Coloniality, (Body-)Territory and Migration
Decolonial feminist geographies of violence and resistance among Latin American women in England

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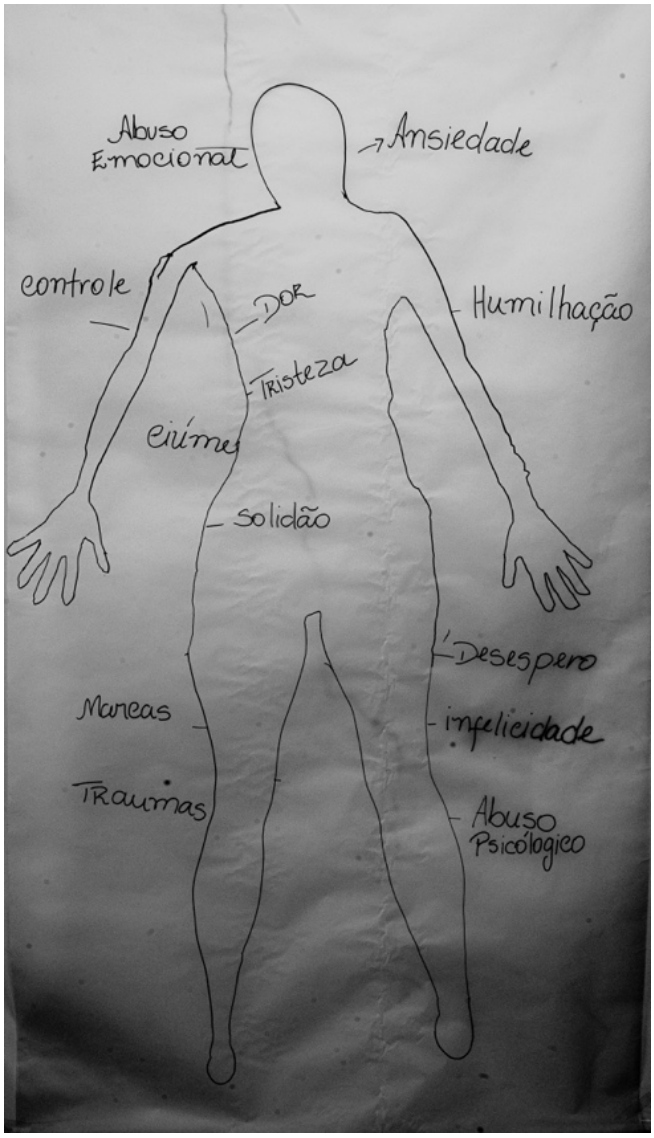

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Abstract

This research examines the experiences of violence and resistance among Latin American migrant women in England, particularly those based in London. In addressing the tendency of existing work to focus on specific nationality groups and/or emphasized intra-community violence, it also develops an innovative theoretical decolonial feminist geographical approach to understanding violence and migration. More specifically, it investigates the ways in which coloniality informs women's experiences across multi-scalar spatialities and temporalities. It does this through an exploration of the territorialized effects of violence and resistance, beginning with the body as the first territory-scale, connecting to territorialities at other scales.

My analysis builds on engaged empirical research including three months of participant observation within the London-based charity Latin American Women's Aid together with the experience of having worked for this organisation for nearly four years; in-depth interviews with 10 front-line workers; life-story interviews with 20 Latin American survivors and Body-Territory maps crafted by 10 of these. Methodologically, the thesis makes original contributions to a decolonial feminist geographical praxis for migration studies by developing Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios as a methodology that links a feminist geopolitics approach to migration with a decolonial feminist geographical embodiment praxis. This builds on and adapts Cuerpo-Territorio ('Body-Territory') as an embodied Latin American ontology and method.

Through this methodological approach, this research provides new empirical understandings of Latin American migrant women's experiences of violence and resistance in England, especially in terms of the relationship between state violence, intimate violence and the embodied effects of those. Conceptually, it provides three main theoretical contributions substantiated through the notions of state and (state-sponsored) intimate border violence; the spatialised coloniality of abuse; and spatialised embodied resistance(s). Advancing a decolonial feminist geopolitical understanding of coloniality, necropolitics and the state of exception, the notion of state and (state-sponsored) intimate border violence traces the multi-scalar workings of border violence against migrant women, from state to state-sponsored intimate manifestations. From within the state territory, border violence territorialises migrant women's bodies as annexed territories of exception upon which legal abandonment enables sovereign power to be exerted not only by the state but also abusive partners. I also investigate modern coloniality through unveiling discourses and practices that perpetuate and legitimise violence against Latin American migrant women by dehumanising them in racist sexualised capitalist territorial ways. To understand the dynamics, causes and consequences of this form of violence I focus on the spatialised coloniality of abuse. This emphasises the ways in which violence against Latin American migrant women is historically and currently underpinned by coloniality, operating intersectionally and spatially in a continuum across spatial-temporal scales, from colonialism into the present. Finally, investigating Latin American migrant women's resistance to border violence and the spatialised coloniality of abuse I develop the concept of spatialised embodied resistance(s). This analytical construct challenges views of migrant women who experience violence as passive victims, by recognising how their resistance is spatially constrained and contingent on spatialised embodied colonial imaginaries, therefore often manifested in small, quiet, embodied, collective or simply unconventional ways.

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Lopes Heimer, Rosa dos Ventos. 2022. 'Bodies as Territories of Exception: The Coloniality and Gendered Necropolitics of State and Intimate Border Violence Against Migrant Women in England'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 1-29. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2144750

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This research investigates Latin American migrant women's experiences of intimate and state violence and resistance in England, particularly in how these relate to coloniality, territoriality and borders. Adopting a decolonial feminist geographical approach, I explore how coloniality informs Latin American migrant women's experiences of violence and resistance across multi-scalar spatialities and temporalities. More precisely, attention is paid to the territorialised effects of violence, starting from the body as the first territory scale (Cabnal 2010; Cruz Hernández 2016), connecting to territorialities at other scales to reveal specific dynamics of power, control and resistance.

As a Brazilian woman living in London for over a decade, my personal experiences, and those of my community, have drawn me to investigate violence against Latin American women in England. Despite being a largely under-recognised migrant community, Latin Americans are one of the fastest growing non-EU populations in this country, having arrived in significant numbers first in the 1970s as political exiles, through to the 1990s and 2000s as students, economic migrants, and via onward migration from Southern Europe (McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011; McIlwaine and Bunge 2016; 2019). In 2013, the UK was estimated to be home to at least 250,000 Latin Americans, 145,000 of which lived in London (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). We are a well-established and highly ethnically diverse community comprising multiple nationalities, the largest of which are Brazilians (38%), followed by Colombians (23%) (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Although largely qualified at the tertiary level and having high employment rates of 70%, Latin Americans tend to undertake elementary occupations (often cleaning) and be more economically deprived than the national average (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Some of the main structural challenges contributing to Latin Americans' marginalisation revolve around English language ability and immigration status, with 17% struggling to speak English and an estimate of 19% being irregular or undocumented (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016; McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011). Those structural disadvantages have severe gendered implications for Latin American women, which make up more than half of Latin Americans in London (53%). I witnessed first-hand some of the intersectional challenges experienced by Latin American women in London facing violence, through volunteering at the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) in 2015 and later working at Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA) from 2016-2020 (two London-based feminist charities specialised in gender-based violence).

Even though there is a vast literature on violence against racialised migrant women across Anglophone countries, investigations into the specific experiences of Latin American women are limited. These are primarily concentrated in the US, with only a few UK studies focusing on particular nationality groups of Latin Americans (e.g. Brazilians – McIlwaine & Evans, 2019, 2022), whilst others focus on Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women more broadly (Mama 1989; Burman et al. 2004; Larasi 2013; Thiara and Roy 2022). Instead, this study aimed to investigate violence against Latin American women in all its diversity whilst recognising their immense heterogeneity. Although my sample does not encompass all *Abya Yala*/Latin American regions, it felt important to leave this open rather than narrow it to specific nationality groups. In doing so, I refuse to compartmentalise *Abya Yala*/Latin America, approaching it in its entirety and reclaiming alternative geopolitics. *Abya Yala* is a Kuna indigenous term, which is increasingly being used by decolonial scholars to recognise the right of indigenous people to self-determine and name their own territories (Santiago 2015; Speed 2017).

Whilst some Anglophone research addressing VAW against racialised women is critical of the role of culture; there is a concerning trend to reproduce problematic culture-blaming arguments to explain violence against migrant women. Culture has frequently been treated as a fixed and timeless construct to portray migrants in gendered culturalist racist ways that reproduce coloniality: as backwards and more patriarchal. In some cases, this has led to pathologising and stereotyping accounts of violence in migrant communities as inherently rooted in cultural values, with migrant men being portrayed as more violent and aggressive and migrant women as submissive and lacking agency (Raj and Silverman 2002; Latta and Goodman 2005; Brownridge and Halli 2002). In Latin American migrant women's cases, for example, decreased likelihood of seeking help has often been linked to them presumably being more traditional, patriarchal and family-oriented, with Latin American migrant men generally portrayed as more patriarchal or 'machistas' (Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014; Page et al. 2017; Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017; Harper 2017). In other cases, more nuanced analysis advanced intersectionality to approach violence against migrants but yet continued to problematically combine this with insidious culturalist arguments (Abraham 1998; 1995; Bhuyan et al. 2005; Das Dasgupta 2005; Erez et al. 2009). Interestingly, cultural considerations concerning violence appear only to be selectively deployed against racialised communities, whilst white people are presumed to have no culture.

These tendencies directly speak to empirical and theoretical gaps in the literature, pointing toward a general need for a shift in direction. Studies on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) against migrant women primarily focus on intra-community cases of violence, mainly between cis-

hetero migrant partners, whilst violence perpetrated by white native men is left unaccounted for. Theoretically, there have been increasing efforts to shift from individual-based or gender-only explanations of violence to more structural and intersectional analyses of violence (Dominguez and Menjivar 2014; Collins 1998b; Crenshaw 1991; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). However, these frameworks are sometimes inconsistently applied, failing to avoid overly gender-focused analyses or culture-based notions surrounding violence against migrant women. There appears to be a lack of analytical consideration of how colonial legacies and ongoing coloniality inform migrant women's intersecting intimate and structural experiences of violence. In this sense, I argue that essentialist ideas about supposedly 'more patriarchal' cultures point towards a need to reconsider historical and spatially-based notions of the colonial/modern gendered world system (Lugones 2008; 2010) when considering violence against colonial immigrant subjects (Grosfoguel et al. 2015).

The Black feminist concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; 1991b) remains central to investigating violence against racialised women, which I combine with several other analytical elements to advance a specific decolonial feminist geographical approach to research. I operationalise the Latin American decolonial concepts of coloniality of power (Quijano 1992) and coloniality of gender (Lugones 2008) to grasp how the intersectional workings of violence produce and sustain social hierarchies of power, connected to the constitution and ongoing reproduction of the colonial/modern gendered world system. My framework brings together the continuum of violence (Kelly 1988) with the multi-scalar lenses of intimacy and feminist geopolitics (Brickell and Datta 2011; Dowler, Christian, and Ranjbar 2014; Joanne 2014; Pain 2014b; Brickell and Maddrell 2016), intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; 1991b) and coloniality (Quijano 1992; Lugones 2008) to conceive and investigate violence against migrant women as produced and reproduced through coloniality across multiple spatialities and temporalities. To this end, I examine violence through an expanded notion of the continuum horizontally connecting violence across time and space, through various scales (e.g. starting from the body and every day to the global) and intersections (e.g. gender, sexuality, race, class, immigration status) in ways that account for coloniality in relation to bordering, territorialisation and resistance processes.

These combined frameworks have not been substantially jointly explored, even less so to investigate violence against migrant women, and certainly not yet applied to study Latin American women in England. Through such frames, I examine intimate and state forms of violence that Latin American migrant women endure, their narratives and understandings of it, and also their experiences and strategies of resistance. I fully account for survivors' embodied

intersectional identities and how these work towards enhancing or constraining, complicating or invisibilising violence and their resistance strategies. This is imperative for this research given that Latin Americans/Latinxs are categories produced through coloniality, having become umbrella terms under which a large and highly heterogeneous population is classified. Many so-called Latin Americans/Latinxs may not self-identify with these terms or may only start recognising themselves as such after migration. Even though Abya Yala/Latin America has not been directly colonised by the British Empire, I conceive of Latin American women in England as gendered colonial immigrants (Grosfoguel et al. 2015). Within this territory, their colonial difference (Mignolo 2002) is marked by a logic of racist/sexist coloniality positioning them within a 'heterogenous colonial hierarchy' (Maldonado-Torres 2008, 65) along specific racial and national belongings, yet always placed in an inferior position to white English and Europeans.

My methodological framework takes a decolonial feminist geographical approach to the production of knowledge. I critically combine and implement a mix of qualitative methods (i.e. participant observation, interviews and Body-Territory mapping) guided by the principles of embodied relational accountability (Daigle 2018; Ramírez 2018; Daigle and Sundberg 2017) and refusal (Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2014; Coulthard 2014) to address persistent issues relating to the geopolitics (Walsh 2007; Mignolo 2002; Gordon 2011), the political economy (Riveira Cusicanqui 2012), and the body-politics (Espinosa-Miñoso 2014; 2016; Curiel 2014; 2015) of knowledge production and ethics in research. To address methodological nationalism, colonial bias and the limited engagement with the body within violence and migration research, I develop and implement Travelling *Cuerpo-Territorios* as a methodology that links critical border and migration studies and feminist geopolitics with a decolonial feminist geographical embodiment praxis. This builds on and adapts *Cuerpo-Territorio* ('Body-Territory') (Cabnal 2010) as an embodied Latin American ontology and method (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017a; Cruz Hernández 2016; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020; Haesbaert 2020), advancing original contributions to a decolonial feminist geographical praxis for migration studies. Implemented remotely, this methodology also responds to the logistical and ethical challenges of conducting qualitative research during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lopes Heimer and Franco 2020).

My analysis builds on three months of participant observation within the London-based charity Latin American Women's Aid, together with the experience of having worked for this organisation for nearly four years; in-depth interviews with ten front-line workers; life-story interviews with twenty Latin American survivors and Body-Territory maps crafted by ten of

these. Although most of my participants were based in London at the time of the research, many lived and experienced IPV in other towns in England and Wales before moving to London (often to flee violence and to relocate to a refuge). Some were also based in different cities (e.g. Oxford, Crawley, Chard, Kent, Cardiff, Newport, Leicester, etc.). I strived to have a diverse sample of survivors regarding race/ethnicity, nationality, class and immigration status but also sexuality and gender. Yet, the latter was not possible. Aware that sexuality and transgender status are identities overlooked in the literature, I was committed to ensuring the participation of lesbian and trans Latin American migrant women survivors of violence; however, none of the women I contacted felt that they were in a position to take part. This is a significant limitation of this study, which primarily focuses on the experiences of cisgender Latin American women who were abused by cisgender men (even though some of the women participating in this research did not identify as heterosexual).

Research Aim and Questions

Research aim

To investigate, from a decolonial feminist geographical perspective, Latin American migrant women's experiences of intimate and state violence(s) and resistance(s) in England in relation to coloniality, territoriality and borders.

Research questions

1. How is violence against Latin American migrant women experienced and territorialised across scales and borders?
    a. What does attention to the multi-scalar coloniality/territoriality of borders reveal regarding the interconnections between state and intimate forms of violence against migrant women?
    b. How is the enforcement of racialised and gendered immigration control over a state's territory extended to and experienced by Latin American women's bodies-territories?
2. How does coloniality inform the experiences of intimate and state violence of Latin American migrant women in spatialised ways?
    a. How is coloniality reproduced and embodied as violence against Latin American migrant women in the English colonial space?

b. How are Latin American migrant women's experiences of violence informed by intersecting identities, oppressive structures and (colonial) imaginaries of gender, sexuality, race, migration and class?
c. What are the connections between intimate partner violence perpetrated by white European/English men and state violence? What do these reveal about coloniality?

3. What is the nature of Latin American migrant women's resistance strategies against violence?
    a. How do Latin American migrant women resist violence in embodied, spatial and collective ways across multi-scalar spatialities and temporalities?
    b. What can Latin American women's resistance practices reveal about how violence and power operate in embodied and spatially informed ways to constrain actions? How are Latin American migrant women's ability to resist violence constrained by their spatial context and specific embodiments?
    c. How can attention to the specific ways in which Latin American migrant women resist intimate and state violence in the English colonial space advance a re-conceptualisation of resistance?

Main Contributions

Theoretically, the thesis develops the notions of *state and (state-sponsored) intimate border violence*; the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*; and *spatialised embodied resistance(s)*. I mobilise a decolonial feminist understanding of coloniality (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b), necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003), and the state of exception (Agamben 1998) concerning bordering and (re)-territorialisation processes. I bring those together to examine how border violence operates across scales, from the global to intimate and the embodied ones, territorialising Latin American migrant women's bodies as annexed territories of exception. The coloniality of borders is materially visible in the gendered racialised capitalist necropolitical operating logic of immigration policies and systems in England. These work to produce state and intimate forms of border violence primarily targeting racialised gendered working-class colonial migrant bodies. Engaging with coloniality at the material and discursive levels, I analyse violence against Latin American migrant women within the context of the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*. This approaches coloniality (of gender and of power) (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b) from a geographical perspective informed by decolonial territorial conceptions (Halvorsen 2018), in particular, the Latin American indigenous concept of *Cuerpo-Territorio* (Cabnal 2010; Ulloa 2016; Cruz Hernández 2016; Haesbaert 2020). As a lens to examine the dynamics, causes and

consequences of violence against Latin American women in a migration context, *the spatialised coloniality of abuse* explores how violence perpetrated against us at the state and intimate scales often mirrors the historical colonial invasion and domination of our territories. The colonisation of the Americas continues to be re-enacted through the colonisation of Latin American migrant women's bodies in this country, dehumanised through racist sexualised capitalist territorial discourses and practices that symbolically territorialise us as annexed inferior territories of conquest. Finally, to make sense of Latin American migrant women's resistance to violence in the context of border violence and the spatialisation of the coloniality of abuse, I draw on the notion of spatialised embodied resistance(s). This recognises resistance in the plural and as a process mediated by the space in which it takes place and the specific embodiments of those who resist and survive similarly plural forms of violence. Advancing a decolonial feminist geopolitics/geography of migrant women's resistance vis-à-vis decolonial debates on territorialisation processes (Haesbaert 2007; 2020; Pereira 2017; Porto Gonçalves 2006; Zaragocin 2018b), resistance is understood as a territorial struggle to reclaim one's bodies, mobility and the spaces we occupy.

Overall, this research contributes to the growing literature on violence against migrant and racialised women in countries of the Global North. Through a focus on Latin American migrant women - a relatively underexplored migrant group, it provides new empirical understandings of the entanglements between intimate and state forms of violence. This is mainly in terms of its centring on the body and violence perpetrated by white British and European men – something largely neglected, empirically and theoretically, in this literature. Expanding decolonial feminist moves within geography, this study significantly advances theory and methodological practice toward a decolonial feminist geography of violence(s) and resistance(s).

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical framework proposed to research violence against migrant women. The importance of a decolonial feminist geographical approach to knowledge production is highlighted throughout the literature review, identifying gaps and harmful implications associated with tendencies to universalise Western frameworks to the detriment of epistemologies from the South. I critically engage with a diverse array of literature which helps delineate my theoretical approach to research. The review theoretically and empirically maps the areas of neglect and strengths in the bodies of works selected based on relevance to the research topic and approach to knowledge. These are organised around a range of themes, including decolonial feminism, decolonial geographies, migration studies, frameworks for

studying violence against women and resistance, and the literature on violence against racialised migrant women.

Chapter 3 situates my research within decolonial feminist epistemologies and outlines how these epistemological principles were translated into my methodological framework. In the first half, I broadly describe the methodology implemented in the study, which used a combination of qualitative methods: participant observation, interviews and Body-Territory mapping. I reflect on my positionality as a migrant researcher and the context in which my fieldwork was developed – in collaboration with the Latin American Women's Aid and amidst the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second half of this chapter turns to my main methodological contribution, the development of *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios,* a decolonial feminist geographical methodology to conduct research with migrant women. This emerged as a response to the context of COVID-19 and enabled me to conduct geographical embodied research despite social distancing constraints whilst practically bringing together and decolonising critical border and migration studies and feminist geopolitics approaches. This chapter incorporates a paper published in the *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* (see list of publications).

Chapter 4 briefly presents the context of violence against women globally and in England, migrant and racialised women, in particular. It outlines the main challenges they experience in leaving their abusers and seeking support. In particular, I provide an overview of the Latin American population in England and their patterns of structural disadvantages. I discuss how these translate onto Latin American migrant women's experiences of violence, the prevalence of abuse and barriers to accessing support services.

Chapter 5 draws on the experiences of Latin American migrant women in England to investigate how state and intimate violence against migrant women are interconnected and mediated by the UK immigration system. I argue for the need to conceive the coloniality materially embedded in the UK border regime not only as a stressor or risk factor but as the source of a particular form of state and (state-sponsored) intimate violence. The UK immigration system wields state border violence against migrant women across multiple scales. In particular, state border violence manifests itself in intimate and embodied scales in what I conceptualise as *intimate* border violence. By intimate border violence, I mean a form of state-sponsored intimate violence that directly stems from the state border violence of the UK immigration system and its necropolitical operating logic. This chapter is an incorporated paper published in the journal of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (see list of publications).

Chapter 6 focuses on the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* in the context of Latin American women's migration to England. I unveil discourses and practices that perpetuate and legitimise violence against Latin American migrant women by dehumanising them in racist, sexualised capitalist territorial ways. To understand the dynamics, causes and consequences of this form of violence, I advance the notion of the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*. This emphasises how violence against Latin American migrant women is historically and contemporarily underpinned by coloniality, operating intersectionally and spatially in a continuum across time and scales, from colonialism into the present. The *spatialised coloniality of abuse* underpins Latin American women's experiences of intimate and state violence(s) in England.

Chapter 7 coins the concept of *spatialised embodied resistance(s)* conceived as a practice and as the analysis of spatial embodiments of resistance as a dynamic and relational process that operates across a multi-scalar continuum. This analytical construct helps challenge views of migrant women who experience violence as passive victims. It recognises how their resistance is spatially constrained and contingent on spatialised embodied colonial imaginaries, often manifested in small, quiet, collective or unconventional ways. Latin American migrant women's bodies in England are made particularly vulnerable within this new colonial territory of migration. As they resist, they simultaneously navigate mutually constitutive forms of intimate and state violence(s), the multi-scalar workings of *border violence* and the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*.

Chapter 8 concludes this study by providing a summary of my main findings. It teases out key methodological, empirical and conceptual original contributions of this research. Methodologically, it focuses on *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios*' offerings to a decolonial feminist geographical praxis for migration studies. Empirically, it unveils new understandings of Latin American migrant women's experiences of violence and resistance in England, especially regarding the relationship between state violence, intimate violence and their embodied effects. Conceptually, three main theoretical contributions are considered: the notions of *state and (state-sponsored) intimate border violence*, the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*, and *spatialised embodied resistance(s)*. It also discusses research limitations. These revolved around the inability to significantly engage with the fast-changing context in which this study unfolded (i.e. the pandemic and the Brexit effects on violence against migrant women) and the specific experiences of trans and queer Latin American women. These gaps point toward important future research directions.

CHAPTER II – TOWARDS A DECOLONIAL FEMINIST GEOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter lays out the theoretical framework proposed to research violence against migrant women. Throughout this literature review, I highlight the importance of adopting a decolonial feminist geographical approach to knowledge production. It identifies gaps and harmful implications associated with tendencies to universalise Western frameworks to the detriment of epistemologies from the South. An intentional search for the pluriverse has therefore guided my theoretical design. Prioritising subaltern knowledges, particularly from the South, I aimed for an intercultural dialogue that recognised power asymmetries stemming from a long-standing history of subordination and invalidation of Black, Indigenous and brown peoples and their knowledges.

In this sense, my theoretical framework brings into dialogue various theories emerging from the body/geopolitical perspectives of subaltern subjects, centring on the theoretical contributions of Latin American decolonial feminism. The proximity between the location from which this school of thought is theorised and the subjects of this study can, at least partially, help mitigate the epistemic violence inherent in attempts to make the subaltern speak through academic productions (Spivak 1988). Latin American decolonial feminism emerged from a decolonial dialogue between diverse literatures, which I also draw upon. Namely, the Decoloniality/Coloniality/Modernity (MCD) research programme; anti-colonial and postcolonial theories; US Black feminism; postcolonial feminism; Chicana feminism; and other subaltern feminisms from Latin America, from which many Latin American Decolonial Feminist authors have themselves started their journeys (e.g. Indigenous feminism, Autonomous feminism, lesbian feminism, antiracist feminism).

In this chapter, I critically review theoretically and empirically the gaps and strengths in bodies of work relevant to my research topic and approach to knowledge production. These are mainly decolonial feminism, decolonial geographies, migration studies, approaches to studying violence against women and resistance, and the literature on violence against racialised migrant women.

Latin American Decolonial Feminism

Latin American decolonial feminism is built upon the central premise that gender must be understood inseparably from race, both having been produced and reproduced since colonisation, co-constituting each other (Lugones 2008; Lugones et al. 2013; Espinosa-Miñoso 2014; Curiel 2014; Mendoza 2014). It confronts attempts to universalize the category of woman and gender, contending that the experiences of Black, indigenous and racialised women cannot be grasped without a simultaneous understanding of how race and gender converge to dehumanise us in unique ways. Coined by the Argentinian decolonial feminist philosopher Maria Lugones (2010; 2008; 2007), *coloniality of gender* critically furthers the contributions of decolonial theorists and Black feminists. More specifically, this concept brings together the Black feminist notion of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw 1991), with the decolonial conception of *coloniality of power* (Quijano 1992).

As Quijano and other authors from the MCD programme note (Quijano 1992; 2000b; Mignolo 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2011; Grosfoguel 2007; Dussel 2011), the emergence of a Eurocentric capitalist colonial/modern world system starts in the sixteenth century with the process of invasion and colonialization of Abya Yala - later termed America by the colonisers. This marks a foundational distinction between postcolonial and MCD's theories. Theorised mainly by academics from the East, postcolonialism tends to limit its understanding of colonialism to its more recent history. Those theorists vastly neglect the crucial historical and political significance of the Latin American colonial experience, which for MCD theorists, represents the constitutive moment of coloniality/modernity.[1] According to MCD scholars, the process of invasion and colonisation of the Americas gave rise to the coloniality of power, a new power matrix co-constituted with modernity - as its other / darker side - and structured around the creation and imposition of 'race' (Quijano 2000b; Mignolo 2000). This power matrix introduces a racial/ethnic classification of the world population and prescribes a racist distribution of work, hierarchically dividing humanity along racist lines: non-human/human, inferiors/superiors, irrational/rational, primitives/civilised, non-European/European, traditional/modern (Quijano 2000a).[2]

[1] See, for example, a critique of postcolonialism by Mignolo (2000), Grosfoguel (2007), and Curiel (2015).

[2] Further to these hierarchies of humanity between colonized and colonizer (the so-called 'colonial difference' (Mignolo 2000; 2002)), the ontological effects of the 'coloniality of being' (Maldonado-Torres 2007) also reflects on

Whilst Latin American decolonial feminism accepts the proposition that coloniality of power has established and imposed a new form of social classification, this was based on a double colonial fiction: race and gender (Lugones 2008; Lugones et al. 2013). For Lugones (2008), both race and gender are central organising principles of the new world system, for coloniality of power and coloniality of gender are mutually constitutive of each other. Therefore, what Quijano identifies as the new colonial/modern capitalist world system, is, instead, for Lugones (2008), a colonial/modern *gender* world system, which, apart from capitalist and Eurocentric, is also heterosexist. In this sense, decolonial feminism provides a relevant critique of the narrow accounts of gender put forward by Quijano and the MCD program more broadly whilst preserving and expanding on the logic of the coloniality of power. Although Quijano understands gender to be impacted by colonialism, his consideration of gender as constructed upon 'biological' sex is argued to be too simplistic, ingrained in a patriarchal and heterosexist perception that 'accepts the global, Eurocentred, capitalist understanding of what gender is about' (Lugones 2008, 2). In Quijano's work, gender is problematically conceptualized as the organisation of 'sex, its resources and products', which, according to Lugones (2008, 5), 'is too narrow and overly biologized as it presupposes sexual dysmorphism, heterosexuality, patriarchal distribution of power and so on'. Gender is reduced to a dispute over the terms through which reproductive sex is socially organised and read, whilst the normative sex/gender binary is uncritically accepted as natural (Lugones 2008). Despite this, Lugones considers that Quijano's model implicitly takes account of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), for it does not consider gender separately from race, but instead as structured by the coloniality of power in ways that allow for a relatively smooth expansion into the logic of the coloniality of gender.

Different from what is commonly accepted by MCD theorists, Lugones (2008) rethinks both 'biological' sex and gender as socially constructed. Drawing on authors such as Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí' (1997) and Gunn Allen (1986), who studied Yorùbá and Native American cultures and languages, Lugones (2008; 2010) sustains that pre-colonial societies were not organised under a binary and hierarchical gender system. She, therefore, argues that gender was introduced by the West as a colonial tool of domination. As the author notes, whilst Western societies have historically suppressed intersexuality within the gender binary, these pre-colonial cultures did not conceive of gender in biological terms. Indeed, there tended to exist a positive recognition

internal divisions between differently racialised colonial subjects (e.g. mestizos, black, indigenous), in what has also been termed 'colonial heterogeneity' (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 133).

of intersex individuals, more than two genders, and homosexuality. As Lugones (2008; 2010) insists, whereas in the modern/colonial system, the construction of gender precedes and gives meaning to the creation of 'biological sex' (as argued by post-structuralist feminists such as Butler), this was not the case in many non-Western societies previous to colonisation.

It is important to note, however, that other Latin American feminist accounts, at least partially, contest Lugones' (2008; 2010) claims. For example, Rita Segato (2014; 2003a) - who also considered but refuted some of Oyěwùmí's (1997) arguments on Yorùbá tradition, defends that historical and ethnographic evidence suggests the existence of patriarchal forms of organisation (gender-based hierarchical classifications) in pre-colonial indigenous and Afro-American societies. She refers to these as a 'low-intensity patriarchy', which has, nonetheless, been significantly more flexible and open than modern patriarchy, illustrated by their positive recognition of transgender practices, gender transitioning and same-sex marriage. As the author explains, these pre-colonial patriarchies were severely modified and deepened by colonial domination and modern coloniality (Segato 2014; 2003a). Indigenous communitarian feminists in Latin America such as Lorena Cabnal (2010a) put forward similar arguments. They identified the existence of a millenary 'original ancestral patriarchy' in the pre-colonial Inca empire. They also argue that these pre-colonial forms of patriarchies have also been reconfigured and significantly strengthened by the imposition of a colonial order, marked by the introduction of a Western patriarchal model along with racism and capitalism.

Despite divergence as to whether these authors recognise pre-colonial patriarchal structures, they converge in arguing that the colonial invasion triggered a violent process of imposition of a radically unequal sex/gender system, which displaced native women from decision-making positions and further restricted them to the domestic sphere (Segato 2003a; 2014; Cabnal 2010). In this sense, Lugones' (2008; 2010) main reasoning is instead sustained: the consequences of the coloniality of gender are much more profound than MCD authors' focus on the coloniality of power suggests. Coloniality not only subordinated female colonial subjects in relation to their reproductive role. It drastically reduced the status of those read as female or gender non-confirming in every sphere of life, reconstructing them as economically, politically and cognitively inferior.

Whilst coloniality of power establishes racial hierarchies dichotomously dividing humans from non-humans, the coloniality of gender intersects and extends this divide by concurrently imposing a sex/gender binary system of classification. According to Lugones (2008; 2010), the colonial/modern gender system, imposed first through colonialism and continually sustained

by coloniality, reserved the category of women only for white women. Colonized 'women' were, in turn, sexually marked as 'female'. Since indigenous and African enslaved people were racially considered to be non-human, gender would not be assigned to them, instead functioning as a marker of civilization limited to the colonisers. Rather than gendered, colonised people were read in terms of sex terms, as animals, therefore classified as female and male – and yet judged for their deficiencies against their human, civilised equivalents (Lugones 2010).

This discussion intimately relates to what Lugones (2008) conceptualises as the 'light' and 'dark' sides of the gender system, the former being its most violent dimension reserved for colonised people. In contrast, the latter was limited only to those framed as humans and civilised. The 'light' side of this system 'constructs gender and gender relations hegemonically' (Lugones 2008, 15). It produces white women as pure and passive reproducers of race and class, holding a certain level of humanity yet being excluded from the public sphere for being considered mentally and physically inferior to white men to whom they must subordinate. Inversely, the 'dark' side of the system violently dehumanised racialised subjects. Imposed during colonisation and continuously sustained throughout history in adapted forms. It begins to take shape with 'the deep reductions of anamales, anafemales, and 'third' genders from their ubiquitous participation in ritual, decision making, economics; their reduction to animality, to forced sex with white colonizers, to such deep labor exploitation that often people died working' (Lugones 2008, 15). As Lugones suggests, since then, racialised women and other gender non-conforming people were turned from animals into different inferior versions of womanhood/humanity according to the needs of the Eurocentric global capitalist system. The lenses of these two sides of the colonial/modern gender system provide new ways of grasping the stark differences in how racialised people have been gendered concerning normative representations of hetero-cisgender white women and white men from colonialism into the present. For example, as Lugones (2008) notes, men of colour were/are often perceived as sexual aggressors as opposed to white men, who tend to be instead imagined as white women's protectors. In turn, women of colour are represented in an oversexualized manner as libidinous and promiscuous and, therefore, undeserving of the protection granted to white women, inversely perceived as in need of protection, for they are considered fragile and pure.

The decolonial feminist contributions of Lugones (2008; 2010) and Latin American feminists are central to bringing race, gender and coloniality together and unveil their historical as well as contemporary impacts on the realities and experiences of racialised people, particularly racialised women and gender non-conforming people. The colonial/modern gender system should not be understood as the end but as the starting point, for there is still much work to be

done 'in detailing the dark and light sides of […] the 'modern colonial gender system.' […] to begin to see in its details the long sense of the processes of the colonial/gender system enmeshed in the coloniality of power into the present' (Lugones 2008, 16). It is following Lugones' call for more theorising in this direction that I propose to adopt these lenses to delve into how the coloniality of gender is implicated in the processes of subjectification of Latin American migrant women - in the ways in which violence is perpetrated against them as well as how they experience and resist violence.

Decolonising Geographies: An unfinished and unsettling process

Geography's engagement with decolonial theory has been relatively recent and has varied to different degrees according to the region. There is increasing enthusiasm among Anglophone geographers in the Global North concerning the potential decolonial thought brings to the field. However, efforts to decolonise geography, its practices, institutions and knowledges, have been no easy task, particularly when faced with what Derickson (2017, 236) called the 'unbearable whiteness' of the discipline in these contexts.

Inversely, with a few exceptions, there has been less appetite by Latin American geography to dialogue with decolonial theorisations, even though two important schools of decoloniality have emerged from this region. Namely, the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD) research program and Latin American Decolonial Feminism. This can be at least partially explained by the fact that critical geography is still incipient across most Latin American geographical academic production. With its long and well-recognised human geography tradition, the Brazilian school stands out as an exception, where there have been significant efforts to rethink geography from a decolonial perspective (Oliveira and Cruz 2017; Porto Gonçalves 2000; Cruz 2017; 2006; Silva et al. 2009). Interestingly, dialogue and incorporation of decolonial practices can also be found in the work of critical geography collectives from the region, although not always in explicit terms. In particular, the Ecuadorian geography scholar, Sofía Zaragocin, who is also a member of the *Colectivo de Geografía Critica de Ecuador,* has played a critical role in advancing a Latin American decolonial feminist geography (Zaragocin 2018a; 2018b; 2019a; 2020; 2021; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020).

In this section, I critically analyse geographers' different regional interactions with the decolonial literature. I also discuss how decolonising geography expands earlier efforts located in the subfield of postcolonial geography, tracing new debates brought to the discipline as well as underexplored areas. Although there have been essential attempts by Global North geographers

to decolonize the discipline, they have yet, reproduced significant silences in regard to the coloniality of gender. More meaningful engagement with Latin American decolonial feminist literature is needed. In particular, to decolonise knowledge flows and practices, geographers from the North must pay more attention to epistemologies and methodologies from the South, pointing towards a decolonial feminist geographical praxis (Zaragocin and Caretta 2020; Zaragocin 2020; Mollett 2021).

Geographical engagements with the decolonial

In the US and Canada, geographers have often engaged with decolonisation through settler colonialism (Wolfe 2006). This framework has gained prominence there over the past decade, emphasising a specific form of colonisation through which native people's lands are appropriated by settlers who seek their elimination. Decolonial frameworks emphasising the ongoing reality of settler colonisation and a political commitment to make a stand against it have been seen as particularly appropriate to those contexts (Naylor 2018; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018). In the UK, dialogue between geography and decolonial theory is more incipient, with calls for decolonising geographical knowledges having been the focus of the 2017 RGS-IBG annual conference. However, British geography's engagement with postcolonial theory stretches further back. Scholars have suggested that whilst there are many cross-overs between decolonial and postcolonial perspectives, there is a need for the discipline to take up the decolonial imperative (Jazeel 2017; Noxolo 2017b).

In settler colonial states and in the UK, some authors have been actively problematising the decolonial turn in geography by reasserting the need to decolonise geography in theory and practice. This must necessarily start by recognising the struggles of indigenous and non-white people (Daigle and Sundberg 2017; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Noxolo 2017b). The failure to do so would risk de-politicizing and co-opting the decolonial task. Geographers from the Global North have also denounced the whiteness of the discipline and its impact on non-white and indigenous students and staff, framing this as a significant challenge for the discipline to move towards meaningful decolonization (Pulido 2002; Baldwin 2017; Tolia-Kelly 2017; Tuck and Yang 2012). Student movements to decolonise universities in South Africa have also echoed in the UK. To some extent, this has been an opportunity to reflect on geography's colonial history and how British geographers themselves are still implicated in the reproduction of coloniality through both their research and teaching practices (Lopes Heimer and Joshi 2021; Elliott-Cooper 2017; Mbembe 2016).

Despite the origins of current and prolific debates on Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality being in Latin American critical thought, Zaragocin et al. (2018) note how Latin American geographers have not yet promoted a substantial discipline-wide engagement with the latter. This is reflected in the limited number of publications in this area. Nonetheless, early works of pioneering Latin American authors highlight the centrality of spatial geo-historical conceptions in understanding the emergence of coloniality, modernity and occidentalism (Coronil 1996; Porto Gonçalves 2003). In particular, the writings of the Brazilian geographer Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves (2000) are vital in advocating for other geographies of the social. This author crossed disciplinary boundaries to dialogue with other social sciences and bridged the debates on modernity/coloniality/decoloniality with geographical conceptions and struggles over territory, territoriality and territorialisation (Escobar 2012; Haesbaert 2007). The Latin American geographical tradition has been putting forward decolonial conceptions of territory, which builds on new meanings acquired as mobilised by indigenous, afro-Latin Americans and peasants movements (Sandoval et al. 2017; Halvorsen 2018). Since the 1980s, these movements started to demand not only *land* but *territory* – *as* a means of echoing their calls for autonomy and self-determination. Hence, territory is conceived beyond traditional associations with 'spatial constructs of state, power, sovereignty and frontiers' (Sandoval et al. 2017, 44), encompassing areas of struggles where processes and spatial practices for control, appropriation, and re-appropriation take place[3].

Latin American critical geography has also increasingly connected with conceptions put forward by Latin American decolonial political ecology on nature and territory (Zaragocin et al. 2018), which proposes re-thinking these concepts as spaces/places subalternised by a hegemonic modern/colonial rationality (Machado 2012; 2010; Cajigas-Rotundo 2007; Cajigas-Rotundo, Castro-Gómez, and Grosfoguel 2007). More recently, some Latin American authors have attempted to bring to life decolonial geographies through a focus on indigenous women's territorial struggles in the Ecuadorian Amazonia and the Ecuadorian-Colombian border (Castro Muniz and Cárdenas Piedrahita 2018; Zaragocin 2018b). In particular, in her study on the geographies of Epera indigenous women resisting elimination, Zaragocin (2018b) remarkably

[3] I am here associating this specific Latin American use of territory, now vastly incorporated in the writings of several Latin American geographers, as bringing a renewed decolonial perspective to this concept. However, this is not to claim an abandonment of the traditional ways the term has been conceived in its European genealogy, as Halvorsen **(2018)** warns us against. There are also other ways in which territory is being used in Latin America, something which is covered in detailed by Sandoval et al. **(2017)** in their review of the term in Latin America.

combines various frameworks to build a so-called Decolonial Feminist Geography/Geopolitics. She brings together Latin American geographical conceptions of territory with both Anglo-feminist geography and decolonial feminism theoretical debates (Zaragocin 2018a; 2018b).

Interestingly, decolonial geographical practices in Latin America are perhaps more strongly located outside of academia (though not necessarily detached or in opposition to it), enacted in the work of various critical geography collectives. For example, La Red de Geografía Crítica de Raíz Latinoamericana[4] (GeoRaizAL)[5] proposes a critical and decolonial geography that confronts the Eurocentric legacies of Latin American geographical research. They advocate for developing an alternative geography of Latin American people, rooted in indigenous epistemologies and close dialogue with indigenous, afro, peasant and working-class social movements (Ramírez Velázquez 2012). In fact, I would also argue that other critical geography collectives[6] across Latin America, are also decolonising geography (Geobrujas 2018; Colectivo de Geografía Crítica 2018; Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017a; 2017b; 2014). They work closely *with* and *for* communities affected by extractive projects utilising multi-scalar counter-cartography methodologies responsive to the specific needs of the communities/spaces they research. Although these collectives do not necessarily or explicitly describe themselves in decolonial terms, their decolonial potential is evidenced by their interconnected epistemological and geopolitical practice underpinned by decolonial notions and collective dialogue (Zaragocin 2019).[7] In particular, a decolonial feminist geographical practice emerges from the work of some of these collectives, which builds on indigenous Latin American feminist notions of *Cuerpo-Tierra/Cuerpo-Territorio*[8] (body-earth/Body-Territory) (Cruz Hernández 2016; Cabnal 2010). This notion conceives the body as

[4] 'Network of Critical Geography of Latin American Root'

[5] More information about this group can be found here: https://www.georaizal.com/

[6] Such as the Colectivo de Geografía Critica (Ecuador), Geobrujas (Mexico), Geografas Haciendo Lugar (Argentina), Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo (Ecuador/México), and Estepa (Colombia).

[7] Zaragocin (2019a) makes this point specifically in relation to the Coletivo de Geografía Critica Ecuador, however, I would argue this could be extended to the work of other collectives here mentioned.

[8] However, it is worth noting here that such conception emerges from the struggles and ontologies of indigenous women who consider themselves as Communitarian Feminists rather than decolonial.

the first territory to be defended from dispossession, extractivism and various forms of violence; the body is, therefore, the first scale of their counter-mapping (see also Chapter 3).

Post or de-colonial geographies?

The usefulness of postcolonial theory to geographical studies in settler colonial contexts has been questioned by geographers in the US and Canada (de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Naylor 2018). Some have argued decolonisation to be more fitting to these contexts, for it stresses the ongoing colonial power and struggles against the dispossession of indigenous lands. In turn, the postcolonial risks undermining the pervasive reality of colonial domination by its misleading use of the 'post' prefix (de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Naylor 2018). In the UK, the influence of postcolonial theory in British geography is of a longer duration, having generated a much-needed critical analysis of its colonial legacies and the complicity of the discipline with the British imperial project through its maps, experts and institutions (Legg 2017; Slater 2004; Noxolo, Raghuram, and Madge 2008; Dwyer and Bressey 2008; Raghuram and Madge 2006; Daigle and Sundberg 2017). Importantly, early calls for a post-colonial geography/geopolitics have shed light on the relationality and continuity between British geography and its former colonies (Slater 2004; Noxolo, Raghuram, and Madge 2008). They have also brought attention to the uncritical use of politically charged binary geographical divides such as First World/Third World and West/non-West, which may leave unrecognised colonialism's role in producing stark global unequal realities (Slater 2004; Noxolo, Raghuram, and Madge 2008).

Anglophone geographers' interactions with the postcolonial perspective opened up important theoretical and methodological debates within the discipline, though they have also arguably reproduced a double canon (Gilmartin and Berg 2007; Jazeel 2017; Naylor 2018). On the one hand, many postcolonial geographers only referred to the triad canon of postcolonial theory - Said, Bhabha and Spivak – to the detriment of anti-colonial writers. Whilst on the other hand, their work contributed to a consolidation, professionalisation and canonisation of a sub-field of postcolonial geography (Gilmartin and Berg 2007; Jazeel 2017). The reproduction of this logic weakens the critical impetus of the postcolonial within geography through the enacting of not only a geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo 2002) but also a political economy of knowledge (Riveira Cusicanqui 2012) - which authors warn us against (Jazeel 2017; Riveira Cusicanqui 2012).

In this sense, despite the discipline's closer connections with the postcolonial perspective, the decolonial imperative is seen by geographers from the Global North as a necessary one that often extrapolates it. This is true particularly when it comes to the decolonial urge for de-linking

knowledge production from Western hegemonic canon, opening up space for a plurality of voices whilst aiming further than the decolonisation of theory and epistemology, rooting decolonisation in practice and methodologies (Jazeel 2017; Naylor 2018; Noxolo 2017a). To this end, the decolonial task moves the disciplinary focus on unveiling the colonial histories of geography to confronting how colonial practices are still sustained in geography's present and its educational institutions - bringing geographers' locations and embodiment to the forefront (Legg 2017; Daigle and Sundberg 2017; Noxolo 2017b).

Ultimately, as Global North geographers, such as Asher (2013), Jazeel (2017) and Noxolo (2017b) note, rather than being in tension, the contributions and demands that postcolonial and decolonial perspectives bring to the field can and should complement each other. Whilst postcolonial theory has been useful for geographers to analyse and deconstruct colonial thought, it has been limited by its focus on theory and epistemology, its emphasis on the 'post' and its reification and re-creation of canons (de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Naylor 2018). New ways to theorise colonialism/coloniality across time and space therefore remain necessary.

Will geographers' decolonial efforts resist depoliticisation?

Critical efforts to decolonise geography in the Global North can be located within different but intimately interconnected areas. There have been calls for decolonising systems sustaining settler colonialism and coloniality; and decolonising geography as a discipline, its research methodologies and techniques, as well as teaching practices (de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Radcliffe 2017; Noxolo 2017b). However, this growing interest by geographers from the North has also been accompanied by legitimate concerns over 'decolonisation' becoming a metaphor (Tuck and Yang 2012; Radcliffe 2017; Jazeel 2017; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Noxolo 2017a; Esson et al. 2017; de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Lindsay 2013). The decolonial lexicon is sometimes appropriated in ways that evade their political meanings, undermining decolonisation's very own possibility (Tuck and Yang 2012).

This is illustrated in how decolonisation has often been deployed in universities and other educational institutions. Contradictorily, educational settings have tended to make calls to decolonise schools, curriculum and education through a narrow focus on 'inclusion' and no or little mention of indigenous peoples, their struggles and their pivotal role in decolonisation (Tuck and Yang 2012; de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Lindsay 2013). There have also been uncritical appropriation and co-optation of indigenous anti-colonial knowledges in a purely theoretical manner. By centring the debate around the decolonisation of knowledges and epistemologies,

the scope of decolonisation has been limited and trapped in academic discussions (Tuck and Yang 2012; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Noxolo 2017a).

These forms of appropriation were the focus of substantial concern within the context of the 2017 RGS-IBG Annual Conference themed 'decolonising geographical knowledges'. Several denounced how the conference risked further reproducing coloniality of knowledge and collectively performing what Tuck and Yang (2012) refer to as a 'settler move to innocence' (Esson et al. 2017; Noxolo 2017b; Jazeel 2017; Baldwin 2017). Its narrow programme on decolonising knowledges may have neglected the need to decolonise institutions and praxis. This was perceived as more likely to undermine than further decolonisation, as it failed to confront the whiteness of the discipline and the colonial structures enabling its perpetuation. Additionally, the absence of mentions of indigeneity or race as part of the conference abstract suggested an appropriation of decoloniality that detached it from Black and indigenous people, whose decolonial struggles initially gave rise to the concept in the first place. The underlying danger of such a move is that 'decolonial theory can become yet another instrument for time-honoured colonialist manoeuvres of discursively absenting, brutally exploiting and then completely forgetting Indigenous people.' (Noxolo 2017a, 343).

With this in mind, members of the RACE working group[9] called on geographers and British Geographical institutions to address the conference and the broader discipline's silences and ultimate dilution of decolonization by committing to confront and dismantle structures reproducing white supremacy and racism in those settings (Esson et al. 2017). Whilst raising concerns that within the conference framework decoloniality would see its transformative meaning deleted by the elevation and centring of already privileged people, several authors stressed the need for geographical debates on decolonization to be led and determined by those most impacted by coloniality, that is, Indigenous, Black and other racialised people (Esson et al. 2017; Noxolo 2017b). However, this demand reached and echoed beyond the conference (Stanek 2019). As Noxolo (2017a, 342) asserted, 'there are material conditions of experience out of which both postcolonial and, crucially decolonial, writings emerge', leading her to affirm

[9] The Race, Culture and Equality Working Group (RACE) of the RGS-IBG defines itself in their website as 'a collective of scholars and other interested publics whose research focuses on issues of race, racial inequality, colonialism, decoloniality and whiteness etc. […] we seek to address the contradiction between the breadth of geographical scholarship on race and postcolonialism, and the failure to address race relations and racial inequality within the discipline itself.'. More information about this group can be found here: https://raceingeography.org/

that ‘decolonisation begins from the scholarship of black and indigenous peoples, and should be led by that scholarship’. Indeed, this directly speaks to decolonial authors’ insistence on a shift in the body/geo-politics of knowledges and the rich pluriverse decolonial theorising that can emerge from experiences of border thinking-sensing from the colonial difference (Mignolo 2011a; 2011b; Grosfoguel 2006).

British geographers’ discussions also resonate with debates by geographers from settler colonial contexts reaffirming the necessity to unsettle the decolonising of geography to preserve its transformative potential. These have emphasised the need to question the whiteness of the discipline, the reproduction of pedagogical and citational practices that privilege white scholars over indigenous and non-white people, and the predominant absence of embodied and situated geographical praxis (Tuck and Yang 2012; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Sundberg 2005). Regarding the latter, exciting conversations have opened up on the need to decolonise geographers’ positions through a responsible decolonial praxis (Daigle and Sundberg 2017; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Ramírez 2018; Daigle 2018).

Long before geography’s strong shift towards the decolonial, its overwhelming uncritical epistemological engagements and ‘objectivity’ prescriptions have been the subject of attention. The decolonial focus on positionality is undoubted of great relevance, especially considering the imperative to mainstream the decolonial task in a predominantly white discipline (Jazeel 2017). As Sundberg (2005) argues, geographers' disregard for their position tended to reproduce a disembodied notion of themselves that assumed a problematic objective, universal and masculinist position. She documents this in the field of Latin Americanist and post-humanist geography, identifying ‘silence about location and silence about Indigenous epistemes’ (Sundberg 2014, 35).

Demands for decolonising the position of geographers as researchers and teachers are therefore of particular importance, with an insistence on a need for a commitment to a decolonial praxis (Daigle 2018; Ramírez 2018; Daigle and Sundberg 2017). Grounded on geographers’ relational accountability to places they inhabit as embodied subjects, decolonial praxis also involves recognising their position as settlers on stolen and occupied indigenous lands (Daigle 2018; Ramírez 2018). As part of decolonial geographical teaching, enacting ‘an embodied and accountable pedagogical praxis’ are seen as necessarily bringing together responsibility as teachers with a political commitment to decolonial movements and indigenous self-determination (Daigle and Sundberg 2017, 338). In summary, by committing to

practising an accountable decolonial praxis, geographers must become transparent about and accountable for their embodiment and geographical location.

British geographers' calls for a shift in the focus of decolonisation toward structures have been another way to prevent the dilution of decolonisation, especially the pervasive coloniality in educational institutions (Desai 2017; Tolia-Kelly 2017; Baldwin 2017; Esson et al. 2017). These have unveiled structures perpetuating inequality of access for indigenous and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students and staff in the discipline; the everyday experiences of racism experienced by those students in the UK academy; the reproduction of a politics of citation and conference chair nomination; and the urgent need to re-democratize the university (Desai 2017; Tolia-Kelly 2017; Baldwin 2017; Esson et al. 2017; Puttick and Murrey 2020; Lopes Heimer and Joshi 2021).

Efforts to 'decolonise' by British geographers have generated a vivid debate, problematisation and contestation, showing that such a project cannot be easy. Preserving the uncomfortable character of decolonisation is vital, embracing it through an 'ethics of incommensurability' (Tuck and Yang 2012, 28) that recognises its uniqueness. Indeed, the decolonisation project is 'an unsettling one, rather than a complementary one. Decolonization is not an 'and'. It is an elsewhere.' (Tuck and Yang 2012, 36).

Further decolonising geographical frameworks

The decolonial literature emphasises the need to move towards the pluriverse, recognising and engaging with epistemologies historically suppressed by Western rationality in its impetus to universalise its regional designs. For this to occur, there needs to be a simultaneous shift in the body-politics and the geo-politics of knowledge (Mignolo 2002; Gordon 2011; Grosfoguel 2007). Recent calls by a few geographers in the North (Esson et al. 2017; Noxolo 2017b; 2017a) advocating for Indigenous and Black people to be at the forefront of decolonial efforts echo the need for such a shift. Nevertheless, the geopolitics of knowledge remains relatively unchanged, with debates predominantly between US-UK-based geographers and knowledge produced by those in the North being privileged.

To further the decolonisation of geography, I argue that there must be more attention to and meaningful engagement with knowledges produced by decolonial authors and geographers from and based in the Global South – in particular, Indigenous and Black people. This urgency is epitomised by Sofia Zaragocin's work (2018b; 2018a), which combines conceptual frameworks from Latin American decolonial/communitarian feminisms with Latin American

and Anglophone feminist Geographies. She emphasises the *Cuerpo-Territorio*/Body-Territory concept, largely underexplored by geographers from the North. Zaragocin's writings evidence how complicating knowledge flows and allowing geographies and feminisms to learn from each other can advance decolonisation, leading to rich theoretical and methodological discussions and practices.

In addition, although geographers from the North have been warmly embracing decolonial thought, they tend to reproduce similar silence found in male decolonial authors regarding gender (Quijano 2000b; Mignolo 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2008; Grosfoguel 2007). In the US, however, a few indigenous authors have been bridging this gap. Their studies focus on violence against indigenous women through the frameworks of decoloniality and settler colonialism, calling for decolonising feminist geography (Holmes, Hunt, and Piedalue 2014; Hunt 2016; Hunt and Holmes 2015). In the UK, there remains an absence of studies attempting to incorporate a gender analysis into decolonial geographical approaches.[10] Whilst this may also be due to the more incipient engagement of British geographers with the decolonial literature, there tends to be almost complete neglect of decolonial feminist writings and conceptions in their debates on decolonising the discipline. Ultimately, geographers' attempts to decolonise privilege race over gender, disregarding decolonial feminists' assertion that race and gender must be equally and jointly considered: they emerged with the imposition of a modern/colonial gender system and are co-constitutive of each other (Lugones 2008; 2010).

The Coloniality of Migration Studies: Gender, intersectionality and other colonial (dis)connections

In this section, I critically analyse migration scholarship's engagement with gender, intersectionality, colonialism and ongoing coloniality. Whilst there is now extensive work within the field incorporating a gender perspective, I argue that its general conceptualisation and operation continue to perpetuate problematic universalist notions of patriarchy. This is particularly problematic, for it risks reproducing coloniality. In addition, migration scholars' primary focus on gender to the detriment of other mutually constituted categories of oppression is concerning with regard to intersectionality. Finally, I review recent work more explicitly connecting migration studies with the legacies of colonialism and ongoing coloniality. Although relatively incipient, this is a promising area, providing critical analytical tools to the

[10] Though in relation to British Latin Americanist Geographers bridging this dialogue see Radcliffe (2015).

field. I conclude by calling for a need to combine those recent theoretical contributions with the decolonial feminist conception of the coloniality of gender. This is crucial for research on the gendered and racialised experiences of colonial migrants, particularly Latin American migrant women in England.

Gender and international migration

The past decades have seen considerable theoretical development in international migration research, with migration now being widely accepted as a gendered process and intersectionality being increasingly understood as integral to its study (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Herrera 2013). However, until a few decades ago, migrant women were virtually absent from migration studies, and gender analysis was utterly lacking.[11]

Throughout the 1960s until the early 1970s, studies tended to portray migrant women in a dependent and almost-invisible way, commonly referencing women as 'companions' (Mahler and Pessar 2003, 814) or, more generally 'migrants and their families' (Boyd and Grieco 2003, 1). From the 1970s, however, migration research started 'adding' women into the field (Phizacklea 1983; Morokvasic 1984). Whilst some of this work may have referred to gender, gender was treated more as a variable than analytics (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Herrera 2013). In response to the previous erasure and representation of women as passive subjects, authors instead emphasised the role of women as migrant actors, leading to a proliferation of women-centred studies focused on migrant women's experiences, their decisions and patterns of migration (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Herrera 2013; Donato et al. 2006).[12] Yet, these largely failed to consider the relational character of gender.

[11] This could be partly explained by the widely influential albeit Eurocentric, colonial and male biased work of Ravenstein (1976), still considered as of significant weight (Silvey 2006; Donato et al. 2006). In his 1885 classic 'The Laws of Migration', the German geographer prescribed that men are generally more mobile than women: whilst women migrate more within national boundaries, they are less likely than men to migrate internationally. Though his thesis has long been theoretically and empirically contested (DeLaet 1999; Silvey 2006), it has markedly contributed towards the male-centred and seemingly gender-blind approach found in most of the early body of research on international migration.

[12] These women-centred studies have largely been marginalised and dismissed as reductionist as they were not seen as representative enough of the migrant population (Donato et al. 2006).

It was not until the 1990s, thanks to feminist theory's influence, that migration scholars' approach to gender started to become more analytical (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Herrera 2013; Donato et al. 2006). This triggered a focus on investigating the impacts of patriarchy on women's mobility and how migration affected patriarchy (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Boehm 2008). The progressive integration of a gender perspective into the field culminated in what authors have referred to as the 'gender mainstreaming' of migration studies (Herrera 2013; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2017). This led to a flourishing of new interpretations, insights and critical areas being further developed within migration research.[13] In turn, the relevance of migration to understanding changes in gender relations started to be recognised and explored. Nonetheless, I contend that the definition of gender that became mainstream in migration studies was problematically founded on the sex/gender binary. Although more relational and analytical, it still presented pervasive shortcomings, as I discuss in the following section.

Migration studies' reproduction of the sex/gender binary

The shift in migration scholarship's general conceptualisation of gender is summarised in two stages. Whilst it first conflated gender with sex - assuming both biological and dichotomous descriptive categories, it subsequently moved to an understanding of gender as something substantially different from sex. Nonetheless, although different from sex, within such a frame, gender is always socially constructed in relation to it.

In their multidisciplinary review of scholarly work on gender and migration, Donato et al. (2006, 6) welcome advances in the field. Accordingly, disciplines' cross-fertilisations contributed toward a more sophisticated gender analysis of migration in which gender is considered socially dynamic and relational instead of equated to the 'fixed or biological' nature of sex. To understand gender in terms of social power relations, this model first naturalises sexual difference and the male/female dichotomous categorisation to then linearly build a socially constructed understanding of gender.[14] Whilst this introduced novel analysis to the field, they

[13] For example, Herrerra (2013) notes how such move led to the production of studies providing a more gendered understanding of the social organisation of migration (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Cerrutti and Gaudio 2010); quantitative analysis of gendered patterns of migration (Donato et al. 2011); and the engendering of transnational migration scholarship (Mahler and Pessar 2003, 2001; Mahler 1999).

[14] This seems to be connected to the strong influence of anthropology to both the early feminist theorizing of gender as well as in fostering the interdisciplinary analysis of gender in migration, as noted by Donato et al. (2006). Another strong resonance could be found in the gender theorising of the feminist historian Joan Scott's work (1986, 1067),

may have unintendedly reproduced the sex/gender binary, often accompanied by the nature/culture divide (see Mahler and Pessar 2003; Donato et al. 2006; Boyd and Grieco 2003).

The prevalent conception of gender within migration scholarship also discreetly universalises 'patriarchy'. Patriarchy is sometimes indirectly replaced by the notion of a 'sex/gender system', theorised by the anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1975) and largely debated and contested by several other feminist theorists (Haraway 2001; Harrison 2006; Butler 1990). Although there is no scope here to delve deep into those debates, I argue that the main issues emerging from this conceptualisation are three-fold. Firstly, it naturalises the dichotomous idea of sex as biological. Secondly, it universalises the 'sex/gender' binary as a system. Thirdly, it assumes gender to be 'primary', privileging it as a category of analysis despite acknowledging other intersectional axes.[15]

These points are identified in Donato et al. (2006) and Boyd and Grieco's (2003, 2) with the latter noting that whilst gender is viewed as socially constructed, 'sex is defined as a biological outcome of chromosomal structures'. A similar notion underpins widely referenced works by Pessar and Mahler (2001; 2003) on the engendering of transnational migration. They are careful to differentiate gender from sex, stating that whilst 'sex is best reserved as a simple dichotomous variable: male versus female', gender is, nonetheless, 'much more complex and involves the ways in which cultures imbue this biological difference with meaning demarcating between male and female domains […]' (Mahler and Pessar 2003, 813). In a subsequent study, Pessar (2005, 2) reasserts that 'gender is the meaning people give to the biological reality that there are two sexes'.

As such, gender relations among heterosexual, cisgender migrant men and women have been privileged and often treated as the default, with the experiences of queer and trans being vastly unacknowledged. However, there is a flourishing sub-field of critical queer migration studies, particularly in the US, critically investigating queer and trans experiences of migration (Luibhéid 2008; Manalansan 2006; Howe, Zaraysky, and Lorentzen 2008; Cantú, Naples, and Vidal-Ortiz

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who maintains the dichotomous division between sex and gender, whilst emphasising that 'gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.'. However, these connections can only be inferred, since there tends to be a persistent lack of definitions of gender and an absence of explicit reference to feminist theorists within the migration scholarship.

[15] I will aim to develop each of these points throughout the different subsections of this text.

2009). Although there have been calls for migration scholarship to address its heteronormativity (Luibhéid 2004), there is a minimal dialogue between these bodies of works (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2017).

Gendered transnational migration studies: gender ideologies and the universalisation of patriarchy

Transnational migration processes (Massey 1994; Basch, Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994) have been broadly recognised as gendered. The alternative model proposed by Pessar and Mahler (2001; 2003) and its subsequent adaptations to various studies (Boehm 2008; McIlwaine 2010; Pessar 2005) has substantially contributed to that. Nonetheless, although such studies have challenged previous linear narratives contending that migration necessarily benefited women and gender equality (Hirsch 2003; Levitt 2001), they have partially continued to reproduce hegemonic views.

Combining the transnational migration perspective with their 'Gender Geographies of Power' framework, Pessar and Mahler (2003, 815) engendered transnationalism, introducing a new interest in understanding how gender operates simultaneously along socio-spatial- scales and social positionings. This was undoubtedly a worthy endeavour; however, their framework's conceptualisation of gender falls short. This speaks to concerns surrounding the reification of the sex/gender binary and its universalising tendencies.

Mahler and Pessar (2003, 816, 818) mobilised their engendered transnational approach to enquire about how 'gender ideologies' and 'gender regimes' are challenged, reconfigured or reinforced through transnational migration processes. However, there is a lack of clear terminology definition throughout Pessar and Mahler's work around 'gender ideologies' (2003, 816), 'gender regimes' (2003, 818) and 'patriarchy' (2003, 822). In addition, those terms seem to be implicitly used in universalising ways that fail to consider gender's colonial history.

Postcolonial and decolonial feminists committed to unveiling the effects of feminist colonial discourses and coloniality more broadly have long been challenging universal conceptions of 'patriarchy' and its related variants (Mohanty 1988; Lugones 2008; R. A. Hernández 2008; Hernández Castillo 2014; Cumes 2012; 2007; Espinosa-Miñoso 2009; Curiel 2014). Assuming patriarchy to be universally present across time and space disregards the historical significance of colonialism in imposing a 'colonial/modern gender system'(Lugones 2008, 12) that persists through 'coloniality' (Quijano 2000a).

There is a danger that Mahler and Pessar's framework may inadvertently contribute toward a view that migrants hold backwards 'gender ideologies' or 'machismo'. These seem subtly understood to be intrinsic to migrants' cultures, even when conceived as 'fluid' and possibly 'changeable' through transnational exchanges with supposedly more 'modern' ones. Latin American debates on women's rights vs cultural rights present a parallel problem, similarly trapping indigenous women amid ethnic essentialism and feminist ethnocentrism (Cumes 2012; 2007; Hernández Castillo 2014). Within those debates, indigenous cultures are frequently represented as timelessly patriarchal and 'machistas', with indigenous women portrayed as more submissive due to presumably embodying their own cultures (Cumes 2012).

A closer review of studies engaging with Pessar and Mahler's framework (Mahler 1999; Pessar 2001; 2005; Goldring 2001) illustrates the above. A good example of that is Pessar (2001) and Mahler and Pessar's (2003) studies with Guatemalan refugee women who returned to Guatemala after a period in exile due to a war marked by genocidal levels of violence and rape. The authors contend that there has been a progressive improvement in Guatemalan women's gender ideology through contact with a globalised feminist gender ideology in the context of migration. This is illustrated in the following excerpt by Mahler and Pessar (2003, 820):

> Empowered by the symbols of an alternative, globalized gender ideology and by support from powerful members of international organizations (e.g. the United Commissioner for Refugees) and from feminist and solidarity groups, many Guatemalan refugee women returned home triumphant in the early 1990.

This narrative reproduces a salvation discourse posing that a (Western and modern) global feminist ideology was needed to break Guatemalan refugee women free from their own culture, insidiously portrayed as more patriarchal. In another piece, Pessar (2005, 10) refers to 'cultural prescriptions' supposedly confining Guatemalan women to the home. She then describes how Guatemalan women were able to challenge such 'cultural prescriptions' thanks to the 'feminist consciousness' and 'empowerment' provided through human rights discourses in transnational arenas. A hierarchical divide is established through which Western women are implicitly constructed as modern feminists with the potential to save Guatemalan women from their own culture. In line with Mohanty's (1988) critique of Western feminist discourses on 'Third World women', such a representation of Guatemalan women risks discursively colonising them and homogenising them as backwards Others.

Reading the above through decolonial feminism illuminates how such a discourse is built on a pretence of universality of patriarchy. The colonial imposition of the colonial/modern gender system is left unacknowledged, as well as how it has produced, or at least radically exacerbated, gender power hierarchies among colonial subjects (Segato 2014; Lugones 2008; 2010; Cumes 2007; Hernández Castillo 2014). Western modern feminism is, therefore, positioned as a valuable resource fostering Guatemalan women's progress. Instead of resorting to cultural explanations, Pesser's (2005, 10) perceived confinement of Guatemalan women to the home can be argued to be the result of a process of colonisation that aimed to domesticate colonised women, stripping the domestic sphere from political power whilst further empowering colonised men (Segato 2014). Paraphrasing Segato (2014), on one hand, modernity and its 'globalized feminist gender ideology' promises to give to Guatemala women what'' colonialism/coloniality took with the other. Mahler and Pessar (2003) lack engagement with Mayan feminist scholars from Guatemala, whose theorisations challenge their findings. As the Mayan author Aura Cumes (2012; 2007) suggests, the historical realities of oppressions experienced by Mayan women cannot be grasped through the fragmented lenses of hegemonic feminism and indigenous essentialism. As an alternative, Mayan women propose a plurality of political readings of their realities from their position as epistemic subjects (Cumes 2012; 2007).

Similar issues are identified in more recent studies adopting Pessar and Mahler's (2003) framework to investigate how migrants' 'gender ideologies' change with migration (Boehm 2008; McIlwaine 2010; 2008c; 2008a). Whilst an extensive review of this work is not possible here, it is worth noting McIlwaine's use of this framework to research Latin American migrants in London. McIlwaine's (2010; 2008c) studies exploring changes in the 'gender ideologies', and 'practices' of Latin American migrant women and men in London may have contributed to reifying the idea of a particular form of cultural patriarchy. The author brings attention to 'migrant machismos' to refer to a form of 'hegemonic masculinity', which she argues is specific to Latin America (McIlwaine 2010, 291). Nonetheless, this analysis does not engage with how such constructs may be linked to colonial legacies nor how they relate to other forms of (white) hegemonic masculinities also present in the country of migration.

McIlwaine (2010, 282) does recognise the 'importance of moving beyond stereotyped notions of how migration entails shifts from traditional gender regimes to so-called modern ones'. However, her presentation of findings inadvertently suggests that Latin American gender regimes, particularly Latin American hegemonic masculinities, are indeed more traditional than those in the destination – albeit they may be 'becoming more flexible' (2010, 289). It is worth noting that some informants themselves 'interpreted machismo as a cultural trait' (McIlwaine

2010, 287), with some women sustaining that men maintained their machismo in Bolivia 'because the society is like that' (2010, 291). However, this could have been further explored vis-à-vis a context of ongoing coloniality. The conclusion of this study suggests that 'migrant machismos' do not necessarily shift towards a more progressive/modern form of 'gender ideologies' upon migration but may rather persist or even get worse since 'more deep-seated transformations in gender ideologies or scripts were much more resistant to change' (McIlwaine 2010, 282). Whilst the author acknowledges the complexity of her findings from an intersectional perspective, if left unproblematised, these may arguably unwittingly reproduce a culturalist viewpoint implying the existence of more traditional 'cultural patriarchies' (see McIlwaine and Evans, 2022 for a revision of this view).

The gendered transnational migration scholarship aimed to understand how 'gender ideologies' are reconfigured through migration in ways that may have homogenised migrants and their gender dynamics along national lines. This occurred even when scholars acknowledged certain flexibility and exceptions to the model. Such narratives sustain an image of migrants from the South as holding 'gender ideologies' that are more traditional than those of their host countries in the Global North – implicitly assumed to be 'progressive'. A few interconnected elements may be contributing to that. Firstly, the privileging of national scales by the gendered transnational approach has led to generalisations regarding so-called 'gender ideologies'. Secondly, this scholarship's embracing of a universalising notion of patriarchy disregards colonial legacies and coloniality, opening the way to gendered culturalism. Thirdly, studies have focused on transnational migration from South to North, paying much less attention to the gendered effects of North to South and South to South migration. Lastly, studies have predominately centred on gendered dynamics within migrant households, with mixed households being nearly completely neglected, where European men may, for example, increase power over their migrant partners upon relocation. This review suggests a need to move beyond 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, 324) still very much embedded in the study of transnational communities, tending to overlook interactions between migrants and non-migrants. As Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002, 325) suggest, analyses informed by methodological nationalism tend to reproduce bounded essentialised images of national communities, discursively constructing migrants as 'culturally others'.

Intersectionality? the privileging of gender and the compartmentalization of oppressions

The past decade has seen a shift in migration research from gender mainstreaming to intersectionality (Herrera 2013; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2017; Bastia 2014). This move is not necessarily chronological nor clearly defined; however, an increasing number of migration studies are now more attentive to different axes of inequality (Herrera 2013). Nonetheless, the extent to which an intersectionality lens has been integrated into migration analyses is curtailed by the continuing privileging of gender as the primary category of oppression with which other dimensions are recognised to interact. There is also the question of whether approaching migration through the intersectionality framework is sufficient to prevent the compartmentalisation of oppressions and unveil how coloniality is enacted.

Gioconda Herrera (2013) argues that migration scholarship's move towards intersectionality is not an entirely new phenomenon. Some research identified this notion long before explicitly referring to Black feminist thought (Collins 2000b; Crenshaw 1991; Lorde 2007). The gender geographies of power framework proposed by Pessar and Mahler (2003) to engender the transnational perspective is illustrative of that. One of its core elements is 'social location', understood in terms of social power hierarchies. Similarly, Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck (2011) advance a framework to understand transnational domestic work in which intersectionality crosscuts the analysis of the interplay of care, gender and migration at an institutional level. Despite that, gender is clearly the structuring force in those perspectives, proving difficult to carry out an analysis that conceives gender as intrinsically interlocked with other forms of oppression.

The simple recognition of various axes of inequality does not automatically lead to analyses attentive to the simultaneous works of the interlocking system of oppressions. Intersectionality, conceptualised by Crenshaw (1989; 1991b), challenges additive thinking. This is illustrated in Bastia's (2007) investigation of the decision-making of Bolivian migrant women who returned to their home countries. The author describes how, during her fieldwork, she felt the need to incorporate an analysis of 'race' into what was initially planned to be limited to gender. However, she admits this did not guarantee the treatment of race and gender in a systematic intersectional manner (Bastia 2014). There are also instances in which scholars claim an intersectional analysis whilst underplaying the role of 'race' as a structural form of power

instead of considering it descriptively. Nonetheless, several studies within the scholarship have also attempted to make use of intersectionality more comprehensively.[16]

There have been limits to the use of intersectionality within migration research, even when one category of analysis is not privileged over another. For example, in Bastia's (2011) study, intersectionality was valuable in explaining how the decisions of Bolivian migrant women were negotiated through the intersections of race, class and gender as locally constructed. However, she does not consider this framework to have helped make sense of these oppressions as historically produced in co-constitutive ways rather than as separate and essentialist categories. She, therefore, advocates that intersectionality must be combined with an investigation 'rooted in a historical analysis of social relations of power, which are embedded in a colonial legacy' (Bastia 2014, 242). She goes further to affirm that to prevent a descriptive treatment of intersectionality, it is paramount to ground research in historical analysis. Even though Bastia develops this argument without explicitly engaging with decolonial feminist writing, the two resonate with each other.

The critique put forward in the previous section is here extended to intersectional analyses that fail to consider historical contexts. The decolonial feminist critique of intersectionality echoes this. As Curiel (2015) argues, this concept sheds light on how oppression operates simultaneously, but it suggests the coming together of ultimately *separate* categories that are independently conceived, failing to enquire about the historical production of difference (Curiel 2015). The coloniality of power (Quijano 1992) and the coloniality of gender (Lugones 2008) enable us to move a step further. These conceptual tools are rooted in a historical analysis that recognises how colonialism imposed a world system that concomitantly produced race, gender and class as co-constitutive of each other; and that these continue to be reproduced by ongoing coloniality.

Towards a decolonial analysis of transnational migration

Investigating the complexities of international migration requires a decolonial analysis contextualised within the gender modern/colonial capitalist world system (Quijano 2000a;

[16] Indeed, intersectionality has been incorporated as a main theoretical framework to study a range of themes within the field, such as sexuality and migration (Kosnick 2011), violence against migrant women (Erez et al. 2009; Crenshaw 1991; McIlwaine and Evans 2020), transnational families (Lafleur and Romero 2018; Smith 2006), migrant political participation (McIlwaine and Bermúdez 2011), diaspora and belonging (Fathi 2017; Parreñas and Siu 2007).

Lugones 2008). Migrant scholars' failure to acknowledge the contemporary significance of modern coloniality and its co-constitutive organising principles has led to incomplete and compartmentalised analyses of transnational migration processes. In some instances, studies may have reproduced gendered racial hierarchies of humanity, maintaining the inferior and dehumanised construction of colonial subjects, therefore being themselves a form of coloniality at work.

Recently, there have been calls to incorporate a decolonial perspective into migration studies (Trujillo Cristoffanini and Contreras Hernández 2017; Grosfoguel et al. 2015; Patel 2015; Gilmartin 2018). Such a task is being taken up by a few scholars incorporating MCD theorists' contributions to analyse various topics within the field.[17] However, attempts at doing so have led to varying results. Whilst in some cases, coloniality has been given its deserved centrality (Malheiros and Padilla 2015; Grosfoguel 1999; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2014; 2010; Mignolo 2011b; Gilmartin 2018), in others it seems to have been included in a tangential manner (Krummel 2015; Parisi 2015; Muelle 2014).

The importance of this is epitomised by migration studies' tendency to reproduce 'a northern-centric social science view of the world' which is based on the experiences of white people whilst pretending neutrality and universality (Grosfoguel et al. 2015, 646). As Grosfoguel et al. (2015, 646) denounce, the scholarship has grappled with the concept of 'racism', generally either being completely silent about it or reproducing a particular form of 'cultural racism'. Therefore, they contend that the framework of coloniality can be helpful to transnational migration for two main reasons. Firstly, this framework would require scholars to acknowledge the specific place they speak from within colonial racial hierarchies. Secondly, it would involve recognising that migrants do not depart from and arrive at neutral spaces but that those countries are already marked and constituted by coloniality. Grosfoguel et al. (2015) offer two valuable analytical tools to advance the coloniality perspective in migration studies: an alternative definition of race and a typology of transnational migrants.

[17] For example, migration and intimate citizenship practices and discourses (Parisi 2015); Puerto Rican labour migration (Grosfoguel 1999); border epistemologies (Mignolo 2011b; Gilmartin 2018); the perpetuation of colonial stereotyped images of migrant Brazilian women (Malheiros and Padilla 2015), the value of domestic work performed by migrant women (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010, 2014); the interconnection between migration, heterosexual regimes, coloniality and globalization (Muelle 2014); and place and identity in migrant women's writing (Krummel 2015)

They define racism as 'a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority, politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the 'capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system' (Grosfoguel et al. 2015, 636). This definition invites us to think of racism in the plural, understanding that human hierarchies of superiority and inferiority are produced through various racial markers according to the colonial histories of specific social contexts. This conceptualisation challenges us to conceive racism beyond colour racism, a form of racism that has been the most dominant since colonial times but which has also overshadowed other contemporary manifestations of racism marked by culture, religion, ethnicity and language. Within such a frame, the politics of border and migration management may be understandably identified as an enactment of racist coloniality, which produces racist hierarchical social classifications (Gilmartin 2018; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010; 2014).

As Grosfoguel et al. (2015, 637) reassert, racialisation processes occur 'through the marking of bodies', meaning these can occur through various symbolic markers. Their conceptualisation of racism unveils an often unrecognised form of cultural racist discourse, which migration scholars sometimes reproduce. 'Cultural racism' claims to be non-racist or even anti-racist by eluding the word 'race', while appealing to culturalist explanations to rationalise social discrimination and internalising the 'causes' of racialised migrant communities' disadvantages racialised (Grosfoguel et al. 2015). As a result, cultural racist discourses may have the simultaneous effect of reproducing racism whilst concealing its perpetuation.

This more nuanced understanding of racialisation processes of migrant communities informs Grosfoguel et al.'s (2015) new categorisation of transnational migrants. The typology proposed separates migrants into three categories defined as follows:

1) 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' – migrant subjects directly colonised by the 'Empire' where they currently live. They, therefore, tend to be the main target of racist discourses.

2) 'colonial immigrants' - migrants not directly colonised by the specific country where they currently live. Although they are subjected to racist racialisation, this tends to be more subtle than that experienced by 'colonial/racial subjects of empire'.

3) and 'immigrants' – migrants racialised as 'white', who generally experience more social mobility.

The usefulness of Grosfoguel et al.'s (2015) framework is unquestionable for scholars striving to incorporate the coloniality perspective into the study of international migration. However,

their framework downplays the significance of gender in understanding migration by failing to significantly recognise the co-constitutive character of gender and race in the formation and reproduction of the colonial/modern system. Cultural and other forms of racisms are gendered, with migrant women and men positioned within the 'dark' side of the 'colonial/modern gender system' (Lugones 2008, 12). This framework should be brought into conversation with decolonial feminist theories to approach migration from a coloniality viewpoint that considers the 'coloniality of gender' as one of its primary facets (Lugones 2008; 2010).

Approaching Violence Against Women Theoretically

Violence against women, and in particular, intimate partner violence (IPV) or what is often referred to as Domestic Violence (DV)[18], have attempted to be explained through conservative discourses revolving around dysfunctional families, biological conditions or individual disorders and behaviour, such as drug use or mental illness (Ferraro 1996; Dominguez and Menjivar 2014; Segato 2016). Feminist movements and discourses have been relatively successful in re-framing violence against women as a cause and consequence of structural and unequal gender power relations. Reasserting the private to be political, they called for public recognition of domestic violence as a broader and structural social problem rooted in patriarchy (Ferraro 1996; Crenshaw 1991; Hayes 2013; Johnson 1995). However, although this feminist framing of violence against women has undoubtedly advanced previous debates, its narrow focus on gender overlooked that violence is experienced intersectionally (Collins 1998b; Crenshaw 1991; 1989). As Black feminists suggest, feminist campaigns affirming that violence affects all women regardless of race, class, and nationality may have worked as a tokenistic gesture of

[18] Although the term Domestic Violence is commonly used across the anti-violence women's sector and the literature on violence against women (Banga and Gill 2008; Pain and Aid 2012; Sokoloff and Pratt 2005; Ferraro 1996), it has been criticised as reductionist and misleading (Hayes 2013; Meth 2003). The concept tends to be used uncritically in ways that reinforce the supposed dichotomy between public and private, whilst implying it to be a form of violence contained in the 'home' (Hayes 2013; Meth 2003). I concur with such critics and suggestion that 'intimate partner violence' conceptualized also as a form of 'interpersonal violence' is more appropriate to refer to violence between couples which is structural and has an element of fear and control. In particular, such conceptualization allows for a better exploration of the multi-scalar spatiality of IPV, recognition that it may occur regardless of cohabitation (and indeed risk may increase after couples no longer leave together) and that physical violence does not need to be its central element (thus equally acknowledging emotional, psychological, financial/economic, as well as physical and sexual dimensions of IPV).

inclusion that maintained the focus on the most privileged women (Kanuha 1996; Crenshaw 1991; Goodmark 2008).

The Black feminist intersectionality framework has become a broadly recognised approach to address violence against women, migrant and racialised women in particular. Attempts to adopt this framework to research VAW have yielded varying analytical results. A large body of research on violence against women continues to focus on immediate factors and individual motivations (Jackman 2002; Kristine and Umberson 2001; R. Collins 2008), with some stressing a need to shift towards the structural roots of violence, acknowledging the interconnectedness of various forms of violence and extra-personal dynamics (Dominguez and Menjivar 2014; Collins 1998b; Crenshaw 1991; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). In what follows, I briefly outline the conceptual contributions of intersectionality and other proposed frameworks to approach VAW and IPV.

Intersectionality and violence against women

Black feminist theorising on violence has built on intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991; 1989) and the interlocking nature of oppression (Collins 1998b; 2000b) to address the silences reproduced by dominant feminist discourses. Black feminists contend that the experiences of women of colour cannot be explained through a one-size fits all single-axis model or an additive approach to oppression. Intersectionality has emerged, since its inception, as a framework primarily directed at simultaneously exploring gendered and racial dimensions of violence against women of colour whilst acknowledging its potential to integrate the analysis of other intersecting axes of oppression (e.g. class, sexuality, immigration status, disability) (Crenshaw 1991). Coined by Crenshaw (1991a), who builds on a long history of Black feminist writings and struggles (Lorde 1984; hooks 1987; Davis 1983), the concept unveils how race and gender intersect to produce violence against women of colour. Accordingly, such violence(s) operate at three interconnected levels of intersectionality: the structural, the political and the representational.

Intersectionality has been utilised in theory and practice by women's organisations addressing VAW, particularly by the Black and Minoritised women's specialist sector in the UK (Imkaan 2017; Larasi 2013). However, concerns have been raised over the operationalisation of this concept in depoliticised ways stripping its original meaning. As Kelly (2013, 2) suggests, whilst some deploy intersectionality 'as merely a bigger word for multiple discrimination, others reduce it to a descriptive term for a myriad of potential identities'.

The lenses of intersectionality remain crucial to address VAW. It brings attention to the multidimensionality of violence against migrant and racialised women. However, there is a need to go a step further to understand the *multicausality* of violence as ultimately rooted in the coloniality of power and gender.

The production and reproduction of coloniality through violence

Patricia Hill Collins (1998b) offers a seminal Black feminist contribution to the study of violence. She conceives violence as socially constructed rather than a universally standardised concept, thus shifting the focus from individuals to social groups. The author contends that social hierarchies of power and oppression require violence to reproduce and sustain themselves. The central role of violence in producing and reproducing social hierarchies is evidenced by the police's use of violence to censor and punish those who dare to extrapolate the subordinate position reserved for them as members of a less powerful social group.[19] Although other authors make similar arguments specifically in relation to VAW, they fail to fully recognise the role of intersectional hierarchies by narrowly focusing on gender and patriarchy (see, for example, Hearn et al. 2016; Segato 2016, 2003).

The operating logic delineated by Collins (1998b) resonates with Rita Segato's (2016b; 2003b) work. Segato argues that male sexual abusers act within a 'symbolic economy of power' motivated by a 'patriarchal mandate' to re-actualise gendered hierarchical positions.[20] Like Collins (1998b), Segato brings to light how violence works in relational ways to maintain hierarchies already systemically structured. Violence is seen as enacting a symbolic economy of power that reproduces the subordination of women whilst reasserting male superiority.

Segato (2003b) affirms that her model can be extended to explain the works of structural and interpersonal violence aimed at reasserting power relations based on race, nationality, ethnicity and other social classifications produced and reinforced by coloniality. However, her framework

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[19] As Collins (1998b) notes, this can be historically evidenced especially in terms of racial, gender and class hierarchies, which she illustrates by pointing towards the way in which, in the US, lynching was used against Black people to maintain racial hierarchies and fix racial group identities.

[20] As Segato (2016b; 2003b) explains, the violation of women functions as an expressive act of enunciation, in which men simultaneously speak to their peers - requesting renewal of their masculine power through the display of domination and aggression, but also to women through a moralizing and punitive discourse that seeks to censor, discipline and re-contain women in their 'reserved' position of subordination.

lacks an integrated analysis of how what may be perceived as purely 'gender violence' intersects and works together with other structural hierarchies produced by coloniality. The conceptual pieces of this puzzle are found in Collins (1998b), who warns us against an additive approach to violence. Instead, she reconceptualises violence as a central structuring element to produce and maintain *intersecting* social hierarchies. Collins (1998b, 919, 920) invites us to rethink 'violence as a site of intersectionality linking hierarchical power relations of race and gender'. Instead of being exclusive to race or gender hierarchies, violence works as a 'conceptual glue that binds them together'.

There are intimate relationships between Collins' (1998b) propositions and decolonial feminist theorising on coloniality. The latter starts from the conceptual premise that modern coloniality has emerged with colonisation through the violent imposition of a modern colonial capitalist gender world system mutually co-constituting and structuring racial hierarchies of humanity along gender and class lines (Lugones 2008; 2010; 2012). Accordingly, modern coloniality is a power matrix responsible for reproducing a hierarchical social order, which though founded in the sixteenth century, survived the end of the formal colonial relations that gave rise to it (Quijano 1992). Whilst intersectionality explains *how* race, gender, and class operate together in the working of violence; adapting Collins, I contend that coloniality is the *conceptual glue binding them together*. Coloniality explains *why* these continue to be mutually reproduced through violence. Violence must operate simultaneously along intersectional axes to sustain the modern colonial world system. The contemporary violence that migrant and racialised women experience is bound across time and space to the physical, psychological, economic, political, symbolic, epistemic and ontological violence(s) their bodies, territories and knowledges have been subjected to from the colonial invasion to the present. This conception of violence as intrinsically connected to coloniality and intersectionality is vital to grasp violence against racialised migrant women.

The notion of a continuum of sexual violence against women by Kelly (1988) has considerably advanced research on violence against women more broadly. The continuum prevents us from approaching violence in a compartmentalised manner; acts and categories of violence are seen as overlapping and non-hierarchically connected. Although initially theorised concerning sexual violence, the continuum has later been used to study interpersonal forms of what is often perceived to be primarily gender-based violence (Moser 2001; McIlwaine and Evans 2020; Kelly 2013). Moser (2001), for example, proposes to research violence and conflict through a gendered continuum of political, social and economic violence. She connects individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural violence, conceiving these to be gendered and

mutually reinforcing. Nevertheless, Moser (2001) appears to give primacy to gender in ways that may overlook other intersecting axes of violence. Similarly, McIlwaine and Evans (2020, 2) adapt Kelly's concept by developing a 'transnational urban VAWG continuum' through which they investigate the multi-scalar nature of violence against Brazilian women in London. Although, in this case, intersectional and structural aspects are conceptualised as risk factors instead of violence in themselves, this is later rectified in a more recent paper (McIlwaine and Evans 2022).

There is also an underpinning idea of a continuum in some theorisations of violence that do not engage with Kelly's framework (Collins 1998b; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Menjívar 2008). For example, Collins (1998b) suggests a non-hierarchical treatment of violence that recognises verbal as much as physical acts. She unveils the existence of a symbiotic relationship connecting speech and actions through the ways in which 'words, ideas and images conveyed through the media, curricula and everyday social practices create an interpretive climate for systemic violence.' (Collins 1998, 923). Similarly, the interconnectedness of different forms of violence is emphasised in the concept of 'multisided violence' - linking structural, symbolic, everyday/interpersonal, and gender violence (S. D. Walsh and Menjívar 2016; Menjívar 2008; Menjívar and Walsh 2016; 2017).

Violence is also an essential subject studied through the lenses of feminist and intimacy geopolitics (Joanne 2014; Dowler, Christian, and Ranjbar 2014; Pain 2014b; Brickell 2020). This framing suggests an expansion of the continuum of violence; the cross-cutting multi-scalar nature of violence is emphasised in ways to overcome dichotomies of local/global, personal/political, family/state. Feminist geopolitics horizontally connects spatialities by breaking with the global/intimate divide that is often embedded in conceptualisations of intimate violence, assuming it to be solely interpersonal and confined to the home. Pain and Staeheli (2014) conceptualise intimacy as a set of spatial relations, practices and modes of interaction stretching from the micro (e.g. the body or the home) to macro (e.g. global, international) scales. Interconnections between intimate violence and geopolitical dynamics and struggles are brought to light. The intimacy-geopolitics lenses suggest that 'the simultaneous, multiple workings of violences are essential to revealing how they work' (Pain and Staeheli 2014, 345).

The work of Rachel Pain (2014c; 2014b; 2012) stands out in highlighting the interconnection between intimate and international violences. Drawing on previous theorisations of intimate partner violence as 'patriarchal terrorism', 'intimate terrorism' (Johnson 2006; 1995) and 'family

terrorism' (Hammer 2002), the author traces some exciting parallels with global terrorism. She argues for remapping violence to rethink domestic violence as everyday terrorism. Pain (2014b) contends that everyday and global terrorism operate through fear and control to exert political influence, despite identified imbalances in allocation of resources, public attention and research interest. Such a parallel effectively connects violence across scales, stretching from the everyday to the global. Pain's analysis focuses on terrorism experienced in the West and acknowledges that colonialism and postcolonialism may play a role in explaining global terrorism. Nonetheless, her analysis does not sufficiently recognises global terrorism and domestic violence perpetrators' different positions of power and capacity to politically influence. Global terrorist violence in the West is publicly identified within those terms mainly when perpetrated by racialised bodies, who have been historically (and may continue to be) subordinated by the West. Even though terrorist violence in the West causes harm and disruption, it is unlikely to guarantee meaningful political influence and change existing power hierarchies. In turn, domestic violence is systematically perpetrated by men already in positions of power, who use fear and control to seek a form of political influence that reasserts their dominant power to subordinate their partners. Any attempt to bring domestic violence and global terrorism closer should recognise those crucial differences; failure in doing so risks unintendedly perpetuating colonial racist representations and stereotypes. In a Western context of widespread islamophobia, references to terrorism may invoke a racialised image of the terrorist 'other', which risks being extended to domestic violence and reinforcing stereotypes of men of colour as inherently violent. Pain explicitly theorises everyday terrorism in reference to white and non-white perpetrators. However, a focus on terrorism may work towards further invisibilising abuse perpetrated by white men against women of colour, a reality already overlooked by scholars.

However, everyday and global forms of violence can be linked by focusing on colonisation and the historical violation of colonised women's bodies. Latin American communitarian feminists develop this argument by proposing to understand colonial invasion and domination as the penetration and violation of their territories, starting from their bodies: the first territory they inhabit and the first to be violated (Cabnal 2010). Similarly, Segato (2016a) builds on the notion of the body/space, body/territory to suggest that the act of violation is aimed at suppressing the victim's will, stripping her of control over her body-space and behaviour. As she contends, through acts of violence, the aggressor seeks to achieve complete control to decide over a woman's body. Similar to the logic of colonial domination, the abuser seeks sovereign power to legislate over the Body-Territory of the victim. Often, violence is not limited to physical acts, nor

it is necessarily aimed at killing. As Segato (2016a) explains, this is because the success of sovereign power lies in the psychological and moral destruction of the other by turning them into an audience of the discretional power of death. Mainly drawing on her analysis of feminicides in Ciudad Juarez (México), Segato (2016a) affirms that interpersonal violence resonates more with colonisation than extermination because it is more expressive than instrumental. This theorising offers exciting insights to further the continuum of violence, which can be particularly helpful when approaching violence against racialised colonial migrant women. There is a need to extend this continuum to connect violence across various scales more adequately (e.g. from the body and every day to the global), intersections (e.g. gender, race, class, sexuality), spatialities and temporalities in ways that account for coloniality.

Victims or Survivors? Women's resistance to violence

Women with experiences of IPV have commonly been represented as passive victims, victim-blamed for triggering the abuse or for seeming unable to challenge it and leave their abusers (Hammer 2002; Enander and Holmberg 2008; Goodmark 2008; Pain 2014a). The feminist anti-violence movement from the 1970s and the widely recognised theory of the 'battered women syndrome' have significantly contributed to this. They have constructed a unified image of the 'victim' of domestic violence. Although strategically aimed at galvanising public legitimacy and political responses, the universalist advocacy appeal reasserting that violence occurs to all women effectively shifted the focus to the most privileged ones: white, cis, heterosexual, and middle-class women (Goodmark 2008; Crenshaw 1991). First introduced in 1979 by Lenore Walker in her book *The Battered Women*, the theory of the 'battered women syndrome' popularised the idea that victims of violence develop 'learned helplessness' after enduring violence for a sustained period.[21] Those influential moves meant that the paradigmatic victim of abuse passed from a working-class woman of colour to a passive, white, cis, middle-class, heterosexual woman who suffers in silence and never reacts (Goodmark 2008; Ferraro 1996; Crenshaw 1991; Hayes 2013).

[21] Accordingly, they are seen to be passive, submissive and weak, and even when they do want to leave, their feelings of powerless are said to render them unable to do so (Goodmark 2008; Hayes 2013; Walker 2017). In line with this theory, a victim would only react to violence as a last resort when they see no other way to save her life from imminent danger. In addition, victims would also be expected to cooperate with persecution. (Goodmark 2008)

In this context, women's ability to be recognised as a victim of IPV and how they are able to resist violence are directly mediated by intersectionality. To be perceived as a victim and receive a certain level of support and protection, women are expected to fit into a normative imaginary of victimhood. However, this can be nearly impossible depending on their race, class, or sexuality, even when they strive to present themselves as passive and helpless (Goodmark 2008; Ferraro 1996). This is illustrated by abused Black women being more likely to be disbelieved in courts and having their cases dismissed (Goodmark 2008; Collins 1998b; Crenshaw 1991). This plays out differently for other groups of racialised women. For example, South Asian women tend to be culturally stereotyped as inherently passive and submissive (Das Dasgupta 2005; Abraham 1998); their victimhood risks being normalised and contingent on their ability to live up to these expectations.

Complex intersectional realities faced by racialised migrant women also mean that they may resist violence in unexpected ways that render them less likely to be perceived as victims. As Goodmark (2008) notes, Black women and lesbians may be more likely to resist violence by fighting back. This may result from having fewer options and resources and being more hesitant to seek outside help, especially from the police, due to direct and indirect experiences of institutional violence and discrimination.[22] The combined effects of being a Black lesbian woman who resists violence by fighting back can be disastrous, for their image and narrative tend to oppose that identified by professionals, courts and the wider society as the normative standard against which victimhood is measured.

Challenging narratives of victimhood: women resist violence

Authors have been challenging prevalent narratives of passivity surrounding women in abusive relationships (Gondolf and Fisher 1988; Abraham 2005; C. Campbell and Mannell 2016; J. Campbell et al. 1998; Coker 1999; Stark 2009; Rajah 2007; Johnson 2006). Confronting the theory of battered women's syndrome and its notion of learned helplessness, Gondolf and Fisher's (1988) survivor theory proposed to rethink abused women as survivors rather than victims by emphasising how they actively resist violence. These authors contend that women abused by their partners are help seekers; however, the sources and institutions they seek help from frequently fail to respond to their needs adequately. This is particularly true for racialised migrant women whose intersecting needs and realities are often neglected by mainstream

[22] This is similarly noticed by Crenshaw (1991a) and Collins(1998b) specifically in regard to Black women.

support services, built upon white women's experiences of violence (Larasi 2013; Das Dasgupta 2005; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005).

Gondolf and Fisher's survivor theory successfully reframed women who remain in abusive relationships as active by focusing on their help-seeking behaviour, with others building on that to uncover how women continue to resist the ongoing control of intimate partners (Stark 2009; 2009; Hayes 2013; Abraham 2005; Rajah 2007). Women in abusive relationships engage in overt and covert strategies of resistance depending on the types of violence experienced and their specific location within intersecting power structures (Rajah 2007). Regardless of whether resistance acts are overt or covert, they often provide women with a sense of agency and relative accomplishment that help them regain a sense of self (Stark 2009; 2009; Hayes 2013; Abraham 2005). Overt acts of resistance, such as hitting back, may lead to further violence and retaliation, with women physically resisting violence at risk of being overpowered and subsequently being treated as the aggressors themselves (Hayes 2013; Goodmark 2008; Rajah 2007). Violent resistance challenges women's passive image, being a legitimate response that, as argued by Johnson (2006), differs from the violence it reacts against since the element of control does not accompany it. The use of covert strategies of resistance, however, enables women to resist without drawing the attention of their abusers. This can involve using what Stark (2009) termed as 'safety zones' and acts such as 'storing away personal objects or thinking about something else during an abusive incident' (Hayes 2013, 3).

Women's resistance to IPV has also been rethought as a form of activism, as 'acts, moments and interventions that, though small and quiet, still contribute to a wider process that ultimately may lead to change' (Pain 2014a, 143). As Pain (2014a) puts it, such a conceptualisation recognises the potential of small acts of resistance as a political struggle to challenge intimate and structural power relations at once. She warns against the risk of overemphasising the potential of those acts, acknowledging that they may frequently not lead to positive outcomes.

Resistance strategies used by women experiencing IPV are suggested to fall within some broad categories: 1) *personal strategies*, 2) *using informal sources of help*, and 3) *using formal sources of help* (Bowker 1983; Abraham 2005). The ability to use them and their effectiveness are, however, highly contingent on intersectionality and spatial contexts. Arguing for 'a situated politics of women's agency', Hume and Wilding (2020) rethink agency in the face of IPV beyond neoliberal framings, as constrained by socio-spatial factors. This is particularly true for racialised migrant women whose informal sources of help may be more limited and to whom

formal ones may be irresponsive and potentially lead to further harm (Hayes 2013; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Smee 2013).

Power, agency and resistance: mapping power through resistance

Identifying and conceptualising how women resist violence is essential to challenge stereotypes and totalise conceptions of power. Research on violence against women, against racialised migrant women, in particular, has been caught between narratives of victimhood or survival, with women being perceived as passive victims or strong and resilient survivors. Although frequently framed dichotomously, both of these dimensions may be experienced more fluidly in reality.

There is also a risk of romanticising resistance. As Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) suggests, increased research interest in resistance has sometimes been accompanied by tendencies to idealise it, with a search for small acts of resistance instead of theorisations focusing on its implications. As Foucault (1978, 95, 96) affirmed, 'where there is power, there is resistance'. Interrogating how power operates within various and simultaneous forms of violence against women across multi-scalar scales, therefore, requires attention to how these also yield creative strategies of resistance. An analytical focus on resistance also embodies a political commitment to moving past suffering narratives, inquiring about marginality as a potential place for creative resistance (hooks 1989) and shifting from 'damage-centered' towards 'desire-based' research models (Tuck 2009) (see Chapter 3) It is crucial to ground such a commitment in a framework of power, agency and resistance to prevent idealistic analyses. As Mahmood (2011, 18) argues, agency 'as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable', must be detached from feminist progressive politics tendencies to trap agency and conflate it with resistance against oppression. As she contends, resistance is only one form of agency which is aimed at political subversion. However, other modalities of agency do not operate within this same logic of subversion. An analytical mapping of resistance must actively work against the uncritical subsuming of all forms of agencies under the resistance umbrella.

Mapping resistance is not the end in itself. As Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) reminds us, Foucault (1978, 95, 96) has also inversely stated that 'where there is resistance, there is power'. This suggests how the study of resistance may offer new insights into the works of power. Abu-Lughod (1990, 47, 48) calls for the use of resistance as a 'diagnostic of power', attentive to what can be learned about power relations and structures by looking at the different forms of resistance that oppose them, for sites of resistance, 'of whatever form, signal sites of struggle'.

This shifts the way resistance is theoretically conceived towards tracing the complex and intersecting workings of power and grasping historical changes in its operation.

Research into the ways gendered colonial migrants resist violence may reveal interesting insights linked to the intersecting workings of the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender. As decolonial scholars suggest, colonial subjection is an unfinished project through which coloniality has been continuously resisted from its emergence to the present (Lugones 2010; Mignolo 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2007). According to Lugones (2010), it is from the *colonial difference* (Mignolo 2002), from the fractured locus inhabited by colonial subjects, that resistance to coloniality emerges. The possibility of resistance lies in fractions and spaces of tension engendered in the process of colonial subjectification imposed by the coloniality of power/gender because subjects are never completely oppressed nor constructed by coloniality (Lugones 2010).[23]

Lugones conceptualises resistance primarily in relation to resistant subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the forms of adaptation and creative opposition to coloniality as 'active subjectivity, that minimal sense of agency required for the oppressing < ---> resisting relation being an active one' (2010, 746). She understands resistance more as a collective than an individual project, for the logic of coalition and multiplicity is central to her conceptualisation. Combining Lila Abu-Lughods's (1990) suggestions with Lugones' (2010) propositions, I argue that attention to the colonial difference as a potential locus of resistance may reveal creative strategies and illuminate the complex ways the coloniality of power and gender continue to operate and enable various forms of violence.

[23] As Lugones (2010, 748) puts it, the colonial difference prompt us 'to think of the colonized neither as simply imagined and constructed by the coloniser and coloniality in accordance with the colonial imagination and the structures of the capitalist colonial venture, but as a being who begins to inhabit a fractured locus constructed doubly, who perceives doubly, relates doubly, where the 'sides' of the locus are in tension, and the conflict itself actively informs the subjectivity of the colonized self in multiple relation.'

Violence against Racialised Migrant Women and the Role of Culture

Violence against racialised migrant women has been widely researched across Anglophone countries.[24] Many studies focus on women who migrate from specific regions in the Global South (e.g. South Asian, Afro-Caribbean and Latin American regions: Bhuyan et al. 2005; Abraham 1998; Shirwadkar 2004; Villalón 2010; Latta and Goodman 2005), whilst others investigate commonalities across migrant women regardless of national backgrounds (Brownridge and Halli 2002; Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Erez et al. 2009; Das Dasgupta 2005). Some authors prefer to centre on Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)[25] women, minoritised women[26] or women of colour[27] more generally[28] (Banga and Gill 2008; Burman et al. 2004; Larasi 2013; Crenshaw 1991).[29]

Authors have struggled to grapple with the role of culture in relation to violence against migrant/racialised women.[30] In some cases, culture has been used to explain violence against

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[24] In particular, in the UK (Mama 1989; McIlwaine and Evans 2020; Larasi 2013; Patel 2013), the US (Abraham 1995; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Latta and Goodman 2005; Conwill 2010) and Canada (Brownridge and Halli 2002; Shirwadkar 2004).

[25] The acronymic BME is predominantly used in the UK across the statutory and voluntary sector.

[26] In the UK, although most 'BME specialist' women's organisations tend to formally make use of the acronym BME, there have also been voices within the sector to highlighting that racialised women are not a minority but rather part of the global majority which is 'minoritised' in this country. In particular, Burman et al. (2004, 334) explains their preference for this term because it illustrates that this is an acquired 'position as the outcome of a socio-historical process'.

[27] The term 'women of colour' is particularly used in the US context but has also had some uptake in the UK.

[28] These last three terminologies therefore emphasise more the racialised aspect of women's identities rather than their migration experience.

[29] Whilst recognising the different potentials of using those terminologies, hereafter I will choose to refer to 'racialised migrant women' or 'racialised women' (in the case of native born second generation migrant women) as a means of emphasizing both their experiences as migrant (from the Global South) and their experiences of being racialised as non-white. However, I acknowledge that women's experiences of migration and racialization vary greatly and will continue to use other terminologies whenever reference is made to authors explicitly making use of them in their studies.

[30] I refer here to the different ways in which women under this definition have been categorized.

racialised women in ways that essentialised and pathologised cultures whilst losing sight of structural causes (Raj and Silverman 2002; Latta and Goodman 2005; Brownridge and Halli 2002). In other cases, although there has been some engagement with intersectionality, culturalist arguments continued to be problematically deployed (Abraham 1998; 1995; Bhuyan et al. 2005; Das Dasgupta 2005; Erez et al. 2009). In contrast, some are firmly critical of the role played by culture in addressing VAW, both theoretically and practically (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Volpp 2002; Burman et al. 2004; Larasi 2013; Smee 2013; Mama 1989).

There is an ongoing need to resist culturalist explanations of violence; as Burman et al. (2004, 335) put it, 'just as accounts of domestic violence have moved away from 'woman blaming', so it is important to avoid 'culture-blaming' minoritised cultures.' There has been a selective deployment of culture to explain violence among migrant and racialised communities, whilst the ways in which culture may also provide context to understand VAW in white communities are left unexplored. This is particularly the case regarding violence perpetrated by white men against racialised migrant women. There is a need for a framework that moves away from culture as a cause of VAW and instead recognises it only as a contextual factor, secondary to the intersecting structural dynamics of violence rooted in coloniality.

Reinforcing cultural narratives to explain violence against women

Although there is no evidence to affirm higher prevalence rates of violence among migrant women, alarming language is frequently used to describe violence against this group as occurring in epidemic proportions[31] (e.g. Raj and Silverman 2002; Latta and Goodman 2005; Brownridge and Halli 2002). Authors linking assumed increased violence and vulnerability to migrant cultural values and ideologies work towards further stereotyping and stigmatising migrant communities (e.g. Raj and Silverman 2002; Brownridge and Halli 2002).[32] The accessibility of support services to migrant women facing violence also tends to be analysed

[31] Event where studies may indeed find higher rates of prevalence among immigrants, as Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) argues, this should be accompanied by need to contextualize findings through a focus on structural factors underpinning prevalence in order to avoid the further stereotyping and stigmatization of racialised/immigrant women and their communities.

[32] This has also happened even when some structural factors were simultaneously being recognised as can be seen in Raj and Silverman (2002) and (Brownridge and Halli 2002) study.

in ways that conflate structural barriers with an assumed cultural reluctance to seek help (e.g. Brownridge and Halli 2002; Shirwadkar 2004). These views are reinforced by suggestions that migrant women hold traditional gender ideologies that may clash or change after migration depending on whether they become more or less acculturated (e.g. Raj and Silverman 2002; Shirwadkar 2004). Such analyses contribute towards monolithic representations of migrant versus (Western) native cultures, positioning them hierarchically as inferior/superior, traditional/modern – in ways that reproduce coloniality.

Nonetheless, there are more nuanced analyses of violence against migrant women from ethnic minority groups (Abraham 1998; 1995; Bhuyan et al. 2005; Das Dasgupta 2005; Erez et al. 2009). Authors have built on the Black feminist critique (Collins 1998b; Crenshaw 1991) to point out how mainstream feminist analyses of domestic violence have tended to marginalise the experiences of minority ethnic women, particularly those who are migrants. To readdress this, they have advocated for the need to consider the intersecting realities of migrant women's experiences (Abraham 1998; 1995; Bhuyan et al. 2005). However, intersectional analyses have still been combined with a strong emphasis on culture, inadvertently enabling the perpetuation of stereotypes pathologising migrant cultures as more traditional, patriarchal and therefore more inherently prone to gender violence. Even though authors may have been aware of existing stereotypes and driven by an urge to challenge them, they unintentionally put forward narratives that internalise blame for violence in migrant cultures (Das Dasgupta 2005).

For example, Abraham (1998, 216; 1995) proposes using the 'ethno-gender approach'[33] to research 'marital' violence against South Asian migrant women in the US. The author insists on the importance of extending existing frameworks 'by focusing on the intersections of culture and structure' (1998, 219). Hence, the model incorporates a strong focus on ethnicity, conceptualised as combining 'cultural differentiation' with a 'social construct that is dynamic' (Abraham 1998, 219, 220). The replacing of 'race' with 'ethnicity' and the specific ways this term is conceived evokes immutability and essentialism.[34] This framing forecloses a deeper analysis

[33] The author defines this approach as 'the multiple intersection of ethnicity, gender, class, and legal status as significant categories in the analysis of domestic violence with a special emphasis on the relationship between ethnicity and gender' (Abraham 1998, 219).

[34] The term 'ethnicity' is broadly used to refer to *cultural* differences, and in fact, there has been identified general tendencies to replace the term 'race' by 'ethnicity', 'either because the very use of the word 'race' has been thought to propagate racism by implying that biological races actually exist or because, tainted by its history, it simply 'smelt

of the interplay between gender oppression and structural racism in favour of cultural explanations assuming specific ethnicities provide a cultural context, further legitimising women's subordination. Abraham (1998) argues that this approach could be extended to other minority ethnic groups whilst implicitly excluding white native populations whose culture is subtly assumed as either inexistent or as not playing an equally relevant role in legitimising gender violence. Unsurprisingly, Abraham's (1998) study focuses on only domestic violence among South Asian migrants, overlooking violence perpetrated by white male citizens against South Asian migrant women and its practical and theoretical implications.

Cultural explanations are also deployed by Bhuyan et al. (2005) to address Cambodian migrant women's understanding of and responses to domestic violence. Although they recognise the importance of structural factors, they stress the centrality of 'socioculturally rooted beliefs and practices' (2005, 905) to explain how 'language, gender roles, and values related to help-seeking behaviour' (2005, 903) influence Cambodian migrant women's response to domestic violence. Bhuyan et al.'s (2005) analysis subtly construct Cambodia's culture homogenously as more traditional and patriarchal than the destination country's culture - the normative ideal against which migrants are compared.[35] Similarly, Erez et al.'s (2009) intersectional analysis of migration and domestic violence provides a nuanced critique of racism and immigration control; however, they insist on positioning culture as a central axis to explain violence. As a result, their study contributes to what they warn against, with migrants' cultures portrayed as remarkably tolerant of gender violence.

Ultimately, the studies highlighted above continue to make use of culture to explain domestic violence only when it occurs among migrant and racialised communities, whilst 'the powerful are depicted as having no culture, other than the universal culture of civilization' (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005, 46, 47). Attempts at making universal claims about non-Western migrants have inevitably generated problematic assumptions regarding extremely diverse groups whilst locating the roots of violence outside the host society.

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bad' (Wade 2015, 15). I would sustain, however, that abandoning the term 'race' risks invisibilising racial structures and on-going processes of racialization that continue to hierarchically produce social subjects.

[35] This is plainly manifested in their assertion that 'similar to other immigrants, it is possible that nostalgia for traditional cultural practices provide the basis for abusers to assert power and control over their wives' (Bhuyan et al. 2005, 905)

Challenging the links between culture and violence against women

Some authors point to the risks of focusing on culture to examine migrant women's experiences of domestic violence (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Das Dasgupta 2005; Volpp 2002; Burman et al. 2004). As Menjívar and Salcido (2002, 901) note, there is a 'common tendency to stereotype domestic violence in some ethnic groups as an inherent part of their cultural repertoire'. Authors argue that culture is used in fixed and stereotyped ways to portray racialised/migrant men as inherently violent and racialised/migrant women as pathologically deficient, submissive, passive, and lacking any form of agency (Volpp 2002; Haq and Lewis 2014; Burman et al. 2004).[36] Migrants' assumed inaction in the face of domestic violence has been framed through the notion of cultural privacy or cultural acceptability, presuming that no action could be effective in addressing what is perceived to be a profoundly entrenched part of a group's culture (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Das Dasgupta 2005; Volpp 2002; Burman et al. 2004). Culture has been racially deployed to explain the causes of violence against ethnic minority women whilst helping to justify and relativise it.

There are also critiques of culturalist framings of BME survivors' experiences over an intersectional understanding of race and gender in the UK. As some authors assert, culturalist narratives have reinforced power inequalities, differently explaining the same or similar forms of violence depending on whether victims and perpetrators are white or not (Mama 1989; Larasi 2013; Smee 2013; Patel 2013). For example, as Kelly (2013, 6) eloquently puts it, 'the rejection of cultural explanations is in part due to the implicit presumption that only 'others' - minorities and not majorities - have culture. In the case of the UK this is invariably accompanied by viewing minority cultures as less modern/'civilised' and more patriarchal'. This is illustrated in the way culture has been intertwined with the concept of community, frequently used as an euphemism to avoid racialised language (Hearn et al. 2016). 'Community' has been selectively applied to refer to ethnic minority groups as 'an oppressive entity which sanctions violence against women' (Haq and Lewis 2014, 373).[37] A similar trend is reproduced in UK policies on violence against women, with certain forms of violence (e.g. forced marriages and female genital

[36] This has been pointed out particularly in relation to South Asian immigrants.

[37] Alternatively, these authors suggest a need to acknowledge that intimate violence occurs in all communities and rather enquire how communities of all types may play a role in sustaining or challenging violence against women (Haq and Lewis 2014).

mutilation) positioned as caused by cultural differences and therefore being 'framed as a problem of 'the Other' (Hearn et al. 2016, 559).

Conflations of race with culture have reduced racial inequalities to cultural differences in ways that left other forms of racism unchallenged, resulting in severe implications for the BME women's sector (Mama 1989; Larasi 2013).[38] Legal responses to violence against BME women have also struggled to 'reconcile the 'culture is no excuse' approach with the need for protection of multiculturalism and religious identity often to the detriment of women's rights' (Smee 2013, 16). As a response, authors have been calling for more nuanced intersectional analyses rooted in the race and gender dimensions of violence against BME women (Larasi 2013; Smee 2013; Patel 2013). They also emphasise the need to treat culture as a contextual factor to adequately respond to violence instead of using it to explain its root causes of violence.

Moving beyond cultural frameworks

Analyses of domestic violence overly emphasising the role of cultural differences have been guided by a misconception of intersectionality, conflated with the descriptive notion of diversity whilst disregarding intersectional structures of power and inequalities that sustain individual experiences of violence and oppression (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Kelly 2013). As Sokoloff and Dupont (2005, 45) suggest, although reductionist notions of culture are unhelpful, a more nuanced focus on culture remains crucial to 'address how different communities' cultural experiences of violence are mediated through structural forms of oppression'. Indeed, violence 'must be understood in the context of White supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism, and economic exploitation of marginalized communities, not as if such violence is inherent in the culture' (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005, 47).

Menjívar and Salcido (2002) propose an interesting framework to investigate migrant women's experiences of domestic violence and factors that render them more vulnerable. Differently from Abraham (1998; 1995) and other authors, instead of focusing on assumed cultural

[38] The overreliance on culturalist arguments 'may explain the fact that Asian refuges have been resourced over and above refuges for Black women, who are assumed to speak better English and have grown accustomed to English culinary habits' (Mama 1989, 292). More recently, as Larasi (2013, 275–76) notes, with the support of such arguments 'larger providers and local commissioners alike, have been able to 'tick the box' by offering 'culturally specific' services under a mainstream/non-BME umbrella structure therefore ignoring how such arguments, in and themselves, reinforce structural inequality and negate any commitment to BME women's leadership.'

features, these authors draw on the commonalities among migrant groups to grasp how political, economic and social structural factors interact to affect them. Menjívar and Salcido's (2002) counterpoise arguments sustaining that migrants experience higher levels of domestic violence because they import traditional patriarchal values from their home countries. Their findings suggest that migrant women's experiences of violence are exacerbated by structural conditions related to their specific immigration position, such as language skills, insecure immigration status, isolation, economic situation, and lack of familiarity with systems in the host country. They contend that structural factors related to migration interact with other intersecting axes of identity and work as *stressors* that increase migrant women's vulnerability to domestic violence and negatively impact their ability to leave abusers. McIlwaine and Evans (2020) also suggest a similar framing, proposing migration status, race and ethnicity as intersectional risk factors that work to exacerbate VAWG against migrants.

The analyses from the above authors considerably advance the previous theorising; however, their treatment of intersectional structures as 'stressors' or additional 'risk factors' can be problematic (Menjívar and Salcido 2002; McIlwaine and Evans 2020 but see McIlwaine and Evans, 2022 that denotes these as a form of violence). This may ultimately leave unquestioned the traditional feminist assumption that gender inequality is the primary cause of VAW whilst combining it with an additive logic that the concept of intersectionality warns us against (Crenshaw 1991; 1989). Instead, some authors have reasserted that intersecting structures of oppression (e.g. gender, race, class) interact and modify each other in ways central to understanding the very same roots of domestic violence against immigrants (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Bograd 1999). As such, it is crucial to incorporate this logic into a framework that conceives violence against migrant and racialised women as intersectionally rooted in coloniality.

Violence against Latin American migrant women

There has been extensive research investigating violence against migrant women in general or focusing on specific 'minority groups', particularly Black and South Asian women. However, there is still limited research on the VAW experiences of Latin American migrant women. Most studies addressing this subject are based on the US context (Villalón 2010; Bloom 2018; Page et al. 2017; Harper 2017; Fernandez-Esquer and Diamond 2013; Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014; Pitts 2014; Messing, Vega, and Durfee 2017; Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017). More recently, there have also been a few studies looking at violence against Latin American

women in England, Brazilian women in particular (McIlwaine and Evans 2020; McIlwaine 2008; McIlwaine and Carlisle 2011).

Troublingly, however, US studies on violence against Latin American women have tended to build on stereotypical representations of their cultures (Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017; Page et al. 2017; Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014). Whilst some authors carefully recognise and further investigate how immigration status impacts and exacerbates Latin American women's experiences of IPV, a centring on culture often accompanies this (Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017; Page et al. 2017; Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014). In some instances, Latin American migrants are portrayed as having 'traditional patriarchal cultures' (Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017, 669), and Latin American women are perceived to hold 'values related to devotion to family and gender role conformance' (Harper 2017, 1), also described as 'familism' (Page et al. 2017, 531)[39]. According to these studies, just like immigration status[40], cultural prescriptions work as stressors or risk factors contributing to higher prevalence rates and decreased likelihood of seeking help (Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014; Page et al. 2017; Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017; Harper 2017). In particular, Latin American migrants' assumed 'acculturation' into a US culture seen as 'conflicting' is argued to generate tensions that contribute to IPV (Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017, 669). In other cases, blame is not placed on culture but rather worryingly shifted onto victims' behaviour. For example, from a health perspective, Fernandez-Esquer and Diamond (2013) investigated the risk of IPV among recently arrived Latina migrants who worked in bars. Centring on their heavy drinking practices and sex-related expectations, their study reinforces victim-blaming arguments and fails to acknowledge violence's structural roots.

However, a few US studies provide nuanced analyses of violence against Latin American migrant women (Villalón 2010; Bloom 2018). For example, Roberta Villalón (2010) offers an

[39] These general assertation about 'Latin American cultures' appear as particularly homogenizing when contrasting with the fact that this pretend to encompass 33 different countries, many with quite distinctive socio-political histories and ethnic/racial population compositions.

[40] Authors have emphasized immigration related factors such as fear of deportation, undocumented status, increased isolation, lack of English skills and so on.

intersectional analysis of citizenship and violence against Latin American women.[41] Adopting a 'life course competency' approach, Bloom's (2018, 2) research with Latin American survivors accessing a crisis centre uncovers the temporal and dynamic dimensions of violence that accumulate on their bodies in a layered and evolving way.

In England, fewer studies have addressed violence against Latin American women. Existing ones tend to explore how VAW among Latin American migrants operates transnationally in a continuum, asserting that gender ideologies travel and transform with migration (McIlwaine and Evans 2020; McIlwaine 2008; McIlwaine and Carlisle 2011). McIlwaine's (2008b) qualitative research with Colombian, Bolivian and Ecuadorian men and women analyses the effects of migration on gender ideologies and power relations, which result in ambiguous outcomes for violence against women. This study recognises the interplay of exclusion, discrimination, labour market participation and immigration status in exacerbating violence against migrants, whilst the primary focus is on how Latin American gender ideologies and practices underpin violence. Interviewed Latin American migrants tended to reproduce monolithic views of culture to explain IPV occurrence, with the downplaying of intra-group differences suggesting that oppressive gender roles were at the root of Latin American 'cultural traditions' (McIlwaine 2008, 7). Even though the author suggests a more complex picture, participants' views could have been further contextualised and problematised. In particular, there is no discussion on how hierarchical gender power relations are also integral to the host countries' societal structures and may underpin white British and European men's practices and perpetration of violence against women, including Latin American women.[42]

McIlwaine and Evans (2018; 2020; 2017) have also investigated violence against Brazilian migrants in London. Their reports on Brazilian survivors of VAWG provide critical empirical contributions to understanding their experiences, help-seeking practices and level of access to service provision (McIlwaine and Evans 2018; 2017). In their paper focusing on urban violence against Brazilian women in London (McIlwaine and Evans 2020, 13), these authors argue that 'gender ideologies' and 'travelling patriarchies' are the starting points underpinning Brazilian

[41] The author unveils the ways in which Latin American survivors' paths to citizenship continues to be mediated by racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist standards enshrined in new laws supposedly aimed at grating further rights to survivors and easing the citizenship process.

[42] However, it is worth noting that this specific study centred exclusively on cases of Latin American on Latin American IPV.

experiences of VAWG. This frame assumes that travelling patriarchal relations are the primary cause that leads to violence against Brazilian women, while other structural issues are considered risk factors. Their notion of *travelling patriarchies* risks externalising the causes of violence to somewhere outside British society, whilst the so-called *machismos* (perceived as specific to Latin Americans) become the focus of substantial attention (but see McIlwaine and Evans, 2022 that challenges this earlier view).

More broadly, there is a general need for research to consider violence perpetrated by white British and European men against Brazilians and other groups of Latin American women. Although McIlwaine and Evans's (2020) study did, in fact, include a few cases of European on Latin American IPV, there remains considerable scope to explore how the specific dynamics embedded in those relations of abuse may reveal new insights to theoretically rethink violence. I argue for more analytical consideration of how British society contributes to the reproduction of gender and intersectional inequalities through its political, social and economic structures in ways that may enable violence against migrant women.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have critically reviewed various sets of literature and situated my theoretical approach to research within a decolonial feminist geographical perspective. More specifically, I have reviewed decolonial debates within Anglophone and Latin American geographies and urged for more dialogue and ethical recognition of emerging decolonial territorial perspectives from the South. I have identified varying levels of engagement within the migration scholarship with gender, intersectionality and coloniality perspectives from MCD and Latin American decolonial feminisms. Whilst migration scholars have engaged mainly with a gender perspective, this has often occurred from a binary, universalising view that tends to foreclose other types of oppressions and their historical colonial roots. Although there has been a recent uptake of the framework of intersectionality in migration studies, gender still tends to be treated as the primary category of oppression. The review of these works reveals how the neglect of colonial legacies and coloniality by studies claiming to incorporate a gender or intersectional perspective has led to the reproduction of problematic constructions of migrants as cultural 'others'. Though the explicit incorporation of coloniality into migration theory and studies is still incipient, it has already offered critical analytical tools.

A review of theoretical approaches to violence against women has presented similar limitations. Individual and gender-focused frameworks are still being adopted; however, a move towards more structural and intersectional lenses has been identified. Nonetheless, these are frequently

combined with cultural-based arguments when addressing violence against migrant women leading to stereotyping migrant communities and stripping migrant women of agency. Therefore, the impact of colonial legacies and ongoing coloniality must be recognised in relation to migrant women's experiences of violence and how we conceptualise violence against them. I propose a decolonial feminist approach to research violence against Latin American migrant women in a Global North context. This is aimed at countering previous shortfalls in this research area and advancing various frameworks. More specifically, I combine the frameworks of the continuum of violence, feminist -geopolitics, intersectionality and coloniality. These enable an investigation of violence against colonial migrant women that conceives violence as produced by and reproducing coloniality across multi-scalar spatialities and temporalities.

CHAPTER III – EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ENCOUNTERS

Introduction

In this chapter, I situate my research within the horizons of decolonial feminist epistemologies and discuss how such frameworks have been coherently translated into methodologies that informed my research design. Rather than claiming an inherent decolonial feminist character for the methods I used to address my research questions, I was interested in exploring decolonial feminist ways to implement them. I developed a methodological approach embedded in decolonial feminist processes and guiding principles for selecting and implementing methods.

There have been intense feminist debates about whether a specific set of feminist methods is suited for feminist research. For example, *Consciousness raising (*MacKinnon 1982) and *feminist historical materialism* (Hartsock 1983) have been proposed as feminist methods by seminal feminist scholars. However, Harding (1987) contends that there are no feminist methods but that certain common features of feminist research constitute feminist methodologies. Although Harding makes this point specifically about feminist methods, I would suggest a need to extend her argument when considering decolonial feminist research. Similarly, rather than searching for a specific set of standardised decolonial feminist methods, I was drawn by how particular research principles and ways to select, combine and implement various research methods could yield decolonial feminist methodologies. The epistemological and methodological approaches I deployed aimed to decolonise research practice to address problems associated with the inappropriate use of positivist and Western (Western feminist included) approaches to research violence against migrant women.

In the following, I discuss this study's epistemological and methodological approaches. I start by outlining the core decolonial feminist principles guiding my methodological practice, which have been integrated and reassessed at each stage to ensure an embodiment of relations of accountability, including the strategic deployment of refusal and writing against culture (Simpson 2007; Abu-Lughod 2008). I summarise my methodological framework by linking it to my epistemological foundations. I also discuss my embodied positionality and the specific ways I related to and was accountable to the subject of study, research participants and the organisation I collaborated with – the London-based charity Latin American Women's Aid. I then turn to how I practically implemented the methodology and worked through the challenges in

the fieldwork, reflecting on how I combined three data collection methods: participant observation, in-depth life story interviews, and Body-Territory mapping. The fourth main section of this chapter incorporates a paper centred on *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios,* a decolonial feminist geographical methodology I developed for migration which builds and operationalises *Cuerpo-Territorio* ('Body-Territory') (Cabnal 2010; Cruz Hernández 2016; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020) as a concept and as a method to advance critical migration studies and feminist geopolitics. In the last section, I outline the process undertaken to analyse and interpret the data collected.

Towards Decolonial Feminist Methodologies: Embodying accountability, refusal and writing against culture

There have been intense discussions about what methods more appropriately embody the principles of feminist research. Concerns about the need to examine the subject-object relationship and to break down power relations between researcher and research subjects have led to a search for more collaborative and non-exploitative methods (McDowell 1992; Coddington 2017). Nevertheless, the favouring of qualitative, participatory and ethnographic methods by feminist researchers has tended to be accompanied by an idealised and oversimplified assumption that by simply using those methods, it would be possible to neutralize unequal power relations (Goodman et al. 2018; Ragavan et al. 2018).

The particular emphasis on participation and collective discussions has often been driven by a feminist concern with pursuing emancipatory goals through giving voice to research participants (Hyams 2004). However, such a focus tends to assume that voice always translates into empowerment whilst obscuring how silences may also be productive of meaning and the oppressive ways in which subaltern subjects are often only invited to voice their pain (Hyams 2004; Coddington 2017; Tuck 2009; Tuck and Yang 2014). Within such models, experiences risk being unproblematically taken as an empowering base for research without due regard to the broader background of power inequalities concerning research with racialised communities.

As indigenous scholars point out, the decontextualized use of individual experiences has historically served imperial purposes (Tuck and Ree 2013; Tuhiwai Smith 2002). The use of specific methods by themselves does not prevent the reproduction of exploitative relations. This is also the case for recent enthusiasm for participatory community-based research methods. Although often considered a best practice for research with Indigenous communities, Indigenous theorists point out that participatory methods may sometimes strain already

burdened communities, unintentionally creating new oppressive dynamics (Leeuw et al. 2012; Coddington 2017). Naïve tendencies to idealize specific qualitative methods must be resisted by actively situating them within their colonial history and acknowledging the everlasting asymmetrical power relations that mark research (Coddington 2017; Tuhiwai Smith 2002). Regardless of the method, power imbalances persist and must be actively accounted for: we must work towards diminishing inequalities whilst remaining aware that they will never be equalised entirely (Leeuw et al. 2012; Curiel 2015).

Feminist researchers have rallied around *reflexivity* and *positionality* to grapple with issues of power in the field and the inherent partiality of knowledge – recognising it as produced from an embodied objectivity or a distinctive standpoint (Harding 1987; Collins 1986; D. Haraway 1988; Rose 1997).[43] However, the limits of reflexive practices in feminist research have also been under scrutiny. Authors have pointed out how those notions have often been uncritically used to gain research legitimacy, merely describing/disclosing one's own position and practised as an individual exercise (Nagar 2002; Nagar and Geiger 2007; Curiel 2015; Coddington 2017). As such, there have been calls for a more critical and relational reflexive practice, which should include individual as well as collective assessments, an account of the wider context of power relations and the variously embodied subjectivities involved in research encounters (Coddington 2017; Hunter 2002; Naples 2003; Burns 2006).

Despite interesting reformulations, indigenous feminist scholarship suggests a need to move beyond these notions towards more accountable research practices. Historically, research *about* Indigenous people and other marginalised groups has been marked by colonialism, coloniality and exploitative practices, thus reinforcing the need to pay special attention to ethics in research (Tuhiwai Smith 2002; Wilson 2009). This is emphasised by the Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002), who developed the 'Kaupapa Maori' framework for research with indigenous Maori people. The framework aims to ensure research benefits Maori people in meaningful ways through involvement, ongoing mechanisms of dialogue and accountability. The author contends that 'determining as Maori our own research needs and priorities' and 'accountability to and outcomes for Maori' are central Kaupapa Maori methodological principles (Tuhiwai Smith 2002, 194–95).

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[43] According to Harding (1987), the principle of reflexivity requires that researchers locate themselves in the same critical plane as the subject matter, making visible their locus of enunciation, and actively reflecting how their position, beliefs, subjectivity and behaviour interact and shape the research process.

Similarly, research on violence against racialised migrant women in Anglophone countries has frequently been marked by a colonial gaze, reproducing culturalist arguments and stereotyping representations (something I return to in subsequent sections). Although only a few women participating in this research strictly identified themselves as indigenous[44], more broadly, Latin American women's racialised gendered experiences of violence as migrants from colonised countries raise concerns about research ethics and commitments. I suggest that these may be usefully explored/addressed through a focus on embodied relational practices of accountability in the research design and development, making a case for indigenous-inspired decolonising methodologies.

Drawing on Indigenous worldviews, decolonial geographers have been calling for embodied decolonial relations of accountability to inform research and praxis in settler colonial contexts (Daigle 2018; Ramírez 2018; Daigle and Sundberg 2017). They highlight the need to situate their embodied positions in relation to the spaces they inhabit through an accountable practice committed to indigenous people's decolonisation and liberation struggles. As indigenous scholars from the North have suggested, relationships and relational accountability are critical to Indigenous ontologies and research practices (Tuhiwai Smith 2002; Wilson 2009; Leeuw et al. 2012). Similar principles of relationality and reciprocity are also integral to Andean cosmovision (Medina 2008; 2006).

Building on these indigenous notions, my research has been guided by the importance of embodying relations of accountability, and forming and nurturing relationships in respectful and caring ways that account for the power relations and responsibilities within them. Authors suggest that, as a decolonial practice, nurturing relational accountability must go beyond the formal and institutional relationships between researchers and researched participants (Leeuw et al. 2012). For this research, I framed and practised relational accountability towards research participants and their struggles and the relationships I formed with them and others who directly and indirectly enabled me to conduct this research. Being a Latin American migrant woman myself and having worked at the Latin American Women's Aid for over three years before conducting my fieldwork in collaboration with them (see below), I strived to remain

[44] The majority described themselves as mixed-race with varying degrees of indigenous ancestry – see tables 3.2 and 3.3 for full details of the 20 Latin American survivors participating in this research.

accountable to this space and the relationships that emerged through it in an embodied, affective and ethical way.

I embraced *embodying relations of accountability grounded in time and space* as a transversal decolonial feminist methodological principle that underpinned the whole research process. I committed to embodying a decolonial feminist attitude *towards*, *within* and *beyond* research. For this specific project, this, in summary, encompassed the following:

I. An embodied reflexive research practice, where, as the researcher, I recognise my own body and geopolitical locations concerning the subject of study and those who I engage with throughout the research process;
II. Grounding embodied reflexivity in a commitment to ongoing individual and collective accountability towards research participants, the communities who may be affected by the study, and the Latin American women's organisation (LAWA) I collaborated with;
III. Practising accountability, relationality and reciprocity to ensure research responds to the needs and priorities of the research group and provides outcomes for them;
IV. Ongoing assessment, recognition and implementation of mitigating strategies vis-à-vis the wider context of power inequalities as well as power asymmetries yielded by the very practice of conducting research;
V. Recognising and incorporating in accountable and ethical ways the alternative ontologies and epistemologies of Black, indigenous and racialised women within my methodological design (e.g. *Cuerpo-Territorio*).

There was no specific step-by-step guide to implement the above; these were loosely incorporated in all stages of research design and implementation by interpreting the direct and indirect embodied insights provided during research interactions. In addition, accountability has been practised in direct and indirect ways. For example, I conducted informal consultations with Latin American Women's Aid workers. There was, however, a concern about placing extra tasks on already time-constrained workers who perform extremely emotionally demanding jobs; hence, most of such consultations were informal, unstructured, and based on day-to-day exchanges. Informal individual discussions and consultations occurred before the formulation of my methodology. More formally, a consultation activity was conducted in September 2019, during which this project was presented to front-line workers, who provided feedback on what was proposed and how to further the implementation of the above principles. During my fieldwork, I was able to informally exchange views and perspectives and share emotional challenges with several front-line workers (who, at the time, were my co-workers), which helped

me adjust activities. In April 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I decided to pause fieldwork activities for two months. This was a difficult but necessary decision taken – before this was formally required - in conversation with my university but triggered by interactions with front-line workers and by listening to embodied insights from participants I had interviewed. A commitment to practising relational accountability and reciprocity guided this decision centred on the wellbeing of all involved, including myself (see below).

The methodological approach implemented in this study combined a plurality of strategies. It brings together indigenous notions of radical embodied accountability and reciprocity with participatory embodied methodologies of knowledge production (i.e. Body-Territory mapping) in ways that have not yet been mobilised for the study of intimate partner violence against racialised migrant women in a postcolonial Western context. That said, there was no specific model to follow, and flexibility was required during fieldwork as embodied interactions and profound contextual challenges related to COVID-19 led to new reformulations. Below in table 3.1, I present a summary of my methodological framework connecting my epistemological approach to methodological principles and data collection methods, which are further explained throughout this chapter.

Table 3.1 Methodological framework

EPISTEMOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES	METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES	METHODOLOGIES / METHODS		PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER
DECOLONIAL FEMINISM	Race and gender as epistemologically bound	a) An embodied reflexive research practice, where, as the researcher, I recognise my own body and geopolitical locations in relation to the subject of study and those with who I engaged throughout the research process; b) Grounding embodied reflexivity in a commitment to ongoing individual and collective accountability towards research participants, the communities who may be affected by the study, and the Latin American women's organisation (LAWA) I will be working with; c) Practicing accountability, relationality and reciprocity to ensure research responds to the needs and priorities of the research group and provides outcomes for them; d) Ongoing assessment, recognition and implementation of mitigating strategies vis-à-vis the broader context of power inequalities as well as power asymmetries yielded by the very practice of conducting research; e) Recognising and incorporating, in accountable and ethical ways, the alternative ontologies and epistemologies of Black, indigenous and racialised women within my methodological design.	Multi-sited Ethnography *working against culture* and practising *refusal*	Semi-structured Interviews	Latin American survivors of violence IPV (former users of LAWA who are no longer in crisis)	20
					Front-line Latin American workers	10
	A shift in the feminist geo-body politics of knowledge			Participant Observation	As a case worker at LAWA, supporting Latin American women survivors of IPV	3 months
	Attention to embodied positioning in the economy of knowledge		Decolonial Feminist counter-cartographies of violence	*Cuerpo-Territorio* /Body-Territory mapping	Latin American survivors of violence	10 Body-Territory maps Individually crafted at participants' homes. Followed by 5 zoom sessions with 2 participants each.
	Theory and practice move together					

From where I speak: embodying accountability

As the Kwakwaka'wakw scholar Sarah Hunt (2014, 28), reminds us, accountability starts from engaging with 'the individual embodied scales at which we reproduce geography', recognising the contradictory positions and spaces which may sometimes seem impossible for us to inhabit. Acknowledging the embodied and spatial scales from which I speak and produce knowledge is not an easy task, for it entails 'going personal': digging into, reflecting on and disclosing aspects of my biography which may be confusing, painful and still hard for me to digest. It pushes me to confront how my mind and writing are pervasively colonised by an almost unconscious tendency to detach myself from the text, even when my own critique points in the opposite direction.

Complex processes, spatialities and temporalities mark my embodied sense of identity and space in ways that I cannot yet fully capture here. Born on Itaparica Island (where I never lived), in the Bahia State of Brazil, female assigned at birth, I now self-identify, with certain gender fluidity, as a queer cis woman. Daughter of two 'racially ambiguous', brown-skinned parents of, hardly ever commented upon, Black-Indigenous-white ancestry, whilst growing up in Brazil, the colour of my skin was not an object of much questioning or self-reflection. I was not the target of racism; I knew I was not white, albeit my seemingly depoliticized light brown skin granted me significant privileges.

My growing up in Brazil was crossed by internal migration determined by some relative upward class mobility of my originally working-class parents. My sense of identity and belonging has never been fully rooted in one place but instead unstably forged through new beginnings, encounters, and abrupt interruptions. My migration history later continued voluntarily; my curiosity - fuelled by a colonial imaginary - and the privileged ease of having a German passport brought me to Europe a decade ago. It was in the postcolonial context of this continent that I first started realising how as a brown-skinned Brazilian woman, I was simultaneously gendered and racialised. From unwanted attention by white men who sexually exoticised me, stereotyping assumptions of me being either a sex worker or a cleaner, to questionings about the validity of my German passport and whether I 'married for papers'. Through the macro and microaggressions, I became aware of my embodied presence in predominantly white spaces, about how racism and gender operate together to produce painful preconceptions, which are inevitably intersected by projected notions around class and sexuality. This research is marked by my messy attempts to grapple with some of these migration experiences, which led me to

become involved in various spaces and processes of (un)learning and reflection, eventually arriving here.

I began to find words to the above experiences after a late discovery and fast submersion into London-based feminist anti-racist grassroots collectives, especially by people of colour and other Latin American migrants (e.g. The London Latinxs, Sisters Uncut, The Wretched of The Earth, and, more recently during the pandemic, Apoyo Comunitario). It was not in academia but through political organising spaces, where personal narratives were shared and relationships of affect formed that I acquired the means and language to critically understand my own experiences and politicise my positioning. These spaces offered a supportive network that enabled me to put my lived experiences into perspective, where without fear of being deemed 'too radical' I could recognise, name and stand against a UK context of pervasive coloniality marked by racism, classism, misogyny and an ever-intensifying hostile environment towards migrants. Through individual and collective places of struggle, my embodied positioning was radically transformed, and narratives of pain and suffering were re-signified to yield critical vision and creative resistance (hooks 1989). As hooks (1989, 23) eloquently notes, 'we are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world'.

Reflecting on my journey helped me understand feminist epistemology theories (Collins 1986; Haraway 1988; hooks 1989), suggesting that distinctive standpoints or embodied positionings are not a given but rather forged through social, political and spatial processes. As Haraway (1988, 586) suggests, 'instruments of vision mediate standpoints; there is no immediate vision from the standpoints of the subjugated. Identity, including self-identity, does not produce science; critical positioning does, that is, objectivity.' Similarly, Black feminists emphasise the role of lived experiences and collective praxis in producing distinctive standpoints which reflect the shared challenges of groups located within particular intersections of hierarchical power relations (Collins 1998a). As I illustrated here, individual and collective reflexive processes and lived experiences that cut across time-space facilitated the development of my embodied analysis of power relations, which has been and continue to be firmly grounded in political praxis.

Practising an embodied and relational accountability to research violence against Latin American migrant women involved scrutinising my relationships with the subject, the spaces, relationships and commitments I am accountable for. I asked myself: What experiences and

processes politically and intellectually compelled me toward this issue? What has brought me close to those who have experienced violence as Latin American migrant women? What power relations must be acknowledged and worked through as I conduct this research?

As I became involved in anti-racist, migrant justice, and feminist work and campaigns, I quickly became familiar with different Latin American NGOs advocating for and offering services to Latin American migrants. I collaborated and volunteered for a few of these organisations. In 2016 I started working for the Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA), a small charity with nearly 35 years of history offering support services and running the only three refuges in the UK and Europe for Latin American women and children fleeing violence. I was immediately passionately drawn by this organisation, by the world vision pursued through its work and the radical principles it strives to enact. Inspired by Latin American communitarian feminism and firmly grounded on Black feminist principles of intersectionality, liberation and self-representation, LAWA works towards a world in which all women and children are free from violence and oppression and can achieve self-determination. Part of the VAW sector of specialist organisations referred to as led *by and for* Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women, all LAWA's volunteers, trustees and staff members are 'BME' women (mostly Latin Americans), who lead services exclusively tailored to other 'BME' women and their children. My experiences within this organisation significantly surpassed traditional expectations for a work environment from the first moment of my job interview. I felt encouraged and at ease to draw on my personal and collective experiences of activism without fear of negative repercussions. At LAWA, through formal and informal exchanges with colleagues and service users, I learned to trust that experiences commonly assumed to belong to separate spheres overlap, feed each other, and can generate powerful insights when placed into a conversation.

Being at LAWA provided me with the experiences and sensibilities to, at least partly, grasp the multidimensionality of the violence migrant, racialised women experience (myself included) and the multiple barriers we face. It also helped me start reflecting on intersectionality – and later on coloniality – in more practical terms and to question the complex ways in which the state and its agents may be deeply complicit. These reflections, prompted by my professional engagement at LAWA, travelled far beyond, leading me to scrutinise my past experiences of violence. At LAWA, the professional, personal, and political were closely intertwined. Disclosure dynamics often shifted and emerged not only from service users but also among staff members during training, lunch and other off-work social occasions.

Through these dynamics, my own experience, as a 22-year-old woman, back in Brazil, being physically assaulted at a bar by a 'jealous' German boyfriend subtly emerged several times. I remembered that my attempt at seeking help from the police led me to be criminalised, perceived as 'too hysterical' - even though I had the proof of my broken glasses. I had to respond in court for 'police contempt' whilst, with the help of the German consulate, my ex not only walked free but provided a witness statement against me. Fortunately, I was in my own country and could access family support to address the subsequent legal implications. And yet, it left me with a complex mix of feelings which I carried for many years after, aiding me to understand the very different, but also strangely familiar, experiences of other Latin American migrant women survivors of violence in this country. It allowed me to empathise from a personal and political place with realities that we commonly come across at LAWA.

This act of self-disclosure is not an attempt to equate my experiences to those from whom I research, nor claim more legitimacy as a researcher. Instead, my impetus to reveal them emerges from a commitment to staying true to the processes, people and spaces that have paved my path to research violence against Latin American women. The place from which I research violence is a place of commitment to its eradication in all its forms. I embody this commitment through being accountable to my own experiences and the political, professional and friendship relationships that have not only allowed me but trusted me to conduct this research. These are, after all, relationships of affect I have built and intimately committed to with women I work *with/for,* to whom I nurture profound respect.

As I have aimed to demonstrate, the embodied position and relations I am accountable to are multiple, intersecting and overlapping at times. Now positioned as a PhD researcher at King's College London, I am simultaneously informed by my personal experiences of violence as a Brazilian queer woman, political involvement in community activism and experiences of working for a Latin American women's organisation supporting survivors. In this sense, I have attempted to situate the ongoing processes that shape the embodied position through which I strive to produce a decolonial feminist analysis. As Black feminists noticed, the Outsider-within status associated with positions of marginality is a potential source of both frustration and radical creativity (Collins 1986; hooks 1989). Even as I move to the centre, I embrace the margin as a radical place of openness from which I produce knowledge and commit to oppositional struggle (hooks 1989). This means embracing the 'struggle of memory against forgetting' (hooks 1989), recognizing where I come from, where I speak from, and my suffering and oppression as sources of political resistance and creativity. It means learning to trust my 'own personal and cultural biographies as significant sources of knowledge' (Collins 1986, 29).

As I identify commonalities between my embodied subjectivities and those of research participants, I have been careful to refrain from centring on my own experiences to interpret those I encountered in the research process (Rice 2009). Trusting my experiences also means recognising their potentialities as well as their limits. Acknowledging commonalities by no means erases the many differences between my participants and me and how these translate into power relations in the field. Latin American migrant women in England are an extremely heterogeneous group, particularly concerning nationality, language ability, race, class, sexuality, cis/transgender status, and migration status. As I aimed to secure a sample as heterogeneous as possible to grasp the ways intersecting dynamics of coloniality play out, I often found myself in a more structurally privileged position than the women I interviewed or invited for an interview. In particular in terms of some of them being Black or indigenous, having an insecure/irregular immigration status, not being able to speak English, working in a precarious job, being trans or having low levels of formal education. Such power differences may partly explain some of my challenges in recruiting women from specific groups (e.g. trans, lesbians, and Latin Americans who strictly identified as Black or Indigenous rather than mixed) whilst facilitating the recruitment of others (e.g. heterosexual cis women, Brazilians in particular, given my nationality and cisgender identity). This is reflected in tables 3.2 and 3.3, where participants' details are presented.

Those intersecting differences, coupled with the fact that I have not endured intimate partner violence for a sustained period of my life, at times yielded substantial imbalances in power that needed to be accounted for as research developed to ensure participants' experiences and perspectives were not misinterpreted/misrepresented. In this sense, this study was guided not only by the fundamental research ethics principle of 'do not harm' but also by an additional commitment to benefit research participants by aiming to respect/contribute towards their self-determination and eradicating violence in ways that they considered meaningful. However, even as I decided to share power in how the research was directed and re-directed to ensure a more collective participatory process, this was ultimately an individual project where I inevitably continued to decide when and how to do so.

Multi-sited ethnography: working against culture and practising refusal

Drawing on my own Outsider/Within position as a Latin American Brazilian woman working for a London-based Latin American women's organization supporting Latin American survivors of violence, I proposed a *multi-sited ethnography* (Marcus 1995) as a central element of my methodology, through which participant observation was to be combined with in-depth

interviews with both Latin American front-line workers and survivors of violence. In particular, I aimed to enact the principle of *embodied relational accountability* by practising *refusal* and actively *writing against culture* as integral to this approach (Simpson 2007; Abu-Lughod 2008). Conceptualised by Marcus in 1995, multi-sited ethnography is characterised as ethnography *in* and *of* the world system, for it situates its subject of study as constituted in and constitutive of a world system through multiple sites across multi-scalar spatialities and temporalities. Shifting from single to numerous locations of ethnographic observation, it maps links and associations amongst and within them challenging classic ethnographic distinctions between lifeworld and system. I also more nuancedly acknowledge time-space connections between places, thus itself suggesting a potential to work against homogenous understandings of culture in favour of considering the interactions across geographical and historical realities. Therefore, in line with this approach, my ethnography strived to be multi-sited not only in terms of moving between different physical locations (i.e. between LAWA's premises and different institutions and locations Latin American survivors navigate in their journeys against violence and seeking safety) but also in that it horizontally considers the multi-scalar dimension of the modern/colonial gendered world system and the various temporalities and spatialities presented through survivors past and present narratives.

Although Marcus (1995) has contextualised this form of ethnography within Wallerstein's world system, for this research, I considered it could more adequately align with the framework proposed by Latin American Decolonial Feminism. As the subject of study, violence against Latin American migrant women must be accounted for in its relationship to the gendered colonial/modern world system (Lugones 2010; 2008). As such, it cannot be grasped through a single-sited focus but instead requires a methodological approach that acknowledges its multi-scalar dimensions across time and space.

Although my observations were physically based in London, its multi-sited character also emerged from its interest and attention to the multi-scalar. I intimately connected this approach with 'ethnographies of the particular' as a proposed methodological strategy to *work against culture*. As Abu-Lughod (2008, 474) contends, 'the effects of extra local and long-term processes are only manifested locally and specifically, produced in the actions of individuals living their particular lives, inscribed in their bodies and their words'. Multi-sited ethnography allowed this investigation to understand common ethnographic interests - reflected in my research questions - in relation to everyday practices, experiences and resistance through multiple and interconnected sites, now combined into an expanded framework that blurs traditional separations between local and global.

Considering that anthropological practices and discourses have contributed toward 'construct[ing], produc[ing], and maintain[ing]' culture, Lila Abu-Lughod (2008, 470) calls for ethnographic practices to work against culture as a means of challenging the pretence boundedness often embedded in this notion. In light of the harmful ways in which culture has been deployed to explain violence against migrant women, my study's methodological practice has been centrally informed by this author's strategies to work against culture. Namely, to shift the focus from culture to practices and discourses, to emphasise connections between people, places, and histories, and to do ethnographies of the particular.

Similarly, in a context in which research about indigenous and other marginalised, overstudied populations such as migrants have been marked by a will to knowledge as much as a will to conquer (Tuhiwai Smith 2002; Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2014), redrawing limits and new possibilities to what can be known or publicly revealed in research has become strategic decolonial ethics to counter the ongoing coloniality of knowledge. Drawing on Indigenous scholars theorising (Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2014; Coulthard 2014), I strived to practice refusal *within* research as decolonial ethics and political strategy that commits to researched participants through sustained embodied relationships of accountability. As Tuck and Yang (2014, 242) assert, refusal as a methodological intervention has the potential to challenge the 'circular self-defining ethics' of science - presuming that research that abides by the norms of individual consent and ethics protocols is always 'good' – by instead confronting 'the problems of collective harm, of representational harm, and of knowledge colonization'.

In the following section, I outline how I implemented the methodology for this study and the challenges that arose during fieldwork. Besides the need to be flexible and creative in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic context, refusal was paramount to overcoming challenges and negotiating power relations inherent to research practice.

Implementing the Methodology: Practising refusal and embodying accountability to overcome ethical and contextual challenges

The implementation of my methodology was marked by challenges relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, the competing meanings of research ethics, negotiating power and positionality in the field. These were addressed through practising embodied accountability and refusal whilst remaining flexible and creative. This section outlines and reflects on what that meant in practice.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic challenges, the fieldwork was a mix of face-to-face and remote interactions, with interesting (dis)embodying implications. The methodology implemented in this study combined three sets of qualitative methods: interviews, Body-Territory mapping and participant observation. Initial target numbers for activities had to be slightly reduced. Overall, I conducted 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews: ten with Latin American front-line workers and twenty with Latin American survivors of intimate partner violence. Latin American survivors of violence produced ten Body-Territory maps, and I also conducted three months of participant observation at the Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA).

I worked at LAWA for over three years before beginning fieldwork, during which time I was able to make unsystematic observations that informed the initial directions of my research. However, my formal participant observation as a casework assistant, initially planned to last six months, was cut short to three months due to LAWA's service moving online at the start of the pandemic. Most of the interviews with front-line workers were conducted face-to-face before the pandemic (8 out of 10), but half of my interviews with Latin American survivors were conducted remotely (5 out of 10). The Body-Territory mapping method originally planned to be delivered as a face-to-face workshop had to be substantially reformulated, taking place remotely, with women crafting their maps individually in their own homes and then participating in a follow-up discussion through zoom (see full details in a paper incorporated in a section below).

Profile of participants

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 present details of the 20 Latin American survivors participating in this research. Although my sample was largely diverse in terms of race, class, immigration status and perpetrators' profile (see table 3.4[45]), recruiting Latin American trans or lesbian women was not possible. This is a limitation of this study (see chapter 8), which therefore reflects primarily on the experiences of cisgender Latin American women abused by cis men. The fieldwork of

[45] Table 3.4 presents details of participants' abusers in relation to nationality, immigration status, class, race/ethnicity. In some cases, participants were abused by various perpetrators throughout their life, this is why, in two cases, there is more than one perpetrator profile per participant. This is not an exhaustive list of all abusers mentioned by participants.

this study started in November 2019. It lasted until August 2020, with a break in December 2019 and another one from the end of March until the beginning of May 2020 (due to the pandemic) – after which all activities were carried out remotely. The data analysis process was ongoing during fieldwork but became more systematic after the completion of data collection from August 2020 until September 2021.

Table 3.2 Details of Latin American women survivors participating in the research (20)

Nationality	
Argentina	1
Brazil	9
Chile	1
Colombia	2
Costa Rica	1
Dominican Republic	1
Mexico	2
Paraguay	1
Venezuela	2
Race/Ethnicity	
Mixed: Indigenous, Black and White ('parda' in Portuguese)	1
Mixed: Black / 'parda'	1
Mixed: Black and White	1
White mixed with Black and Indigenous heritage	1
Mixed: Indigenous and White (one of them being a Guarani native speaker)	8
Indigenous descendant	2
White Hispanic	2
White	4
Class	
Working-class in the country of origin and England	15
Middle-class in the country of origin and working-class in England	2
Upper-middle-class in the country of origin and working-class in England	2
Upper-middle-class in the country of origin and middle class in England	1

English Level	
Beginner	5
Intermediate	8
Fluent	7
Educational Level	
Primary school	3
High school	5
Higher Education	10
Postgraduate	2
Sexuality	
Heterosexual	16
Bisexual	2
Pansexual	1
Hetero-curious	1
Age	
23 years	1
30 - 34 years	7
38 - 45 years	7
49 - 55 years	4
63 years	1
Occupation	
Cleaner	6
Cooking & Catering	4
Housekeeper	3
Nanny	2
NGO worker	2
Bartender	1
Student	1
Office job	1

Religion	
Christian (catholic or protestant)	16
No religion (although one of them considered herself spiritual)	2
Jewish-evangelical	1
Agnostic	1
Children	
Did not have children	6
Had children with the recent perpetrator	12
Had children but not with the recent perpetrator	2

Table 3.3 Immigration details of Latin American Women survivors participating in the research (20)

Immigration Status	
British family visa (2)	2 were undocumented for many years and could only regularise their situation through their child's status.
EU family visa (3)	1 was undocumented for many years and could only apply for this visa through her daughter's status; 2 had this visa as a spouse of an EU citizen (their abusive exes).
EU citizen (no visa required pre-Brexit) (7)	4 had EU citizenship by descent. However, one of them was undocumented for five years before she was able to apply for Italian citizenship. 3 had EU citizenship by naturalisation (due to adoption, marriage or length of residency in another EU country).
Indefinite Leave to Remain (7)	4 acquired ILR via the Domestic Violence Rule; 3 acquired ILR through the length of residency in the country.
British Spouse Visa (1)	Separated due to DV but unable to apply for ILR via DVR rule due to a lack of sufficient evidence of abuse.

Table 3.4 Details of perpetrators of Latin American survivors participating in this research[46]

Nationality and immigration status	Class	Race/Ethnicity
British citizen	Middle-class	White
British citizen	Middle-class	White
British citizen	Upper-middle-class	White
British citizen	Working-class	White
British citizen	Working-class	White
British citizen with Jamaican heritage	Working-class	Mixed: Black and White
Colombian with British citizenship	Working-class	White
Greek national / EU citizen	Middle-class	White
Portuguese national / EU citizen	Working-class	White
Portuguese national / EU citizen	Working-class	White
Brazilian with EU/Italian citizenship	Working-class	White
Brazilian with EU/Italian citizenship	Working-class (middle class in Brazil)	White
Brazilian with EU/Portuguese citizenship	Working-class	White
Brazilian with EU/Portuguese citizenship	Working-class	White
Venezuelan with EU/Portuguese citizenship	Working-class (middle class in Venezuela)	White
Republican Dominican with EU family visa	Working-class	White
Brazilian with undocumented status	Working-class	Mixed / brown
Venezuelan with undocumented status	Working-class	Black
Brazilian with undocumented status	Working-class	White
Costa Rican / NA (based in Costa Rica)	Middle-class	White

[46] In some cases, participants referred to two recent abusers, therefore, their profiles were included in the same row. This is, however, not an exhaustive list of women's abusers.

Challenges of conducting research

Although the start of my fieldwork activities was initially scheduled for September 2019, there was a significant delay in securing ethical clearance from KCL's Ethics Committee. The ethical application for this study was initially rejected and required a large amount of work for re-submission and acceptance, which was granted in November 2019. While the panel made some useful comments, most observations suggested a level of suspicion towards my research's epistemological and methodological approach, both embedded in decolonial feminism. They were unnecessarily interventionist, requiring changes in the design of the research methodology rather than ethical procedures. In particular, the committee challenged the use of Body-Territory mapping as a methodology and my research interest in exploring colonialism and coloniality in the context of violence against Latin American women. This ultimately reflected the ethics committee's positivist bias and lack of understanding of proposed methods. As Tuck and Yang (2014) suggested, the self-defining logic of formal ethic procedures rarely addresses issues relating to the coloniality of knowledge and collective harm in terms that are meaningful to researched groups. In the case of this study, this was evident in whose views and positions the committee represented and how it contributed to the ongoing reproduction of colonial ways of doing research. Doing decolonial feminist research meant practising a certain degree of epistemological and methodological disobedience by *refusing* to change core aspects of this research that the KCL ethics committee challenged. This meant I had to push back and undergo a lengthy back and forth before this study was approved.

The incorporation of refusal in my study occurred as an ongoing ethical practice where the limits and directions of research have been drawn by attention to embodied relationships of accountability and a commitment towards research participants, namely, Latin American survivors and front-line workers who provide them with ongoing support. As such, refusal helped humanise us both, researcher and researched communities, through committing to an ethical relation between us within the research process and beyond. It encompassed accountability grounded in historical analysis, committed to the past, present and future of these relationships and the effects the research would have on those invested in them. Reflecting on the embodied research encounters and running formal and informal consultations helped to re-direct research and refuse to proceed in specific ways.

While waiting for this study's ethical approval, I used the opportunity to have informal meetings with front-line workers to explain the project, receive feedback, and gain support for the

upcoming activities - for which their collaboration was crucial. I started my fieldwork activities at the end of November 2019, interviewing front-line workers and survivors of violence. In January 2020, I officially started my participant observation at LAWA as a volunteer caseworker. However, by mid-March 2020, the COVID-19 global outbreak had already escalated in the UK. Weeks before the nation entered its first lockdown, I went into isolation due to contact with an infected person, having to halt participant observation. I had several interviews scheduled for the following week and was able to conduct most of them remotely, by video or telephone call. Participants indeed preferred this (a few survivors and one front-line worker) either because they lived out of London or because they were also starting to be concerned about the risk of continuing physical contact.

By the time the first UK lockdown was announced, and amid myself experiencing mild COVID-19 symptoms, I realised that the new context required a complete reassessment of my fieldwork moving forward. The emotional and physical toll of a global pandemic and the anxiety about an uncertain future started to weigh heavily on all of us. I selfishly feared not being able to complete my research, but most importantly, I feared the impact of asking survivors to recount traumatic experiences at a time when much of their formal and informal sources of support had been withdrawn, and they were likely to be re-visiting old feelings of isolation. My emotional, physical and mental capacity was also profoundly affected, and I had to honestly reassess whether I would be able to hold space to their stories. As an organisation supporting survivors, I witnessed how LAWA passed through immense pressure to quickly adapt its services and continue supporting women in and out of their refuge. I consulted with some of my co-workers at LAWA and my PhD supervisor, who helped me put all those perspectives in balance. I finally decided that despite having the 'technical' means to, at least partially, continue fieldwork; it was ethically important to pause as an act of care for all of us. At that moment, I was, indeed, exercising *refusal, refusing* to stick to research timelines and carry out research at a human cost. This decision involved accountability and reflection on the embodied effects of the pandemic and lockdown isolation on the research participants and me, to fully recognise our humanity and fragility. Ultimately, as Tuck and Yang (2014, 223) suggest, refusal is also 'about humanizing the researchers', for there is no fixed set of rules on how to proceed.

I expected to be able to resume activities at the end of the lockdown, which was set to last for three weeks but instead lasted for months. At the beginning of May 2020, still wary of the pandemic's immediate consequences and long-lasting effects, but having had time to process and better understand that the new reality was going to stay for long, I decided to resume interviews slowly. I contacted women initially referred to me by their caseworkers to ask them

how they were, introduce myself and invite them to a video call interview. In these initial calls, I emphasised the need to consider how the pandemic affected them and how recounting their stories in this new context could impact them further. Many women were very open and honest in saying they were not in a good place to participate and that they considered remembering their traumatic past would harm them. Some were eager to share their experiences but lacked the appropriate physical space to do so as they were isolated with their children, whilst others were willing and described having more time to do so in this new context as they had to stay at home. I sent more detailed information about the project via e-mail to those who confirmed interest and availability and asked them to read and reassess whether they still felt they wanted to participate, considering the impact this could have on their wellbeing. In this process of reassessment and centring their wellbeing, many women took a step back and decided not to participate. This reassured me that I was creating enough time and space for them to exercise their agency and *refuse* participation.

During the interviews, particularly with survivors but also front-line workers, *refusal* appeared in multiple ways. Firstly, by listening and respecting the various ways women refused to participate without always verbally stating, respecting silences and their direct and indirect refusal to engage with specific topics and questions and to reveal certain parts of their narratives. Indeed, participants' cues for redirection led me to refuse to follow my interview script. Interviews with survivors became much more loosely structured than initially planned, as most participants revealed themselves to be skilled storytellers. This also helped mitigate power imbalances between interviewer and interviewee as survivors took much more control over the interviewing process, with very little intervention and redirection on my part. Sharing power and allowing women to choose how they wanted to tell their own stories meant practising refusal to be intrusive and also refusal to censor, letting them be vague at times and overly detailed and graphic at others. I also refused to control interview duration, respecting that some women wished to tell their stories in length and others in a much more summarised way, with interviews varying from one to over three hours - with most lasting for an average of at least two hours.

Practising refusal meant drawing attention to limits that are all too often neglected by the extractive and colonising impulses uncommitted to doing research *with* and *for* researched

communities.[47] Simpson's (2007) ethnography of Kahnawake's struggles around membership and citizenship rules illustrates how *refusal* as an embedded ethnographic practice is engendered in an embodied commitment to indigenous *sovereignty*. As an indigenous scholar, for her, taking sovereignty seriously necessarily involves 'a calculus ethnography of what you need to know and what I refuse to write in' (Simpson 2007, 72). Instead of being narrowly translated as a 'no', refusal is much more complex than that; it is productive and strategic, sets limits to knowledge and reframes research to present new possibilities (Tuck and Yang 2014; Simpson 2007). Indeed, refusal may be better understood as an attitude that involves *refusing* to do research in certain ways whilst choosing to *proceed* with others (Coddington 2017). As authors suggest, *refusal* may take multiple shapes: refusal to ask specific questions or refusal not to ask others, acknowledging participants' refusal to engage or respond to inquiries, refusal as a prompt to redirection or refusal to reveal critical information already acquired in the course of the research (Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2014; Coddington 2017).

Although the study of violence against gendered colonial immigrants necessarily involves navigating through narratives of pain, inquiry about painful stories without actively recognising marginality as a potential site of resistance would have constituted a silencing and colonising act (hooks 1989). As authors suggest, decolonial refusal resists relying on *suffering* as a measure of *authenticity* in research (Tuck and Yang 2014) by actively refusing to invite the subaltern to only speak about their pain, to 'only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing' (hooks 1989, 23). As an alternative and antidote for what she calls 'damage-centered research', Tuck (2009, 416) suggests we instead shift towards 'desire-based research' by insisting on documenting the hope and wisdom that is often hidden beneath narratives of pain. As. she notes, 'even when communities are broken and conquered, they are so much more than that—so much more that this incomplete story is an act of aggression' (Tuck 2009, 416). To that end, my inquiry was informed by a *desire* to grasp that which has often been relinquished by research on violence against migrant women, moving

[47] Indeed, discussions around the ethical limits to ethnographic research, to which refusal as a practice may respond to, appears to have already emerged in a 1989 text by Said, where he critically reviews anthropologists' efforts to acknowledge the problematic effects of their work. In the ethnographies of Richard Price and James C Scott, they admittedly presented and elaborated on the moral issues related to revealing secretive aspects of resistance strategies utilized by the groups they studied (Saramaka people of Suriname and peasants). However, as Said (1989) notes, the theoretical paradox is that although carefully considering the situation, they both eventually decided to publish the information thus effectively *refusing* to practice *refusal*.

beyond suffering to interrogate and recognise when, how, and under which conditions, painful experiences give rise to resistance, struggle, hope and wisdom.

I embedded refusal in the research questions posed in this study as much as I embraced it as an ongoing practice in my fieldwork, in the analysis of data and in writing up findings. Questions guiding interviews and data analysis aimed to interrogate what is often left out of discussions regarding violence against migrant women (e.g. coloniality, racism, borders, violent state inaction). At the same time, they also sought to problematise stereotyped representations of migrant women (e.g. passive victims, culturally patriarchal, etc.) commonly reproduced in research. These broad aims steered my participant observation during the formal 3-months period of observation and the nearly four years I worked at LAWA, some of which preceded and motivated this research.

***** The below section is an incorporated paper published in the *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* (see details in the list of publications).

Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios: A decolonial feminist geographical methodology to conduct research *with* migrant women

> When you are abused physically or psychologically, the pain is felt all over the body. My body is like my world; when my world is attacked, it is felt on the arms, legs, and everywhere, because everything is interconnected. […] It is a feeling of rage, pain, hate, fear, it is a mix of everything.
>
> (Eduarda, Brazilian, mixed-race, 32 years)

Eduarda[48] is a working-class mixed-race Brazilian (cis) woman who migrated to London with an EU family visa to join her middle-class white Brazilian husband, who was also an Italian national. He abused her physically, psychologically, emotionally, and economically in Brazil and after migration. Once in England, these forms of violence worsened and became compounded by *(state-sponsored) intimate border violence* – a term I conceptualise elsewhere to refer to intimate forms of violence that directly stem from the state border violence of the UK immigration system and its necropolitical operating logic (see chapter 5). Eduarda was constantly reminded of her visa dependency by her husband, who attempted to use this as a tool of control, repeatedly saying that he '*brought her here*'. In Eduarda's words above, she

[48] I have replaced all participants' names with pseudonyms in order to guarantee their anonymity.

suggests how the various forms of violence she experienced were felt and imprinted on her body, as she reflected on the map she crafted as part of my study (see figure 7.3 in chapter 7). In her map, she identified, with number 7, several parts of her body that were marked by violence(s), and with number 8 those where she found strength and power to resist these. As she reasserted, her body is her 'world' and when one part of it is under attack, her whole body is affected. This suggests an understanding of the body as her first territory, in line with the Latin American concept and method of *Cuerpo-Territorio* ('Body-Territory') (Cabnal 2010; Cruz Hernández 2016; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020) which conceives of bodies in their totality and as part of an ontological continuum with territories. *Cuerpo-Territorio* has been mobilised and implemented as part of my PhD research methodology.

My PhD research explored the interconnections between Latin American women's experiences of intimate partner violence and state violence in England (particularly in London) as well as their resistance strategies to these. This article focuses on a specific tenet of my wider methodology, which also involved three months of participant observation within the London-based charity Latin American Women's Aid[49], together with the experience of having worked there for nearly four years. Through this organisation, I recruited and interviewed ten Latin American front-line workers and twenty Latin American women survivors of IPV. The participating survivors were all cis women from nine different Latin American countries, they were from various but mostly mixed racial backgrounds, the majority were working-class, and heterosexual. Although most of them held regularised immigration status when my research was conducted, many were undocumented or in a precarious and dependant immigration situation in the past when they experienced IPV[50]. Engaging with a decolonial feminist understanding of coloniality (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b) at material and discursive levels, my project aimed to unveil the ways intimate and state forms of violence are underpinned by a multi-scalar continuum of colonial, racist and patriarchal bordering and territorialisation processes. Whilst these operate at multiple scales in relational ways, I particularly focused on how they penetrate and affect the intimate and embodied scales.

[49] LAWA is a by and for Latin American and Black and minoritised women's organisation specialised in gender-based violence.

[50] See a full breakdown of participants' details in tables 3.2 and 3.3

The *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* methodology I developed for my study adapts the *Cuerpo-Territorio* method to operate remotely in response to the challenges of undertaking fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic[51]. Planned and implemented together with my friend Nina Franco[52], an Afro-Brazilian visual artist and activist, as part of an art-research collaborative project[53], its key methodological innovation revolves around the creative incorporation of technological and logistical tools/services (Lopes Heimer and Franco 2020). As part of this method, participants were asked to draw their silhouette on a body-size piece of paper, then write and draw on them as they reflected on their embodied spatialised experiences. Making use of video, postal services and online video-conference meetings, participants were able to carry out the activity individually at home, whilst subsequently being offered a virtual space for debriefing, connection and dialogue. The invitation to migrant survivors to craft their maps individually and privately at home meant they were in full control of their time and space and able to sit with and reflect on their embodied memories, emotions and sensations relating to their lived experiences across and within various territory-scales.

Expanding on critical migration, feminist political geography and geopolitics perspectives, in this section I advance *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* as an embodied decolonial feminist methodology to research migrant women's multi-scalar experiences of intimate and state violence (s) and resistance, in a Global North context marked by COVID-19 restrictions (Amelina and Faist 2012; Hyndman 2012; De Genova 2013; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Williamson 2015; Anderson 2019). I propose to move theory and methodology together towards a decolonial feminist geographical praxis for migration, which builds on existing efforts to decolonise feminist geographical methodologies (Cruz Hernández 2016; Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017a; Colectivo de Geografía Crítica 2018;

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[51] Although my methodology was adapted in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, my research questions did not change to reflect the ways this new context impacted on violence against migrant women. This is because when the pandemic broke out in March 2020, I was already halfway through my fieldwork.

[52] Nina Franco is based in London, where she uses photography and installation to create works reflecting on the intersectionality of race, gender and migration. See more about her work here: https://www.ninafranco.com/

[53] I applied for a grant to undertake a collaborative art-research project with my friend Nina Franco, as part of a wider initiative called Imaging Social Justice developed by the KCL Visual and Embodied Methodologies network and the Arts Cabinet (more details about it can be found on their website). I saw this as an opportunity to amplify the narratives encountered throughout my research in an artistic and accessible way. I provide an extensive reflection on the processes and results emerging from this collaboration in a forthcoming paper.

Zaragocin and Caretta 2020; Hernández, Lozano, and Jurado 2020). As a travelling, remote methodology to conduct decolonial feminist geographical research *with* migrant women, *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* builds on and adapts *Cuerpo-Territorio*.

In the next section, I provide an overview of *Cuerpo-Territorio*, contextualising its origins, ways that it has been deployed as well as setting out its decolonial feminist potential as a method for migration when applied in an embodied, relational and accountable way. I then move on to review some of the migration literature and its conceptual-methodological propositions to situate my position and the contribution I aim to advance with *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios*. The last half of this section is dedicated to outlining how I implemented this methodology in the context of my PhD research and discussing some methodological insights that emerged through this experience. I discuss and argue specific ways in which this methodology has done important decolonial feminist work and contributed to marginalising universalist Western knowledge foundations whilst illuminating multiple scales at which border violence and resistance to it can operate. In my conclusion, I summarise my main original contribution and reflect on the possibility to implement *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* in other areas of migration research.

Engaging with *Cuerpo-Territorio* through embodied relational accountability

The notion of *Territorio Cuerpo-Tierra ("Territory body-earth or Body-Territory")* has emerged as a political slogan by indigenous *Maya-Xinka* women in Guatemala and is central to the communitarian feminist political project (Cabnal 2010), as well as to Latin American women's territorial struggles more broadly (Ulloa 2016; Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017b; 2014; Cruz Hernández 2016). As Lorena Cabnal (2010) contends, *Cuerpo-Tierra* represents an ontological continuum between earth and bodies. As this author explains, this concept bridges the ongoing struggles of indigenous women to defend their territories against extractive exploitation with the historical violation of indigenous women's bodies. Apart from being a cosmological and epistemological proposal, it is also a political call to defend and reclaim the body as a territory, a base to promote life and dignity whilst resisting capitalist, patriarchal exploitation (Cabnal 2010).

Cuerpo-Territorio has become a central ontological base for Latin American knowledge production committed to a decolonial praxis. Working alongside indigenous and peasant communities, various Latin American geography collectives have operationalised this as a mapping method in significant and innovative ways. During a research visit to Ecuador in the

spring of 2019, I had the opportunity to meet members of the Colectivo de Geografía Crítica de Ecuador[54], the Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo[55] (Ecuador) and Geobrujas (Mexico) (among others) and gain a more practical understanding of their work at the Autonomous Geographies Encounter hosted by Colectivo de Geografía Crítica de Ecuador. These theoretical and embodied encounters as well as the methodological guides published by these collectives informed my implementation and adaptation of *Cuerpo-Territorio* as a method to research migration experiences (see Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017a; Colectivo de Geografía Crítica 2018; Geobrujas 2018). *Cuerpo-Territorio* has flourished in its hemispherical travels across the Americas (Zaragocin and Caretta 2020; Mollett 2021; Haesbaert 2020; Satizábal and Melo Zurita 2022), and likewise moved and migrated with my own body to London.

Cuerpo Territorio presents itself as an ontological and methodological base to counter what Latin American authors have conceptualized as internal colonialism in its cultural/intellectual dimension (Casanova 2006; Rivera Cusicanqui et al. 2016), intellectual colonialism (Fals Borda 1979) or coloniality of knowledge (Quijano 1992). *Cuerpo-Territorio* helps to marginalise and displace Western epistemology from its universal positioning, whilst creating the conditions for feminist decolonial thinking to emerge. This is because it methodologically builds on an embodied, decolonial feminist ontology that de-links/detaches from the European paradigm of 'rationality/modernity' (Quijano 1992; Walsh 2007; Maldonado-Torres 2008; Grosfoguel 2007; Gordon 2011; Escobar 2007), whilst recognising the epistemic authority of indigenous women of *Abya Yala*[56] (Cumes 2012; Espinosa-Miñoso 2009).

However, to actualise this shift in the body/geopolitics of knowledge, which is crucial in decolonising epistemologies and methodologies, there must be simultaneous attention paid to the political economy of knowledge (Riveira Cusicanqui 2012). This requires an embodied ethical engagement with subaltern ontological conceptions, epistemologies and struggles based on which this method emerged. In this sense, it is important to state that *Travelling*

[54] https://geografiacriticaecuador.org/

[55] https://territorioyfeminismos.org/

[56] The term, from Kuna indigenous language, has been used to refer to Latin America as a means to reclaim alternative geopolitics recognising the right of indigenous people to self-determine and name their own territories (Santiago 2015; Speed 2017).

Cuerpo-Territorios has been proposed as an adapted methodology for migration, but not a completely new one. Hence it is an ethical imperative to emphasise *Cuerpo-Territorio's* ontological roots in indigenous communitarian feminism as well as its many methodological travels across Latin America in the praxis of women's territorial movements, critical/decolonial geography collectives and scholars.

Even though body-mapping has been used as a methodology for research with undocumented migrants and survivors of violence in the Global North (Gastaldo et al. 2012; Lykes and Crosby 2014), little attention has been paid to the decolonial feminist potential *Cuerpo-Territorio* offers, nor to how it can be fruitfully combined with feminist geopolitics and critical migration/border studies perspectives. More generally, Global North researchers' use of body-mapping as storytelling (Gastaldo et al. 2012; de Jager et al. 2016; Coetzee et al. 2017) does not tend to conceive of its process in explicitly political terms nor build on an alternative ontology. As an exception, Sweet and Ortiz Escalante's (2017) research on gender violence with Mexican women (in the US and Mexico) engages with *Territorio Cuerpo-Tierra,* arguing it to be a useful tool to deconstruct Western notions of bodies separated from the land, whilst also blurring the public/private divide.

Indeed, I concur with Zaragocin and Caretta (2020), who suggest that *Cuerpo-Territorio* as a concept and as a geographical method carries a significant decolonial feminist *potential:* grounded in the ontological continuum between bodies and territories, it enables the co-production of knowledge in embodied and more accessible ways. I argue, however, that the unlocking of such potential depends on the specific ways in which this method is deployed and/or combined. I am therefore calling for a contextualized, accountable and relational embodied research practice as this method is deployed and implemented in the migration field (Said 1984; Daigle and Sundberg 2017; Daigle 2018; Ramírez 2018).

As Indigenous scholars contend, relationships and relational accountability are key notions in Indigenous ontologies and research paradigms (Tuhiwai Smith 2002; Wilson 2009; Leeuw et al. 2012). As such, decolonial geographers emphasize the need to situate their embodied positions in relation to the spaces they inhabit through an accountable practice committed to decolonisation and liberation struggles (Daigle and Sundberg 2017; Daigle 2018; Ramírez 2018). As Leeuw et al. (2012, 188) suggest, nurturing relational accountability must go beyond researchers and research participants or institutional spaces of research evaluation to include friendships, networks of relationships and other spaces where research and researchers 'are themselves constituted.'

As a racialised Brazilian migrant woman researching violence against Latin American women in England, my critical, relational and embodied sense of accountability underpinned my drive to address methodological issues relating to the study of migrant women's experiences of intimate and state violence(s) and how they resist to these. My long history of migration as well as experiences of intimate, intra-family and state violence(s), have drawn me to research this topic from an embodied commitment to social justice. Even as I move to the centre in my position as a PhD researcher at King's College London, I choose to embrace the margin as a radical place of openness from which I produce knowledge and commit to oppositional struggle (hooks 1989). I embody this commitment by being accountable to my own experiences and the political, professional and personal relationships that imbued me with trust and enabled me to conduct my study. As an early career migrant/migration scholar based in the core of a former colonial Empire researching migration from the South, I occupy a disruptive yet ambivalent position. Doing research with gendered 'colonial immigrants' whilst being a gendered 'colonial immigrant' myself (Grosfoguel et al. 2015) is complex since we share similar experiences and concerns, though our interactions are also crossed by power. Striving to produce critical decolonial/border thinking, therefore, meant recognising our unequal power relation, our similarities as well as differences, listening and practising an embodied relational accountability for the design and implementation of my methodology.

Embodied relational accountability has driven me to counter epistemic violence, to search for a method with the potential to become a 'crossroads', a method that can help us live *sin fronteras* as migrant women—to survive the material, political, symbolic and academic borderlands, paraphrasing Gloria Anzaldúa (1991). I argue that *Cuerpo-Territorio* can be this crossroads. As a Global South method that travels and transforms across spatialities and temporalities, it already lives in the in-betweenness, where feminist border thinking is possible. As Lugones (2010, 45) contends, the colonial difference can only be transcended 'from a perspective of subalternity, from decolonization, and, therefore, from a new epistemological terrain where border thinking works.'

Decolonising migration methodologies from the body

In this section, I critically review some of the conceptual-methodological tendencies within the migration scholarship. I situate my position within feminist geopolitics and critical migration and border studies, from which I build and advance *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* as a potentially decolonising methodology to investigate migration experiences.

Much of migration studies have been historically driven by a colonial bias or northern-centric view conceiving of migration as an exceptional problem to be tackled, and the nation-state as a naturalised, bounded entity (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Grosfoguel et al. 2015; Anderson 2019). This is at least partially due to historical blindness towards colonialism in migration research and its lack of engagement with decolonial and post-colonial theories, which helped pave the way for methodological nationalism (Mayblin and Turner 2021; Tudor 2018; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Post-war immigration integration theories uncritically put forward what Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002, 302) have termed *methodological nationalism*: 'the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world.' This assumes the nation as an integrated and stable territory with a somewhat homogenous community, whilst migrants are seen as security threats, cultural others and social deviants whose integration becomes a major problem to be studied.

Attempts to go beyond methodological nationalism have led to a flourishing of studies in the past decades adopting a transnational migration framework that moves away from the nation-state as the scalar focus of empirical analysis (Amelina et al. 2012; Amelina and Faist 2012; Glick Schiller 2015; Anderson 2019). However, as Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) note, some transnational studies have continued to accept a view of the world as divided into nations, reifying transnational migrant communities and/or overlooking interactions across migrant and non-migrant communities. The contribution of Latin American migration scholars investigating transnational cities (Besserer 2016), spaces (Román-Velázquez and Retis 2021), religious communities (Levitt and de la Torre 2018; Sheringham 2013) and families (Herrera 2016) have been crucial in surpassing these, as have been critical feminist analyses of the role of migrant women on global care chains (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010; Herrera 2011; Malgesini 2004; Vega Solís 2009).

Some studies on gender and migration implementing an engendering transnationalism approach (Mahler and Pessar 2001; 2003) may have, nonetheless, been guilty of reproducing both methodological nationalism and Western feminist views on gender and patriarchy. Investigating how gender identities and 'gender ideologies' are challenged, reconfigured or reinforced through transnational migration processes, these have unintendedly put forward reified culturalist notions of patriarchies linked to specific national/ethnic belongings (see Boehm 2008; McIlwaine 2010; Pessar 2005). Methodologically, the scale of the nation has once again been privileged and treated as a container - now, of 'gender ideologies'.

Research on intimate partner violence against racialised migrant women in Anglophone countries has largely exhibited similar problems. Culturalist arguments have led to the portrayal of migrant women as passive victims trapped in their own 'patriarchal' culture, contributing to further stereotyping and stigmatizing whole migrant communities (Raj and Silverman 2002; Latta and Goodman 2005; Brownridge and Halli 2002). Within this area of study, there is a methodological scarcity of research *with*, *for* and/or *by* - rather than *about* - migrant women, which often translates into scant reflections on how research findings and representations impact the communities studied. As Grosfoguel et al. (2015) suggest, uncritical migration scholars tend to neglect the embodied and geopolitical epistemic location from which knowledge is produced, hence risking to reproduce the viewpoint of the coloniser.

Compelling alternative methodological propositions within migration research have, however, continued to firmly oppose methodological nationalism. These include, for example, mobilities approaches, bordering methodologies, methodological de-nationalism, and multi-scalar perspectives (Amelina and Faist 2012; Hyndman 2012; De Genova 2013; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Williamson 2015; Anderson 2019). Similarly, there have been efforts to bring the decolonial into migration research (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010; Walia 2013; Grosfoguel et al. 2015; Tudor 2018; El-Enany 2020; Mayblin and Turner 2021).

The theoretical-methodological contributions to migration scholarship by feminist geopolitics and political geography (Hyndman 2004; 2012; Hiemstra 2017; Sundberg 2011; Kwan and Schwanen 2018; Mitchell-Eaton and Coddington 2022) and critical migration and border studies (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; De Genova 2013) are particularly relevant to my approach. With its focus on border regimes, critical migration and border scholars advanced a significant shift in how borders are researched (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015). Grounded in a constructivist de-naturalizing approach to borders, the border regime encompasses practices, systems, and discourses that produce and reproduce borders in a more or less ordered manner – though politically contested and changing. Within this perspective, 'the border can only be conceptualized as being shaped and produced by a multiplicity of actors, movements and discourses' (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015, 69). Similarly, feminist geopolitics and political geography propose a multi-scalar framework that shifts the overemphasis on the national, engaging with the body as a scale of analysis and source of situated knowledge production (Hyndman 2004). These perspectives converge in their treatment of scales and borders as relational and historically produced rather than seen as pre-given. Calling for engagement with multiple other scales, they effectively de-centre the state (whilst not dismissing it), in particular as they focus on migrant bodies (Hyndman 2004; Mountz

2011; Smith, Swanson, and Gökarıksel 2016; Smith 2020), how borders become embodied (Coddington 2020; Geobrujas-Comunidad de Geógrafas 2021), migrant subjects and their struggles (De Genova 2002; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013; Álvarez 2017; Cordero, Varela, and Mezzadra 2019; Gil Everaert 2021), non-human actors' involvement in boundary-making (Sundberg 2011; Pallister-Wilkins 2022); and bordering processes from within and beyond the state's physical boundaries (Yuval-Davis et al.2019; Hyndman 2012; Mountz and Hiemstra 2014; Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; Domenech and Dias 2020).

The *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* methodology I put forward to research migrant women's experiences builds and expands on these efforts by suggesting a multi-scalar approach that centres on the body and adapts the Latin American *Cuerpo-Territorio* method. Within this method territories and borders are to be understood as socially, politically and economically produced as they are traced and mapped onto bodies. Whilst the nation-state continues to be empirically and analytically relevant, it is conceived in constant relation to multiple other scales, from the body to the global. Prioritising the body not only as a scale of analysis but also in the research method, I am *methodologically* further decolonising feminist geopolitics and critical migration and border studies. *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* combines a decolonial feminist understanding at the global scale (the colonial/modern gender capitalist world system) with a decolonial feminist geographical ontological approach to the body/embodiment - understood in a continuum with territories. I argue that through its practical focus on the body as a method it is possible to practically expand on the 'epistemologically situated', 'embodied', and 'accountable' research principles advocated by Hyndman (2004) as she conceptualises feminist geopolitics. Similarly, it aligns and ontologically pushes forward the important methodological propositions of feminist political geographers' on the use of periscoping to research seemingly hidden topics in the field of borders and migration (Hiemstra 2017; Williams and Coddington 2021). As I bring *Cuerpo-Territorio* to migration, I build on the rich counter-mapping work of feminist geographers (Whitesell and Faria 2020; Zaragocin et al. 2018; Suárez Val 2021) whilst also uniquely advancing critical migration and border scholars' use of counter-cartographies as embodied and situated methods for militant research (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubias 2018; Mason-Deese et al. 2018; Geobrujas-Comunidad de Geógrafas 2021). *Cuerpo-Territorio* has been deployed within my methodology as a *counter-mapping* method that centres bodies: from an embodied position, it maps bodies' travels and how violent bordering and territorialisation processes at various scales, as well as resistance to these, cross bodies.

The decolonial feminist geographical approach to the body/embodiment, which takes centre stage in this methodology, also requires scholars to interrogate and account for their own embodied relational positioning as they implement the adapted *Cuerpo-Territorio*. Centring the principle of embodied relational accountability is a methodological effort to counter the risk for *Cuerpo-Territorio* to be emptied of its decolonial feminist potential as it travels to migration research. If not adapted in contextualised and accountable ways, *Cuerpo-Territorio* risks de-politicisation, emulating a colonial 'move to innocence' and therefore contributing to the metaphorisation of decolonisation (Tuck and Yang 2012, 3).

Cuerpo-Territorios that travel

Inspired by and building on the work of Latin American collectives and scholars, I designed *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* as a methodology to specifically work with Latin American migrant women survivors of intimate and state violence(s). In this section, I discuss this methodology in more detail as well as the various travels *Cuerpo-Territorio* has taken in the context of my project, conducted in England in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cuerpo-Territorio has travelled conceptually, methodologically and physically across various scales as part of the implementation of this methodology—from the global, national, local and virtual scales. *Cuerpo-Territorio* travelled globally, as a concept (from South to North) as well as locally, as body-size papers that moved across London (and sometimes beyond it) to become survivor-made *Cuerpo-Territorio* maps at the home of participants and then travelled back into the hands of my collaborator, the visual artist Nina Franco. What also travels are the journeys that participants themselves have taken as migrants, imprinted on their maps as embodied memories, emotions and sensations. The twenty Latin American women participating in my project were from nine different Latin American countries. Their bodies travelled many journeys, moving across countries, cities and neighbourhoods with or to join their partners, fleeing intimate partner violence and/or seeking safety and a better future for themselves and their children.

Cuerpo-Territorio is a travelling concept/theory and methodology (Said 1984) within the framework of my project, which moves it from its place of origin to another. Although concepts travel in time and space, as Said (1984) eloquently suggests, when examining travelling theories, it is crucial to be attentive to the risk that they become reified or de-politicised in the new context. Indeed, as Said (2000) also contends, when carefully reconsidered, the process of transplanting a theory—and a method, I would argue —may indeed politicise it.

To ensure that *Cuerpo-Territorio* remained relevant and attuned to the new political possibilities arising from the new context, I paid careful consideration to the new dynamics at play. Designed as a methodology to be implemented in a Global North migration context, I have tailored *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* to engage with territorialities at multiple scales, recognising both decolonising conceptions of territory and also more traditional ones connected to state territorial border practices (Wastl-Walter and Staeheli 2004; Sandoval et al. 2017; Halvorsen 2018).

Due to COVID-19 safety measures, my initial plan for the implementation of this method had to be modified. Since physically meeting in a group workshop was no longer viable, instead, research participants were invited to map their *Cuerpo-Territorio* at their own home, which was then followed by a video conference debrief session. After considering its particular emotional implications, those who felt comfortable taking part in the activity were sent body-size papers by post. Papers travelled from Nina Franco's home through London and to other cities, arriving in migrant women's homes. Following a set of questions, participants drew and wrote their memories, feelings, sensations, and emotions on different parts of their body-silhouettes, crafting their own *Cuerpo-Territorio* map. These then travelled back to us digitally and physically.

In addition to written instructions with questions to reflect on, participants also received a video in which a Brazilian woman survivor of violence performed the mapping activity with Nina. Drawing on the guide by *Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo* (2017a), the video started with an exploration of the *Cuerpo-Territorio* notion followed by a step-by-step visual tutorial. After the maps were individually produced at home, participants displayed them digitally in follow-up debriefing sessions by video conference, in which they also reflected on the differences and commonalities of their embodied experiences. This was a fundamental feature of the methodology, useful to firmly ground the activity as an embodied relational practice and a collective diagnosis of healing potential, aligning with core principles associated with Latin American communitarian feminism (Cabnal 2010).

Cuerpo-Territorios in the making

In this section, I briefly outline and discuss the practical steps taken to implement the *Cuerpo-Territorio* method in the context of the *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* methodology. I then turn to the empirical material to discuss some of the embodied methodological insights arising from this experience. This is, however, far from an exhaustive account of my empirical results, which is beyond the scope of this paper/section.

Redesigning *Cuerpo-Territorio* to travel in the COVID-19 context called for greater logistical effort and flexibility whilst also demanding a specific kind of emotional labour which were carefully considered throughout the implementation of this method as these affected everyone involved in the research. As both Nina and I experienced the embodied physical, emotional and mental effects of the pandemic, we tried to anticipate how this new context would also be affecting the health of women participating in the project in various ways. These were Latin American survivors with various intersecting identities and at different stages of their healing journeys, some with childcare responsibilities, most with very limited social networks and emotional support in England. Striving to embody our ethics of care, we sought to be mindful of their circumstances whilst maintaining their agency. Having conducted interviews with participants previous to the body-map activity helped establish rapport and build trust with participants as well as provided important background knowledge to sensitively adapt the activity, conduct the debriefing sessions and further analyse the maps. With that said, although I do not consider that within this methodology participants must necessarily be interviewed first, this felt ethically important within a project enquiring about experiences of violence.

As a practical step, I called each of the twenty women I previously interviewed to check-in, see how they were and generally explain the proposed changes for this phase of the project. At this stage, one of them already admitted to not feeling well enough to participate. I advised another one not to take part and she agreed, given that she disclosed having returned to live with her abuser. The remaining 18 agreed to receive information by email and were given two weeks to confirm and provide consent. Out of those, 17 confirmed participation and later received written instructions and a video tutorial by email, as well as a body-size paper and markers by post. Eventually, ten women completed their *Cuerpo-Territorio* maps, which they documented by photograph before posting them back to us.

Combining the individual mapping activity with subsequent group discussions engendered a significant political process of recognition and resignification of bodies. Reflecting on the methodology, many participants identified advantages of carrying out the mapping process privately in their own homes, describing having been able to set their own pace and space, and sit with themselves in their own time with their bodies, feelings, memories and thoughts. For example, for Amanda, a white middle-class Costa-Rican woman in her 40s, mapping in a group setting *'would not have worked in the same way, because by yourself you have more privacy, more space, more silence to think and to remember.'* Having experienced severe physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, economic and state violence(s) upon her body from an early age until late adulthood, the process of mapping was experienced in intense and visceral ways (see

figure 7.1 in chapter 7 – where she marked with number 6 parts of her body affected by various forms of violence). She took around three hours to complete her map, allowing herself time to take breaks, go out to smoke a cigarette, sit and process the questions. For Tainara, a white working-class Brazilian woman also in her 40s, it took even longer, nearly a week. She left the paper on the floor for three days until she asked her daughter to help her draw her body silhouette, and another two days passed before she proceeded with the mapping process. As she explained, she was preparing herself and waiting for the right moment as she was aware that mapping her *Cuerpo-Territorio* would surface old feelings and potentially trigger uncomfortable bodily responses – such as the strong migraines she used to experience as a result of her ex-husband's post-separation harassment.

Participants recounted how conducting the mapping in isolation enabled them to deeply submerge into their thoughts, bodily experiences and feelings, which affected them differently according to their healing stage. Their experiences and reflections were not homogenous—they converged but also significantly differed at times. Some women lived their mapping process in visceral ways, describing temporarily experiencing bodily symptoms in its aftermath (such as headaches, sadness and fatigue). Others considered it lighter and more reflective in comparison to the interview, where they verbally recounted their experiences in more detail. For example, for Lorena, a working-class Indigenous descent Brazilian woman who experienced extreme levels of state and intimate border violence - intersecting with psychological, emotional, physical and economic abuse from her British ex-husband; mapping her body turned out to be less emotionally intense and more reflective than the interview.

> I was afraid to do the mapping and that everything would come back again because the interview is quite intense. But it was not like that, it was ok. I reflected a lot about everything but there wasn't that kind of heavyweight.
>
> (Lorena, Brazilian, Indigenous descent, 30 years)

The mapping activity allowed Lorena to reflect on the embodied ways (intimate) border violence suffocated her throat/dreams and affected her stomach, as a result of ongoing anxiety. She identified this not only with her husband's abuse but also with the 'Home Office', seen as an institutional source/perpetrator of this ultimately state form of violence (see numbers 2, 6 and 7 in figure 5.1 in chapter 5). On her map, it is also possible to see how she resisted these by focusing on her 'work' (number 8) as she actively waited, years within her abusive relationship,

and then months after separation, for her 'freedom' (number 4) in the form of an Indefinite Leave to Remain (IRL) status.

Nearly all women spoke about the pain of remembering, associated with the act of re-living violent experiences, something which looked different for each of them. Some considered themselves to be slowly healing or having indeed already healed, describing having experienced the mapping process as a less painful type of remembering. For them, visualising everything their bodies went through was shocking but also made them feel stronger. They were able to put into perspective how much they had to survive and yet how far they are still determined to go. Thinking through the questions also caused them to remember things they had forgotten, recognising which parts of their bodies healed and which ones were still in need of care—ultimately aiding their self-learning and embodied healing journey. This was the case for Jaqueline, a working-class mixed-race Brazilian woman, whose words suggest how through mapping her *Cuerpo-Territorio* she became more aware of her body, how violence(s) affected it and where she still needed to seek healing.

> I thought the mapping process of responding to the questions and identifying what I was feeling on the body was very interesting because these are the parts where it really affects you. It starts revealing your sensibilities, where you still may need to find healing.
>
> (Jaqueline, Brazilian, mixed-race, 45 years)

For other participants, the mapping experience turned out to be much more painful, with some feeling they went back in time and/or realised that some of their embodied pains were still with them. Two participants repeatedly described how they both felt like '*the time never passed*' and that the violence they went through would stay with them forever, that they would '*always feel the same.*'

Listening to these discussions also triggered specific reactions in my own body, such as anxiety, chest pain and headaches. I felt troubled by upholding an ethical sense of responsibility and a commitment to respecting the women's agency and capacity to choose to get involved as well as withdraw participation. As a researcher, it was hard to hear how painful the exercise was for some of the participants. This is something that continues to give me pause. However, later in our conversations, I understood that those women decided to participate with an awareness that it would be difficult, in the hope that their stories could ultimately travel to and help other women like them.

Moreover, some of the participants reiterated that even though mapping was hurtful and visceral, they would do it again and recommend other women in their lives do it too. For example, Hermana, a middle-class white Mexican woman explained that although extremely painful, the mapping process was useful to recognise that her life story is not only defined by violence and suffering but also by resistance, community, happy moments and places. She experienced psychological, emotional, economic and intimate border violence from her white, middle-class English husband, which intersected with state forms of violence (particularly institutional violence at the family court), and the effects of these were still being felt on her body. In figure 6.1 (in chapter 6), it is possible to see how Hermana's body seems to have been overtaken by CPTSD signs in the form of generalised stress, fear, anxiety, fatigue, racing thoughts, loneliness, desperation, sadness and insomnia, in addition to chronic physical pain on her foot and other physical symptoms. As she mapped her body, Hermana realised that even though she is strong and resilient she also needs help to heal, something she is now determined to seek.

> It is really impressive what living in fear can do to your body. But I am determined to heal, I want to become a story showing that it is possible to heal completely. I'm convinced that I want to pursue that.
>
> (Hermana, Mexican, white, 38 years)

Through women's maps, their collective spatialised resistance strategies to violence became visibly manifested in viscerally embodied ways that connected people, places and communities across scales and temporalities. Overlapping multiple scales, women drew memories of places and people who have given them strength and helped them resist, heal and move forward in the face of violence (see, for example, Hermana's drawings on her body's chest, marked with numbers 5 and 8 on figure 6.2). These were sometimes located outside England, providing them emotional strength from afar – and, often, also unknowingly.

By mapping, not only their experiences of violence but also resistance, the exercise was at least somewhat an empowering process whereby pain and suffering, as well as strength and resilience, could be recognised and put into perspective. In particular, being part of nature and feeling in connection to it emerged as a source of healing energy for participants, suggesting a particular embodiment of the *Cuerpo-Tierra* ontological conception of body and nature in a continuum, as a whole (Cabnal 2010). Just below her chest, Gisela, a mixed-race working-class migrant woman from Chile, who experienced psychological, emotional and (intimate) border violence from her white middle-class English husband, drew a sun and the beach of Mallorca

(see figure 7.2 in chapter 7). This is where her cousin lives and where she wanted to move once she acquired an independent immigration status: '*The beach helped me a lot, the sun, being part of nature, to be in nature. It was really beautiful and it was really good for me. Being able to feel connected. The salty water cleans you.*' Jaqueline also drew a beach and sun just above her shoulder and close to her neck, where she reported feeling pain due to stress – as a result of intimate partner violence combined with living under the fear of being undocumented and destitute as a single mother for more than ten years. As a Brazilian migrant woman from Rio de Janeiro (a city known for its long coastline), she explained that she pictures a sunny beach when she thinks of a relaxing place; it is what makes her feel good.

The participants welcomed meeting other women during the follow-up discussions, they told their stories through their maps, recognising each other in the differences and similarities of their embodied narratives. This virtual space was a powerful platform for women to connect, listen, feel validated and look up to each other, where they generously provided comfort, words of advice and hope. They found connecting dots even when their experiences drastically differed from one another, suggesting insidious ways that collective resistance strategies emerge from the embodied effects of violence and migration.

Displacing Western rationality and moving towards a decolonial feminist direction

Having presented how *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* has been implemented in the context of my research, in this section I discuss how Western research premises and colonial impetus are radically contraposed by this methodology. Based on this practical experience, I argue that *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* effectively responds to the need to decolonise methodologies in migration research. In particular, it helps us move beyond methodological nationalism by practically and ontologically advancing feminist geopolitics and critical migration scholars' perspectives on borders, bodies and scales towards a decolonial direction.

Re-centring an ontology based on the geo/body-political location of indigenous women, *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* helps confront the false Western separation between theory and practice. As a political slogan arising from indigenous women's alternative ontologies (Cabnal 2010; Ulloa 2016; Cruz Hernández 2016), *Cuerpo-Tierra/Cuerpo-Territorio* mobilises theory and practice in ways that match the imperatives of decolonial feminist epistemologies and methodologies (Curiel 2014; Espinosa-Miñoso 2014; Lugones 2020; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020). As argued by Curiel (2014), moving beyond the binary between theory and activism is crucial considering that historically, indigenous, Black and racialised women have produced

knowledge and alternative epistemologies directly connected to their lived experiences, personal and collective struggles (e.g. Collins 2000; Cumes 2012; Lozano Lerma 2014).

The implementation of *Cuerpo-Territorio* as an enacted travelling embodied participatory methodology has practically brought forward a decolonial feminist conception of bodies and embodied objectivity in research that significantly contraposes ontological fractures upon which Western rationality is constructed as a universal option (Lander 2000; Castro-Gómez 2005; Dussel 2000). In particular, it contrasts Descartes' foundational separation of body and mind and objectivity prescriptions striping the knowing subject from sensorial and empirical experiences, necessarily detached from the object of study (Castro-Gómez 2005; Lander 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2007). Within this methodology, migrant women are invited to actively reflect and map their own lived experiences concerning their gendered, racialised, class-based and geopolitically situated embodiments. They are therefore recognised as epistemic subjects instead of being treated as 'raw material' to be 'objectively' studied – as has historically been the case in research with racialised people from the South (Tuhiwai Smith 2002; Rivera Cusicanqui 2018; Tilley 2017).

The above mentioned Western ontological separations were also countered in the ways *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* enabled migrant women to conceive body and territory as the same and body and mind as a whole. This understanding deeply resonated with migrant women's embodied experiences of violence and resistance within and across various territorial border struggles. A non-hierarchical understanding of intersecting forms of violence emerged as connected and felt through various territorialities. Violence inflicted on the external physical body was understood to affect the mind, and what was done to the mind was understood to affect the physical body. Participants situated their minds not as detached or above, but as part of the body and in an interconnected relational continuum with all its other organs, feelings, sensations and emotions. Something which is clearly illustrated in the opening quote by Eduarda in the introduction of this section.

Conceiving bodies and territories in a relational continuum, *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* practically displaced the western separation between body and nature, whilst politicising and denaturalising territories and borders. My participants' discussions evidenced the particular ways in which the migration experience speaks to the notion of the body as women's first territory, where many other territories at multiple scales cross and meet in a relational continuum. When migrant women's bodies are violated, so are the territories they inhabit, whilst the territories they travel and inhabit are often controlled and contained through their bodies.

Prioritizing the body as the first territory-scale, not only theoretically but also methodologically, enabled critical interrogation and negotiation of the multiple borderlands emerging through our migrant bodies, making room for research participants to actively co-produce knowledge.

Starting from the scale of the body as a decolonising conception of territory, *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* methodologically disrupted nationalist tendencies whilst effectively engaging other territorial scales and how they are produced through and mark the body, including more traditional ones connected to state territorial border powers. This methodology demonstrated its potential to unveil the functioning of power and to connect multi-scalar experiences of intimate, structural and institutional violence with ongoing coloniality, revealing how these are spatially registered and manifested in embodied ways. This has had the effect of simultaneously de-emphasizing separations between intimate and state violence, by revealing the similarly embodied ways in which these are experienced in a continuum (Kelly 1988), facilitating reflections on their shared systemic roots.

As migrant women ontologically conceived body and territory as unified, their maps made visible how border violence extends from national to women's body-territories in ways that make (state-sponsored) intimate border violence visible (see chapter 5). Women's maps revealed how their *Cuerpo-Territorios* travelled across and through spatial, symbolic, and political territorial borders - external and, the subtle but incisive, internal ones. Those journeys became imprinted on their bodies as border violence, in its state as well as intimate and embodied manifestations. Indeed, Lorena's map (see figure 5.1), discussed in the previous section, powerfully illustrates that.

I argue that this multi-scalar embodied methodological approach to studying migrant women's experiences is needed because it is the body that travels with migration and it is our bodies that connect the multiple territories to which we belong or may never belong to—because of the intersecting meanings assigned and projected onto bodies. The multiple violence(s) migrant women are subjected to, as well as the ways we resist these, become imprinted upon our bodies, carrying and connecting multi-scalar spatialities and temporalities. As we move and cross material, economic, social and cultural borders, our bodies become marked by specific socio-spatial processes of capitalist, gendered racialisation and (re)territorialisation which can be well-understood through *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios*'s multi-scalar focus on embodiment (Longhurst 1995; Moss and Dyck 2003; Pile 2010; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020). With migration, the body registers the violent borderlands that we come to live in as migrant women, and it is from the body that we may struggle to survive them (Anzaldúa 1991). As the bodies of women

participating in my research show, as they migrate and settle in the Global North, they carry the South within, from which they resist as they continue to live under the abyssal line in the zone of non-being, in the colonised periphery of the modern, colonial, gendered, capitalist world system (Fanon 2021; Santos 2016a; 2016b; Ramon Grosfoguel 2016; Lugones 2008).

Within this methodology, mapping and resisting from the *Cuerpo-Territorio* has been approached not only as a research method but as a political act of bodily autonomy reasserting the right to our *Cuerpo-Territorios*—as originally intended by Lorena Cabnal (2010). As Cabnal (2010) contends, *Cuerpo-Territorio* invites us to consciously rethink our bodies as full of corporeal and ancestral memory. In the diasporic Global North context in which this method has been re-designed and implemented, the invitation was embraced by migrant survivors: through their mapping, they unveiled a deep awareness of embodied painful histories, feelings, emotions, and scars alongside their bodily strengths and potentialities. The conversations between survivors surfaced past pains but also strength and wisdom, something which, as bell hooks (1989) suggests, may often be yielded through suffering. In this sense, *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* can be conceived as a decolonial feminist methodological tool on several fronts, including in its commitment to *refusal* (Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2014; Mitchell-Eaton and Coddington 2022) to do research that only recognises and centres suffering as a measure of authenticity, ignoring the hope and wisdom often concealed underneath those narratives of pain (hooks 1989; Tuck 2009).

Final thoughts

In this section, I expanded efforts to decolonise geographical methodologies into the field of migration research. Refuting methodological nationalism, and responding to calls for migration scholars to seriously engage with decolonial and postcolonial perspectives and the scale of the body, I *methodologically* advanced critical migration studies, feminist political geography and feminist geopolitics' perspectives towards a decolonial direction.

I built on the Latin American indigenous notion of *Cuerpo-Territorio* (Cabnal 2010; Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017a; Cruz Hernández 2016; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020), adapting it as a concept and a method to operate remotely to grasp complex experiences of migration. Drawing on my own need to carry out fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* is a methodology that attends to the social distancing requirements of this moment, potentially being useful to research other contexts of constrained mobility. Therefore it can lend itself well to the purposes of feminist periscoping methodological

strategies interested in researching migration topics which are seemingly hard to access (Hiemstra 2017; Williams and Coddington 2021).

Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios may be suitable to investigate Global North contexts of migration in which the coloniality of borders is ever more present but re-shaping through various processes of (re)territorialisation. This was specifically designed to grasp how, in the context of the British hostile environment, an ever more dispersed border regime was operating at multiple scales, in particular, at the intimate and embodied ones. Since my study, there have been significant and fast changes in the UK's border regime as a result of the pandemic geopolitical developments and the Brexit transition period coming to an end in December 2020. There is, therefore, scope to use this methodology to map and trace how violence(s) triggered by COVID-19 and the post-Brexit scenario have been impacting migrant bodies since then.

Even though this methodology has been developed with survivors of intimate partner violence who migrated from South to North, it could possibly be expanded to research with other migrant groups and to investigate South-South migration. As I emphasise the 'travelling' character of this methodology, I encourage it to keep travelling, in particular to Latin America, where it indeed came from. Central to this methodology was the adoption of an embodied perspective to understand the body as the first scale from which scholars and research participants produce knowledge, and from which it is possible and necessary to enact an embodied relational practice of accountability in research (Daigle 2018; Tuhiwai Smith 2002). That said, as *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* travel to be used in other migration studies, it is paramount, however, that scholars critically engage with the embodied scale from which knowledge is produced - in a relational way that is accountable to migrant subjects, their migratory journeys and struggles. This would require carefully rethinking this methodology to respond to the needs arising from varied socio-spatial-political embodied contexts it may travel to.

As I conclude writing this section, the *Cuerpo-Territorio* maps produced as part of my research continue travelling beyond the scope of my PhD and in alignment with participants' wishes that their stories helped raise awareness and reached other women like them. Having carried out *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* from within an art-research collaboration has helped their dissemination among non-academic audiences - something I have been committed to. The artistic outcomes from this project – including the Body-Territory maps, have been publicly

available on the Arts Cabinet website[57] since 2020. They were also featured at the Science Gallery London at KCL from end July 2022 as part of the 'Embodied Lines' exhibition and Latin American women were encouraged to visit and engage with the display through targeted outreach.

* The incorporated paper 'Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios' ends here with the above section.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis occurred during and after fieldwork and when I wrote up the findings. It was an iterative and circular process - rather than a linear one, in which I kept going back to the data (Kitchin and Tate 2014). I took notes during participant observations, interviews, and Body-Territory mapping discussions, which worked as the first level of analysis and interpretation. This helped me restructure and refocus ongoing activities and informed the coding process after finalising data collection. I conducted and transcribed all interviews in participants' native languages, Spanish or Portuguese (with some excerpts in English as some participants sometimes switched between languages). I allowed participants to express themselves in whatever language came out naturally to them according to what they were saying. This, together with my ability to understand those three languages, ensured the data collection and analysis process captured the nuances of their experiences in-between languages. I only translated to English specific sections of data selected to be cited in this thesis. I transcribed most of my data during the fieldwork and manually open-coded it into themes emerging directly from participants' narratives.

By the end of my fieldwork, having collected, transcribed and partially analysed all my data into themes, I was intimately familiar with its contents. I remembered all participants and the nuances of their stories very well. This familiarity helped combine a more personal and fluid analysis and triangulation of data with a more systematic thematic analysis. I coded all interviews with survivors and front-line workers using NVivo, with some of my codes emerging directly from data whilst others reflecting some of the theoretical questions and concepts I

[57] https://www.artscabinet.org/imagingsocialjustice/rosa-dos-ventos-lopes-heimer-and-nina-franco

aimed to explore through the empirical data. As such, I took a flexible approach to thematic analysis combining some elements of grounded theory with some a priori themes (Ryan and Bernard 2003; Braun and Clarke 2006; Charmaz 2006). Using NVivo enabled me to make sense of lengthy interview transcripts, although sometimes participants' narratives became too compartmentalised. I was hyper-aware of this and therefore made sure to go back to original transcripts whenever it felt necessary and sometimes included a more extended narrative in my analysis and writing.

The analysis of the Body-Territory maps crafted by survivors occurred first with/by themselves during our zoom debrief sessions in which they commented on words and drawings featured in the different parts of their bodies – marked with numbers in response to specific questions. During those sessions, with two participants in each, they told their stories through their maps, leading the analysis. I asked them to go through each of the eight questions they responded to in the mapping exercise, which are listed below:

1. Where and what do you feel when you think about the violence suffered at the hands of your partner?

2. Where and what do you feel about how your nationality, immigration status or level of English may have been used to exert violence or control over your body?

3. Where and what do you feel when you think about the ways you were treated by public authorities while trying to escape violence?

4. Where in your body do you feel strength and power in the face of violence? What is it? (it could be a word or a drawing)

5. Draw places or people that bring you good memories, happiness, and love. It could be a place, where you currently live, frequent, pass on your commute, or have lived or been in the past.

6. Draw places, people and events that make you feel insecure, sad, or violated (for example, it could be a city, a country, a house, a neighbourhood, an institution, a room, etc.).

7. Identify the parts of your body that feel hurt or are already healed, parts that any kind of violence has scarred. Think about how that violence marked your body. What places and people are part of this?

8. Identify in this body where your strength is, where the resistance is, and the will to transform. What places and people are part of this? Which strategies? Think about how that strength and resilience marked your body.

Whilst going through the above questions and presenting their maps, we would zoom into particular areas of the digitally displayed image. Participants were free to give as much or little detail as they wanted. Although I sometimes prompted them with a few follow-up questions, some aspects of the maps were not always fully discussed. This was partially due to constraints regarding the time and format of those discussions and also due to an ethical decision. I made a point to allow participants to take control of their narratives, exploring in detail what felt most important to them rather than requesting additional emotional labour. I transcribed the recordings from those sessions and were then combined with the images of the maps for a second level of analysis in which I reviewed all maps together and identified preliminary themes.

Those themes and images were then used to analyse this data in conjunction with thematic analysis from interviews. My three sources of data – survivors' maps; life-story interviews with survivors; and in-depth interviews with front-line workers – were triangulated to ensure 'completeness' in the analysis (Breitmayer, Ayres, and Knafl 1993), a broader understanding of the subject rather than simply to validate findings.

I strategically practised refusal (Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2014) in this study's analysis and writing up to avoid collective harm by carefully assessing the community impact (and risk of misinterpretation) of revealing and focusing on specific aspects of the rich and extensive data gathered. Refusal guided me to understand what parts of participants' stories deserved to be publicly known and what should be kept between us; what may exploit or harm as opposed to what paid justice to or benefited those who trusted me to hold their stories.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodological framework implemented in this study, which adopted a decolonial feminist geographical approach to research. Decolonial feminist epistemological guiding principles steered the selection and implementation of methods used to respond to my research questions. In particular, indigenous-inspired notions of radical embodied relational accountability and practising refusal were core elements informing this research, which helped design and implement my methodology, adapting it throughout fieldwork when needed.

The specific methods of data collection were qualitative and selected based on their decolonial feminist potential. This involved multi-sited ethnography in and of the gendered capitalist colonial/modern world system, which considers how the particular interacts with other scales.

Participant observation in a Latin American women's organisation (LAWA) was combined with in-depth interviews with front-line workers and life story interviews with Latin American survivors of violence. Given contextual changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic, these were carried out partially face-to-face and partially remotely. Finally, building on *Cuerpo-Territorio* as a concept and method, a Body-Territory mapping exercise was also implemented remotely as part of an adapted methodology for the study of violence and migration, which I have termed *Travelling Cuerpos-Territorios*.

CHAPTER IV – SETTING THE CONTEXT

Introduction

Violence Against Women (VAW) is broadly defined by the United Nations (1993) as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life'. Worldwide it is estimated that 35% of women (1 in 3) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or non-partner throughout their life (WHO 2013). IPV is globally reported as one of the most prevalent forms of VAW, with some national studies revealing that 70% of women will have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime (UN Women 2015). These are only estimates, and actual rates are likely to be even higher considering the systemic underreporting of VAW.

In the UK, IPV falls under the current cross-government definition of domestic violence as 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. It can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional' (Home Office 2012, 19). Although gender inequality and other intersecting axes of oppression are not recognised in this official definition, evidence shows that domestic violence is undoubtedly gendered, disproportionately affecting women. An average of two women a week are killed by a partner or ex-partner in England and Wales (Brennan 2017). In 2018, an estimated 28.9% (4.8 million) of women aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse at some point since the age of 16 (ONS 2018). The vast majority of victims of domestic-related prosecutions are women (66%), whilst nearly all defendants are men (92%) (ONS 2018). However, according to the 2018 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), an estimated over four in five victims (83%) of partner abuse do not report the abuse to the police (ONS 2018). Although there is a scarcity of published data relating to race/ethnicity and nationality of victims, underreporting is likely to be lower among Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women, mainly if they are migrants, whilst they are believed to experience higher rates of domestic homicides (UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women 2014).

In this chapter, I briefly outline the English context of violence against racialised and migrant women, also referred to as Black and minority ethnic women, and the main challenges they experience in leaving their abusers and seeking support. I outline the particularities of the Latin American population in the UK, their patterns of structural disadvantage and how these may

translate onto Latin American migrant women's experiences of violence, the prevalence of abuse and barriers to accessing support services. I also briefly discuss the effects of Brexit and COVID-19 on women, migrant and racialised populations and the implications of these for violence against Latin American women.

Black and Minoritised Women's Experiences of Violence in the UK

Research on BME women subjected to IPV in England suggests they experience a range of challenges that prevent or delay them from leaving the abuser, seeking/receiving appropriate support or reporting to the police (Imkaan 2010; Femi-Ajao, Kendal, and Lovell 2018; McIlwaine et al. 2019). Unfamiliarity with the UK system, language barriers, and fears due to irregular immigration status lead to BME women often staying in abusive relationships for considerably longer than white British women before they seek help (Imkaan 2010). A 2019 study commissioned by the Latin American Women's Rights Service with BME migrant women with experience of insecure immigration status and subjected to violence has revealed that over half of them feared that because of their immigration status, they would not be believed by the police (54%) or that the perpetrator would be more likely to be supported by the police or the Home Office (52%) (McIlwaine et al. 2019). Unsurprisingly, 24% of the women surveyed in this study admitted that they did not formally report abuse due to fears of deportation.

The challenges experienced by BME migrant women survivors of violence in the UK are compounded by inappropriate referral pathways and shortages in the availability of adequate support services. Since 2010, austerity measures put in place by the government have significantly decreased welfare benefits levels and funding allocated to local councils.[58] This led to direct cuts to publicly funded women's refuges and services that hit BME specialist refuge provision the hardest. By 2016, it was estimated that since then, more than 50% of all refuges led by and for BME women had to close or were taken over by a larger provider (Imkaan 2016). Currently, the national provision of shelters falls way below the demand and it is increasingly challenging for BME survivors to access adequate services and accommodation where they are safe, supported and able to recover from abuse. The UK national provision of refuge spaces was calculated at 5,562 for 2018, falling short by 1,715 bed-spaces compared to the Council of Europe's minimum target. According to 2018 data from a Women's Aid report (2019), there are

[58] It has been estimated that funding allocated to local councils have been slashed by half (WBG 2019).

30 specialist refuges exclusively for BME women in England, with 15 of these in London. However, many have very few refuge beds, the total amounting to 325 beds only. This represents only 8.5% of the national provision of 3,847 refuge spaces, with an average of four in five BME women survivors turned away when they approach a refuge (Imkaan 2016).[59]

BME women who are migrants are in an even direr situation as they are faced with additional legal barriers to accessing services. Migrant women who have an insecure immigration status - with a Non-Recourse to Public Funds condition attached to it - and those who are undocumented/irregular are not entitled to any form of state welfare benefits. Since 2002, the government introduced provisions for women who are spouses of a British national or someone who has Indefinite Leave to Remain under the Domestic Violence Destitute Rule.[60] However, there are no support routes for women living under work permits, student visas or who are irregular, particularly if they do not have children.[61] Despite those structural/legal disadvantages, regardless of their immigration status, BME women's experiences with local authorities broadly reveal severe patterns of systemic and institutional forms of racism and racialised gender stereotyping even when they are legally entitled to support and protection (Sisters For Change 2017). The challenges experienced by Latin American migrant women in England who are subjected to IPV are reflective of the above and compounded by the specificities of their experiences as migrants – as discussed in the following section.

[59] This is likely to be mostly due to lack of space but also due to other reasons such as immigration status, number or age of children the refuge is able to take in, survivor having additional complex needs that some refuges are not qualified to support her with, etc.

[60] Under the Domestic Violence rule, a woman who is living in the UK with a spouse visa can apply to Indefinite Leave to Remain if she can prove that her relationship broke down permanently due to domestic violence. Although this woman would only become eligible to have access to public funds following a positive decision, if she is destitute she can apply for the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (introduced by the government in 2012) which would give her access to public funds for a period of three months until a decision is made. It is worth noting however, that it can take long periods of time for a Home Office decision to be made and women might therefore be left destitute for the remaining time when it exceeds three months.

[61] Migrant women with children might be able to access some form of support through Section 17 of the Children's Act 1987.

Latin American Migrants in England and Women's Experience of Violence

Despite the absence of strong colonial links with England, having primarily been colonised by Spain and Portugal, Latin Americans are a growing migrant population that started arriving in this country in large numbers in the 1970s. The latest estimate from 2013 reveals that there were around 250,000 Latin Americans in the UK, of which 145,000 were concentrated in London (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). The largest nationality groups are Brazilians (31,000) and Colombians (19,000), followed by much smaller yet significant nationalities, such as Ecuadorians, Argentinians, Venezuelans, Mexicans, and Peruvians.

Latin American migrants in the UK tend to be well educated (half have tertiary education according to McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016); however, they are often presented with specific patterns of structural disadvantage. For example, even though Latin Americans have high employment rates (70%), nearly half work in precarious, low-paid jobs (i.e. elementary, service, caring and processing jobs). They tend to be more deprived than the national average; the vast majority live in private rented housing (70%), and for many English language barriers are a significant problem, with an average of 1 in 5 not being able to speak or communicate well in English (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Those structural disadvantages have a disproportionate gender impact on Latin American women, who make up 55% of the Latin American population in the UK (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016), often translated into barriers making it harder for them to leave abusive relationships. Although many Latin Americans do have a British (31%) or European passport (22%), precarious and irregular immigration status is a pressing issue, with research estimating that between 2012-2013 there were at least 2,266 irregular Latin Americans in the UK who had overstayed their visas (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Another study has estimated that 19% of Latin Americans living in the UK had an irregular immigration status (McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011).

Often referred to as 'invisible' migrants for their neglect in official diversity monitoring statistics, Latin Americans are nonetheless well established as a community, having set up a variety of local businesses and community-based organisations (Román-Velázquez 2009; Carlisle 2006; McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Despite recent political and funding challenges, there are two long-established non-profit organisations in London specifically running services by and for Latin American migrant women – namely, the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) and the Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA). The latter is the organisation I collaborated with to carry out this research. LAWA specialises in providing holistic support for victims/survivors of

gender-based violence and runs the only three refuges in the UK and Europe for Latin American women and children fleeing violence. These are two organisations I have been involved with, having volunteered for the first in 2016 and worked for the second before and during most of this research.

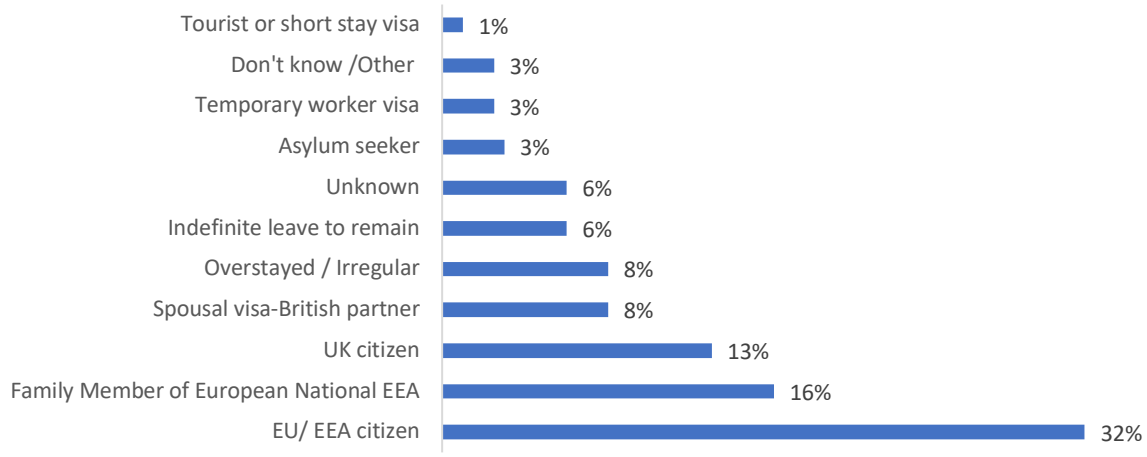
Even though there is scarce research on Latin American migrant women subjected to violence in England, McIlwaine and Evans (2017; 2018; 2020; 2022) have investigated Brazilian migrant women's experiences of violence in London. These suggest that despite the existence of these two London-based Latin American women's organisations with specialist services on VAWG, Brazilian women still face considerable challenges to flee abuse and seek support. In particular, Evans and McIlwaine's (2017) report reveals how class, language barriers and immigration status bear on Brazilian women's experiences of violence and access to support services. Their evidence suggests that Brazilian women seek help as a last resort once violence has become very severe. According to this study, the main risk factors contributing/enabling violence against Brazilian women were control over financial resources and lack of secure immigration status. Holding an EU passport considerably increased the likelihood of reporting violence to the police. Prevalence of VAWG among Brazilian women was also established to be high, with a survey by McIlwaine and Evans (2018) with Brazilian women living in London revealing that 82% of them experienced some form of VAWG in their lifetime. Most experienced violence in Brazil and the UK (2 in 5). Their survey also found IPV to be highly prevalent, with a quarter of respondents having experienced it.

LAWA's internal datasets (2019) reveal trends similar to the above studies whilst adding nuance to Latin American women's profiles and diversity of experiences. In 2019, I conducted a simple descriptive analysis of 194 profiles[62] of Latin American women supported by LAWA due to their experiences of VAW. At first glance, the profile of LAWA's users resonates with patterns already traced by more comprehensive studies of Latin Americans (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016; McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011). Nonetheless, their structural disadvantages appear even deeper when compared with the larger Latin American population. Something that may be explained as both a cause and consequence of their intersectional experiences of VAW. Quite shockingly, results showed that over half of the sample were not comfortable speaking English, and at least 40% were irregular or in a precarious and/or dependent visa situation. Those with

[62] Those were selected based on data availability, with the only criteria being that those included had experienced at least one form of violence.

a British spouse visa (8%) or an EEA dependant visa (16%) would have been able to access public funds via the DDVC or prove that they and their abusive partners are exercising their treaty rights (in a pre-Brexit context); whilst the remaining have access to near to no avenues of welfare support and regularisation in the face of IPV(see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Immigration status of LAWA's service users subjected to at least one type of abuse (%)

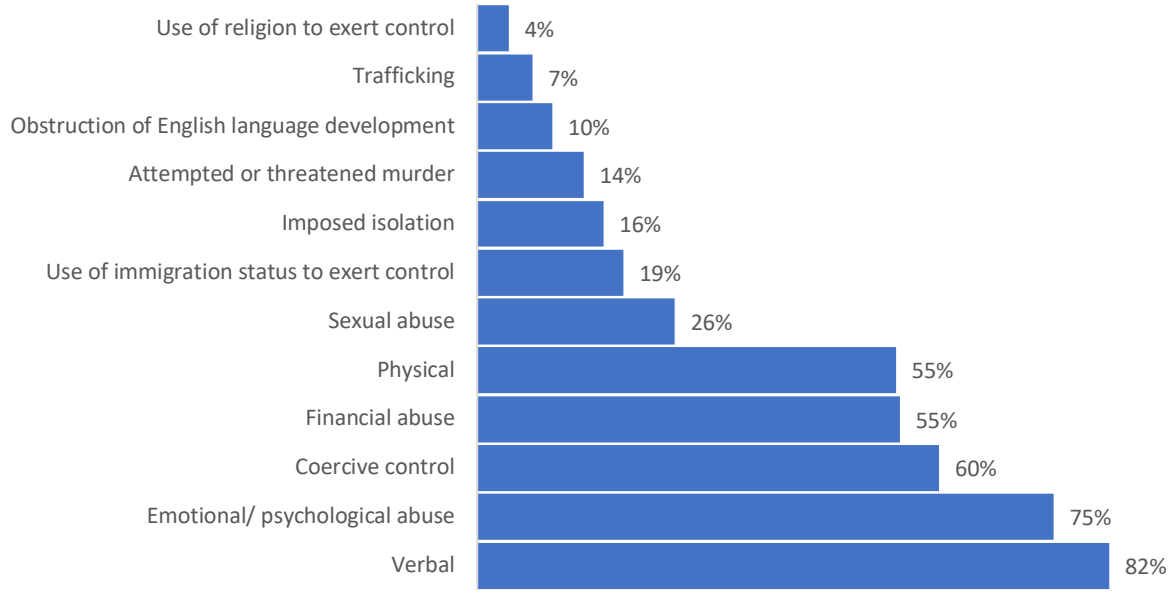


Source: LAWA's service user database, 2019

The largest nationality groups in the sample extracted from LAWA's database were Colombians (32%), followed by Brazilians (26%), Ecuadorians (10%), Bolivians (9%) and Mexicans (5%). Women tended to be Christian (78%), and most identified as White (46%), whilst a small portion identified as Black (7%) or Indigenous (3%) – the remaining self-identified themselves across different combinations of mixed race and other (44%).[63] Only 2% self-identified as trans women, and likewise 2% described themselves as lesbian or bisexual. The average prevalence rate of specific types of violence tended to be high for verbal (82%), emotional/psychological violence (75%), coercive control (60%), financial abuse (55%), physical violence (55%), and sexual abuse (26%) (see Figure 4.2).

[63] However, it is worth noting here that Latin Americans often identify as white even if they are in fact mixed race, although this will vary according to different experiences, racial identifications are often connected to being lighter skin and/or a colonial desire to approximate to whiteness.

Figure 4.2 Prevalence of abuse among LAWA's Latin American users who experienced at least one type of abuse (%)

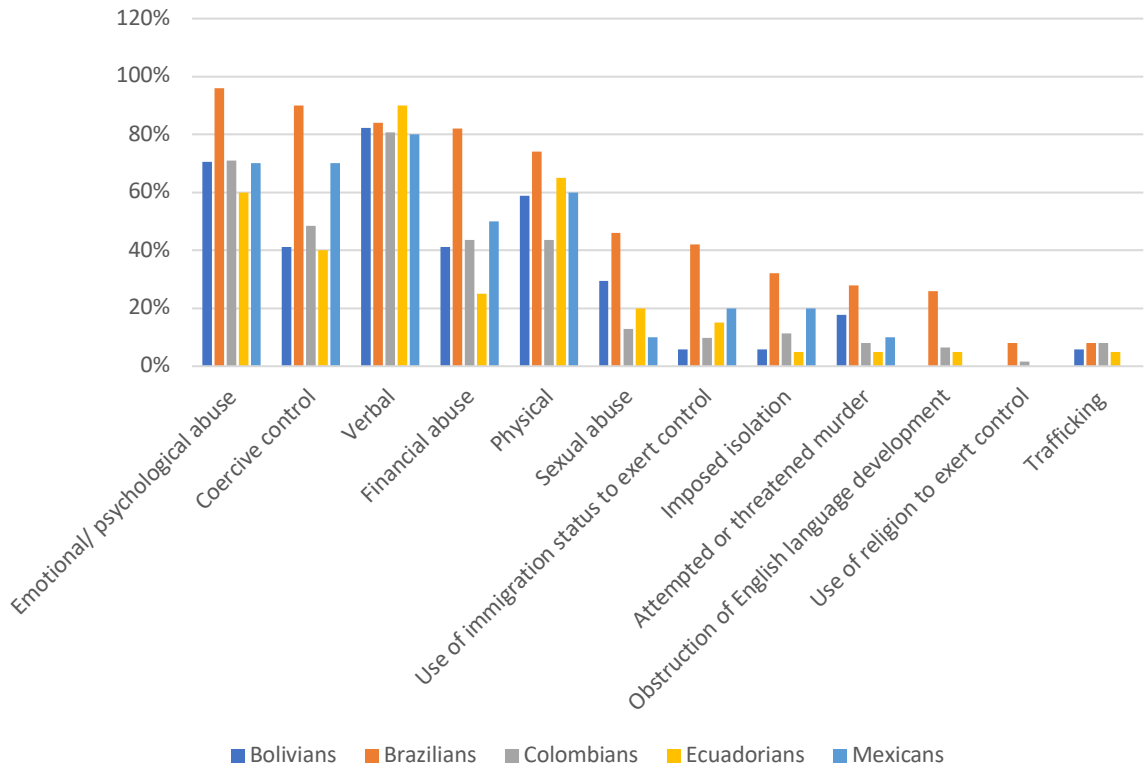


Source: LAWA's service user database, 2019

Although some of these are at the same or sometimes even below national levels reported by Save Lives (2018) IDVA statistics[64], specific nationality groups tend to have higher rates for some types of violence. In particular, Brazilians scored the highest in nearly all types of abuse, with physical (74%) and sexual violence (46%) considerably higher (see figure 4.3) than the national average, which is at 66% and 26%, respectively (Save Lives 2018). The length and frequency of abuse experienced by Latin American women have also shown to be generally high, with 20% having experienced abuse between 5 years to over 20 years and 51% suffering violence between 1 to 5 years, whilst 68% reported having been abused every day or at least a few days per week.

[64] It was not possible to make a more precise comparative analysis since the published national IDVA dataset by Save Lives (2018) uses different categories of abuse. Their 2018 data reveals that at 3 months prior to the intake survivors experienced the following: Physical abuse (66%), Sexual abuse (26%), Harassment & stalking (72%) Jealous & controlling behaviours (85%).

Figure 4.3 Prevalence of abuse among LAWA's largest nationality groups (%)



Source: LAWA's service user database, 2019

My analysis of LAWA's database shows that similarly to other migrant women, Latin American women experience specific types of abuse that intimately connects to their intersecting identities and oppressions. For example, 69% of women with an irregular status reported that their immigration status was used to exert control, and 76% of all women who experienced this type of abuse had some form of precarious or dependant immigration status. In addition, 'obstruction of English language development' was encountered as a form of abuse by 10% of all women from the sample, with 85% reporting that they did not feel comfortable speaking English. A high percentage of 68% of LAWA's users disclosed some form of mental health symptoms, compared to the national average of 42% (Save Lives 2018).

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Post-Brexit Context

Since the start of this research, two significant events have severely affected violence against women globally and, more specifically, migrant Latin American women in England. These are the formal exit of the UK from the European Union in January 2020 - followed by the end of freedom of movement in December of 2020 and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first months of this same year. My research does not fully engage with the implications of those

contextual changes; as they unfolded during my fieldwork, they are not integrated into my research questions and design. Yet, emerging literature has been shedding light on how these impacted migrants and violence against women and migrant women in particular, which I now briefly discuss.

The 2016 Brexit referendum mobilised an unprecedented anti-immigration rhetoric and sentiment, which led to an immediate increase in visible forms of racism and xenophobia, with migrants' rights and entitlement becoming under attack even before being formally revoked (Guma and Dafydd Jones 2019; Lopes Heimer 2019; Abranches et al. 2021). After lengthy negotiations and a transition period, the UK withdrew from the EU in 2020, meaning EU citizens became subjects to immigration control. With the end of freedom of movement, EU nationals no longer have an immediate right to reside, equal treatment, and welfare protection in the UK. This meant the formalisation of bordering practices that some groups were already experiencing before the withdrawal (Turcatti and Vargas-Silva 2022). For example, previous to that, some Latin American women who were EU passport or EU-family visa holders were already being wrongly classified as NRPF and prevented from accessing life-saving welfare support (Lopes Heimer 2019).

Indeed, Brexit impacted not only Europeans but Latin Americans and their families since a large proportion of the Latin American population in the UK hold EU passports or EU-family visas. Most of whom are onward migrants who moved here from Southern Europe after the economic recession in the 2000s (McIlwaine and Bunge 2019; McIlwaine 2020; Turcatti and Vargas-Silva 2022). In preparation for the withdrawal, the government introduced the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), for which EU nationals and their non-EU relatives needed to apply to secure lawful residence status. Although the EUSS application was presented as an easy process and the government framed the scheme as a success, research suggests significant gaps and raises concerns about migrants not being able to successfully apply and secure their rights (Sumption and Fernández-Reino 2020; Lagrue, Bourthoumieux, and Layonu 2020; Turcatti and Vargas-Silva 2022). In particular, migrants with intersectional disadvantages, such as those with limited English and digital skills, with disabilities and the elderly, faced barriers that made them more likely to have failed to apply (Sumption and Fernández-Reino 2020). Turcatti and Vargas-Silva's (2022) research confirms that this was a reality encountered among Latin Americans. Latin Americans from low-income groups with limited digital and English skills were more subjected to misinformation about the EUSS process and requirements. As these authors suggest, Brexit and the EUSS generated anxieties and a sense of loss among Latin American migrants, particularly Onward Latin Americans (OLAs) with previous experiences of being subjected to

immigration control. Whilst fears of losing their recently acquired residence status seem to have favoured OLAs' uptake of the EUSS, their non-EU family members were much more affected. Many are likely not to have been able to successfully apply to the scheme due to misinformation about their eligibility and difficulty in meeting the criteria, something that particularly worsened during the pandemic (Turcatti and Vargas-Silva 2022).

More specifically, Brexit has also had gendered implications for Latin American women in ways that may have furthered their social vulnerabilities and reinforced existing patterns of abuse of using the immigration system to exert power and control. With the process for non-EU family members applying to EUSS being much more onerous, unclear and dependent on evidence from their EU family members, this is likely to have had a severely detrimental effect on Latin American women. In particular, those in abusive relationships with EU nationals, whose power to exert control may have been exacerbated by the new rules. In many cases, they may have withheld information about the scheme or denied access to evidence for their partners' applications, ultimately preventing women from securing their status as a means to maintain them in a position of insecurity and vulnerability. Whilst there is not yet in-depth research on this, in Turcatti and Vargas-Silva's (2022) study, community workers reported cases of women whose ex-husbands refused access to their marriage certificates to prove their relationships. Indeed, the scheme may have been used as a tool of abuse to trap non-EU spouses in conditions of abuse as those unable to secure their status through the scheme were at risk of becoming NRPF, vulnerable to detention and deportation. Moving forward with Brexit and the end of the EUSS may pose gendered consequences for newly arrived Latin American women who are EU nationals or EU family members, as further restrictions for EU nationals and higher fees for family migration were introduced.

This changing national landscape for migrants in England was compounded by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic only a few months after Brexit. In the UK, the first lockdown came into place on 23 March 2020. It was followed by successive ones and other measures that significantly put women at increased risk of violence and with fewer support avenues – migrant and racialised women in particular. Research investigating the effects of COVID-19 on social inequalities highlights that gendered and racialised structural inequalities were exacerbated, with Black and racialised groups and women being disproportionally affected (Banga and Roy 2020; IPPR and Runneymede Trust 2020; Women's Budget Group 2020; Yong and Germain 2022; Abdelshahid and Habane 2021). Lockdown measures imposing social isolation created a conducive context for abusers, leading to an increase and change in the nature and patterns of abuse, with studies showing how perpetrators used the pandemic to exert specific forms of

coercive and controlling behaviour (Banga and Roy 2020; SafeLives 2020; Kaukinen 2020; Solace and Justice Studio 2021; Thiara and Roy 2022).

Although specialist women's organisations quickly adapted their services to respond to the fast-changing reality of the pandemic, their ability was limited by years of austerity and the lack of initial attention to VAWG in the government response to the pandemic. Black and minoritised VAWG organisations were particularly over-stretched, being six times less likely to receive emergency funding than mainstream VAWG organisations (Sheil 2020a, as cited in Thiara and Roy 2022). Although the women's VAWG sector generally reported a significant increase in demand following the first weeks of the lockdown (SafeLives 2020; Sheil 2020a, as cited in Thiara and Roy 2022), this peaked at as much as a 300% increase for BME-led women's organisations (Sheil 2020a, as cited in Thiara and Roy 2022). More than 60% of these came from local authorities and were referrals of Black and minoritised women that they were unable to support due to their immigration and language needs being perceived as too complex (Sheil 2020a, as cited in Thiara and Roy 2022).

Thiara and Roy's (2022, 318) research effectively documents the challenges experienced by BME-led organisations, which were 'left to bear the brunt of increased and complex cases'. Those organisations supported 43,255 women at the start of the lockdown, out of which 40 per cent were destitute due to socio-economic factors such as immigration status and/or precarious employment (Sheil 2020b, as cited in Thiara and Roy 2022). BME-led organisations reported an eight-fold increase in NRPF cases, and 75 per cent of women referred to them could not be safely accommodated because refuges were full (Sheil 2020b, as cited in Thiara and Roy 2022). It became harder to re-locate women from refuges during the pandemic, making fewer refuge spaces available for migrant and BME women in need (Lopes Heimer 2020). Statutory services used the pandemic to justify their lack of action regarding BME women's cases, whilst mainstream organisations often denied them support due to the intensity of the required advocacy work (Thiara and Roy 2022).

Although no studies primarily focused on Latin American women during COVID-19, Latin American migrants have been found to have severely struggled due to the first phase of the national lockdown in the UK. A report by IRMO, a London-based Latin American charity, surveying their service users, found that nearly half (49%) were out of work during this period. Since most work in the hardest-hit hospitality, cleaning and construction sectors, 77% reported being unable to work from home, and 49% were worried about going to work. As a result, more than half of respondents (58%) struggled to pay their rent, and one in three (31%) struggled to

pay for food, relying on food banks and food parcels. In addition, Latin Americans were also at high risk of contracting COVID-19 due to their concentration in essential sectors and poor housing conditions. Apart from the concerted response from well-established Latin American charities, a Latin American mutual aid group - 'Apoyo Comunitario', was formed at the beginning of the pandemic to help the needs of our community in London, primarily in the South (Lopes Heimer et al. 2021). Having been involved with this initiative from its start, I witnessed first-hand a parallel reality to that reported by IRMO, of Latin Americans going through extreme financial hardship, unable to meet their basic needs whilst prevented from accessing government welfare. As part of this initiative, we started an emergency fund with crowdsourced resources and re-distributed small financial sums to Latin American migrants in need who were NRPF. As funds were limited, we always prioritised those undocumented and/or with other intersectional needs. We established a referral system with LAWA through which we supported some Latin American women experiencing violence who were NRPF, for whom no financial help was available elsewhere.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have briefly outlined the context for this research concerning the prevalence of VAW and IPV globally and in the UK, particularly among migrant and racialised women. I have reviewed the main challenges and experiences of migrant and racialised women in a UK context of austerity measures, reduced welfare provision and funding to women's services and minoritised women's refuges. This general context is compounded by strict immigration policies, which create a hostile environment for migrants, particularly in a post-Brexit and pandemic context since 2020.

These have gendered consequences on migrant women who experience violence, causing fear of reporting and seeking help, limiting their access to statutory and voluntary support services, and pushing them into destitution. Latin American migrant women's experiences reflect this, revealing even more profound levels of structural marginalisation when compared to the broader community. Although there are two dedicated VAW service providers and three refuges run by and for Latin American migrant women in London, these are at capacity and underfunded.

* The chapter below is an incorporated paper entitled 'Bodies as Territories of Exception: The Coloniality and Gendered Necropolitics of State and Intimate Border Violence Against Migrant Women in England' published in the journal of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (see details in the list of publications).

CHAPTER V – BODIES AS TERRITORIES OF EXCEPTION

Introduction

> The moment I returned [from Mexico], the moment I returned with my spouse visa, he started to constantly threaten me, 'If you don't behave well, I'm going to put you in a plane and send you back to your country' […], and I'd say, 'How can you tell me that? I can't believe you are telling me that, I'm not a dog!'
>
> (Diana, Mexican, mixed-race white and indigenous, 23 years)

Through his statements, Diana's husband effectively embodied the territorial powers of immigration law, performing bordering as a means of controlling and disciplining her. The boundaries between state violence and intimate partner violence become blurred as national borders are not only controlled by state officials but also by abusers at the intimate and embodied scales. Having a British spouse visa meant that Diana qualified to use one of the only legal routes for migrant survivors to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) - the Domestic Violence Rule (DVR).[65] However, like many other women in her situation, Diana was not aware of this route or any other form of support. Socially and spatially isolated in a small English town, she felt she had to endure abuse until the end of the probationary period of her visa. It was not until her husband physically attacked her and tried to strangle her that Diana called the police. Upon seeing physical evidence of abuse, the police temporarily took her husband into custody, who claimed they were already separating and that Diana was inventing the story to be able to regularise her immigration status. Diana eventually applied for and was granted an ILR under the DVR. However, the criminal court acquitted her husband's charges – with his lawyers

[65] Only survivors who have a British Spouse Visa or are dependant of a settled person are eligible to apply to the Domestic Violence Rule and the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC). Under this rule they can apply for ILR if they can prove that their relationship broke out due to domestic abuse. If they are destitute they can also apply for the DDVC to become eligible to access public funds for a maximum period of 3 months whilst they wait for a response on their ILR application (although this may often take longer).

claiming that Diana provoked him to create evidence of violence to secure permanent status. The trial was highly re-traumatising for Diana as border violence was explicitly weaponised against her in a continuum (Kelly 1988) of state and intimate abuse.

The experiences of Diana and other Latin American survivors of IPV participating in my research reveal how abusive men reassert their border authority by projecting national sovereign power onto women's *Cuerpo-Territorios/*body-territories (Cabnal 2010; Zaragocin 2018a) – territorialised as annexed extensions of the national territory though under a state of emergency (Agamben 1998). Whilst this more evidently occurs when women's immigration status is insecure or tied to their marriage, border violence may also be directed at migrant women with a permanent or regularised status independent of the perpetrator. The material and discursive production of 'illegality' is a powerful strategy of intimate border violence that can be weaponised against Latin American migrant women regardless of their status.

State violence against racialised migrant women is identified in the literature regarding institutionalised racism, immigration control, reduced rights and uneven access to resources and services (Anitha, 2010; Critical Resistance and Incite!, 2003; Lopes Heimer, 2019; McIlwaine et al., 2019). Authors highlight the importance of accounting for intersectional structural factors relating to the migration experience, such as immigration status, language abilities, economic precarity and social isolation (Menjívar and Salcido 2002; McIlwaine and Evans 2020; Anitha 2011). They tend to emphasise these as 'stressors' or 'risk factors' that increase migrant women's vulnerability to violence (Menjívar and Salcido 2002; McIlwaine and Evans 2020). I conceive the coloniality materially embedded in the UK border regime not only as a stressor but as the source of a particular form of state and (state-sponsored) intimate violence. This regime wields state border violence deployed against migrant women across multiple scales. In particular, state border violence manifests itself in intimate and embodied scales in what I conceptualise as *intimate border violence*.

By intimate border violence, I mean a form of state-sponsored intimate violence directly stemming from the state border violence linked to the UK immigration system and its necropolitical operating logic. Although extensive literature explores the interconnections between violence and borders, border violence is widely conceptualised in relation to the state (Pellander and Horsti 2018; Topak 2019; Schindel 2019; Tofighian 2020; Chubin and Ramirez 2020; Esposito and Kellezi 2020), whilst its intimate manifestations are under-theorised. Intimate border violence is enacted by abusive men through intimate bordering practices to exert power and control against their migrant partners not only at and through the national and

global scales but also at and through the intimate scales of the body and home. Building and expanding work on everyday bordering (Cassidy, 2019; Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018, 2019), I show how the UK immigration policies are designed to extend border policing into intimate spaces and onto women's bodies. They enable violent men to control women and their mobility across multiple scales: the Body-Territory, the home, the national and global.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between the state and intimate violence against Latin American migrant women through a multi-scalar focus on border violence. My analysis points towards forms of violence that may speak to the experiences of other groups of gendered 'colonial migrants' (Grosfoguel et al., 2015). As a result of the geo-historical experience of colonialism, Latin American women are highly heterogeneous regarding skin colour, culture, religion, language, race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality. The gendered colonial gaze through which they are constructed in England differs according to their specific intersectional positionings, informing their experiences of intimate and state abuse in intricate ways (something which I develop in chapter 6). However, this paper primarily focuses on how bordering practices are structured to operate under a necropolitical logic that is racist and gendered (Mbembe 2003; Wright 2011), exacerbating racialised migrant women's exposure to state and intimate border violence across nationality groups. It is worth noting that white Latin American women are not subjected to skin colour racism. Yet, other aspects of their geo-territorial identities may mark them as inferior to white Europeans and possible targets of border violence. As Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2014, 197) rightly suggests, migration regimes work as contemporary 'technologies of colonial othering', which disproportionally, but not exclusively, impact racialised populations and maintain them within inferior legal/economic statuses.

Many Latin Americans who migrate to England hold EU passports or EU-family visas, having been intersectionally affected by Brexit (Turcatti and Vargas-Silva 2022). Nonetheless, this paper draws on data collected before the UK effectively withdrew from the European Union (EU). Although outside the scope of my analysis, Brexit is likely to have opened up further avenues for intimate border violence and should be the focus of future research.

My analysis traces the multi-scalar workings of border violence against migrant women, from state to state-sponsored intimate manifestations. It employs multi-scalar lenses (Hyndman 2001; 2012; Dowler and Sharp 2001), adopting a decolonial feminist conceptualisation of coloniality (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b), necropolitics (Mbembe 2003; Wright 2011) and an embodied re-scaling of the state of exception (Agamben 1998; Pratt 2005) – through which race, gender and class are understood to be mutually co-constitutive. I reveal racial capitalism

(Robinson 2000; Bhattacharyya 2018) and gendered underpinnings and implications of the UK border regime.

Through a myriad of border-making practices, I explore how territorial power relations produce migrant women as embodied territories of exception (Agamben 1998; Pratt 2005), as targets for surveillance and disciplining, as 'illegal', deportable and disposable (De Genova 2002). The enactment of territoriality produces territory, here intrinsically tied to a multi-scalar reconfiguration of UK borders to control migrants from within the territorial space (Hyndman 2012; Balibar 2003; Jones and Johnson 2014). I expand on literature analysing neoliberal globalisation processes of de-territorialisation/re-territorialisation and practices of de-bordering/re-bordering, moving away from national boundaries (Yuval-Davis et al.2019; Wastl-Walter and Staeheli 2004). I build on these to investigate how (re)bordering penetrates the intimate and embodied scales to control and re-territorialise migrant women's bodies. Through the proliferation of bordering practices, border violence is not only exerted at the state level, but extends to intimate and embodied scales as sovereign power is outsourced to ordinary citizens, including migrant women's abusive partners.

I set out the theoretical framework for approaching the UK immigration regime in the following. I then discuss the context of Latin American migration to the UK, the PhD project informing the analysis contained in this paper and the methodology used. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to analysing the empirical material, exploring how border violence is embodied and enacted through the intimate relationships and the geopolitics of home.

Coloniality and Necropolitics in the UK Immigration Regime

The UK immigration law sustains colonial power by protecting not only territory but also colonially derived wealth and infrastructures from global racialised populations impoverished by colonialism (El-Enany 2020). Nadine El-Enany (2020, 27) re-frames it as a 'racial regime of power', which maintains the global racial power introduced by colonialism through (b)ordering and classifying people into hierarchical legal categories that effectively regulate humanity along racial lines. Similarly to other Global North contexts, immigration regimes and border politics work to produce and sustain racial categorisation and colonial othering (Gilmartin 2018; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2014).

This understanding of the UK immigration system suggests that coloniality (Quijano 2000b) is structurally manifested in modern 'Britain'[66] through immigration policies and practices. However, I go further to argue that gender, like race and class, is structurally embedded into this system, as these markers are intersectionally produced and co-constituted by coloniality (Lugones 2008). The hierarchies of humanity created by the UK immigration regime disproportionally impact former colonised, racialised poor populations in capitalist and gendered ways.

Immigration legal categories and everyday bordering are instrumental in perpetuating ongoing colonial dispossession through controlling territory, people and resources (El-Enany 2020). Geopolitics scholars have pointed to how the geopolitical management of the territory and the biopolitical management of populations influence one another, mainly through border control practices (Hyndman 2012; Gilmartin and Kofman 2004).

In this sense, the geopolitical management of territory is intimately connected to necropolitics (Mbembe 2003), for it draws on the threat of violence and death as a technique of territorial governance. Through its immigration system design, the UK state reaffirms its multi-scalar sovereign necropower 'to dictate who may live and who must die' (Mbembe 2003, 11). Certain bodies are legally abandoned as bare-life (Agamben 1998; Pratt 2005), exposed to harm and left to die. Creating differentiated access to conditions of life and death, immigration policies and discourses effectively produce migrant bodies as deportable and disposable (Davies et al., 2017; Mayblin et al., 2019; Mbembe, 2003). Necropower is the operating logic of coloniality – institutionally embedded in immigration law, whereby exposure to and acceptability of death for some are justified by the state as a means of protecting the lives of others. Although Mbembe (2003) conceptualises necropolitics as a politics of death primarily organised around race, my analysis concurs with scholars who suggest the centrality of gender (and class) to necropower (Brickell 2020; Threadcraft 2017; Wright 2011). Connected to this is the recognition that the state sovereign power's creation of spaces of exception is informed by coloniality as a matrix of power, therefore producing gendered racialised migrant bodies as bare-life (Agamben 1998; Pratt 2005; Mountz 2013). Racialised, gendered and class-based hierarchical notions of (in)humanity reproduced by the immigration system inform how the necropolitical state determines who dies and who lives. The embodied politics of coloniality is intrinsically

[66] El-Enany refers to 'Britain' to image the UK without its colonies. My analysis focuses on England (where my participants were base), however, since immigration powers are not devolved in the UK, I refer to a UK border regime.

connected to necropolitics, the politics of death (Quijano 2000b; Mbembe 2003; Lugones 2008). In England, the exposure of racialised migrant women's bodies to conditions of death is an ongoing reality enacted through external borders and, as I aim to theoretically and empirically evidence here, ever more internal, intimate and embodied ones. From within the state territory, border violence territorialises migrant women's bodies as annexed spaces of exception upon which legal abandonment (Agamben 1998) enables sovereign power to be exerted not only by the state but also by abusive partners.

The proliferation of everyday/internal borders (Yuval-Davis et al. 2019) emerges as a necropolitical technique of government(ality) of territory/migration with clear racial and gendered implications. This marks a progressive shift in the UK immigration policy from external borders — at the edges of the territory — to internal ones, whereby borders and their practices permeate everyday life, moving through to the centre of the political space (Balibar 2003; Jones and Johnson 2014; Yuval-Davis et al.2018). This re-territorialisation of borders is accompanied by a scalar shift in bordering responsibilities from state immigration officers to a range of professionals, and ordinary citizens called on to adopt the role of border guards through everyday bordering practices (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Mckee et al., 2021; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018).

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition is a major internal bordering technology of legal abandonment with explicit racialised and gendered necropolitical effects. Legally introduced within Section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the NRPF restricts access to colonial wealth by barring those subjected to immigration control from accessing life-saving welfare support and public services. The necropolitical consequences of NRPF on migrant families and their children are well documented, having been conceptualised as a 'statutory neglect' (Jolly 2018) and a 'necropolitical exception' (Farmer 2020). The gendered necropolitical implications of this policy are particularly salient for migrant women survivors of IPV. Regardless of their imminent risk of death at the hands of their partners, NRPF prevents most migrant women from accessing women's refuges, housing support and welfare benefits (Anitha 2011; 2010; 2008; Lopes Heimer 2019; McIlwaine et al. 2019).

By instructing state officials and state-funded services to deny support to migrant women experiencing violence, immigration policy effectively produce them as internal embodied territories of exception. Stripped of basic means of survival, they are exposed to conditions of violence and death, caught at the crossfire of state border violence in the form of statutory destitution and intimate violence at their partners' hands. Whilst this is true for all women

subjected to NRPF, those who are undocumented are further exposed to a proliferation of everyday borders that create insecurity, precarity and 'illegality' (Yuval-Davis et al.2018; 2019; Griffiths and Yeo 2021). Under the threat of criminalisation, detention and deportation, migrant women become further trapped in violent relationships as they may fear seeking support and justice.

Technologies of everyday bordering have begun to be introduced in the UK immigration legislation since the 1970s, with the 1971 Immigration Act requiring aircraft and ship agents to carry out immigration checks on passengers (Yuval-Davis et al.2018; Griffiths and Yeo 2021). Subsequent acts increased fines for non-compliance and widened the reach of everyday borders to the realms of employment and marriage. Formally enshrined in the 2014 Immigration Act (later extended and fortified in the 2016 Immigration Act), 'hostile environment' policies sought to make undocumented migrants' lives hostile enough that they would prefer to return to their countries voluntarily. Recognising the inefficacy of national borders in deterring irregular migration, these policies diffuse border controls into the everyday, demanding that citizens become border guards under the threat of being fined and/or criminalised (Griffiths and Yeo 2021). Griffiths and Yeo (2021, 3) argue that the 'hostile environment' marks a more openly punitive policy approach to migration that firmly introduces a logic of 'deputisation', that is, 'the co-opting of organisations and people as de facto immigration officers'. It requires landlords, banks, healthcare professionals, social workers, police officers, marriage registrants, schools and homeless services to routinely carry out immigration checks on people and regularly share data with the Home Office. Indeed, the hostile environment mobilises an unprecedented range of sectors, agencies, professionals and citizens to the task of border policing (Griffiths and Yeo 2021).

Hostile environment bordering practices inevitably operate under a racially profiling logic creating suspicion and insecurity among racialised populations who become a target regardless of their citizenship status, as illustrated by the Windrush scandal (Yuval-Davis et al.2018; El-Enany 2020; Griffiths and Yeo 2021). They create death worlds (Mbembe 2003), whereby undocumented migrants' precarity, marginalisation, criminalisation, deportability and premature death are not only produced but ideologically legitimated by the state. Although the draconian everyday effects of hostile environment policies have been documented, little attention is paid to how 'deputisation' extends into the intimate and embodied scales, amounting to a contemporary intimate form of colonial (border) violence which points toward the re-scaling of sovereign territorial power.

I argue that the expansion and diffusion of everyday borders through 'deputisation' performs a specific pedagogic work that normalises and expands this operating logic to intimate and embodied realms. By making citizens responsible for border policing, immigration law and discourses suggest that monitoring and controlling migrants is not only acceptable but a duty. The message is that immigration enforcement is truly everyone's responsibility. This creates a conducive context for abusers to deploy intimate and embodied bordering practices against their migrant partners to exert sovereign power and control. Whilst abusers are not explicitly required by immigration legislation to act as de facto immigration officers, they are empowered and provided with a rationale.

Abusers create a 'hostile environment' for migrant women at home, vis-à-vis a national backdrop of hostility against migrants produced by the state and sustained through everyday bordering practices entangled in the civil society. Although the hostile environment impacts undocumented migrants more severely, its capacity to create an atmosphere of generalised fear, insecurity and distrust among all racialised migrants is capitalised on by abusers (Flynn 2015; Griffiths and Yeo 2021).

Context and Methodology

Despite the absence of direct colonial links, Latin Americans are a growing non-EU migrant population in England, having arrived in significant numbers first in the 1970s as political exiles, through to the 1990s and 2000s as students, economic migrants, and via onward migration from Southern Europe (McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011; McIlwaine and Bunge 2016; 2019). In 2013, it was estimated that the UK was home to at least 250,000 Latin Americans, 145,000 of which were based in London (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). We are a racially diverse community comprising multiple nationalities, but Brazilians (38%) and Colombians (23%) are the largest groups (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016).

Despite half being qualified at the tertiary level and employment rates at 70%, Latin American migrants tend to be economically deprived and occupy precarious jobs (e.g. cleaning and service) (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Immigration barriers and limited English ability contribute to that, with 1 in 5 struggling to communicate in English and an estimate of 19% being irregular or undocumented (McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011; McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Nonetheless, many hold a British (31%) or European passport (22%). Structural barriers affecting the general Latin American community in England intersect with gender to further disadvantage Latin American women, who represent over half of Latin Americans in London (53%).

As a racialised Brazilian woman living in London for over a decade, I witnessed some of these disadvantages first-hand. In 2015, I volunteered at the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) and from 2016-2020 I worked at Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA). LAWA is a by-and-for Latin American women's organisation specialising in gender-based violence. They run the only three refuges for Latin American women fleeing violence and receive referrals from across the country. My analysis of LAWA's internal datasets (2019) revealed that among 194 users who experienced at least one type of IPV, over half (58%) were not comfortable speaking English, and 40% were undocumented or were in a temporary or dependent visa[67]. Out of those, only 8% held a British spouse visa, and 16% held an EU/EEA family visa, whilst the remaining 16% had temporary visas (e.g. tourism, work or student visas) or were undocumented. Abusive partners commonly used immigration status to exert control, with 69% of undocumented women and 76% of women with precarious or dependent visas reporting this abuse.

Motivated by my work at LAWA, in 2018, I started a PhD study investigating Latin American migrant women's experiences of intimate and state violence and resistance in England. This paper is part of this research. In addition to receiving the KCL research ethics committee's approval, my fieldwork was guided by the principles of *embodied relational accountability* (Daigle 2018; Ramírez 2018; Daigle and Sundberg 2017) and *refusal* (Tuck and Yang 2014; Simpson 2007) to address the potential of individual and collective harm. My methodology was developed and implemented in consultation with front-line workers from LAWA to ensure an ethical and sensitive process. This included 3-months of participant observation, through which I was able to support one front-line worker with cases of survivors who consented to my involvement. I also interviewed ten Latin American women who work in the front-line supporting survivors. They helped me recruit participants by disseminating information about the study among women they supported who were no longer experiencing violence and were considered relatively stable, emotionally and materially. Only when women showed interest in the project, I was advised to contact them directly to provide further information.

I conducted twenty life-story interviews with Latin American migrant women survivors of IPV. After being interviewed, ten took part in a Body-Territory mapping activity as part of the *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* methodology (see Lopes Heimer 2022). This builds on *Cuerpo-*

[67] Whilst the majority were EU/EEA citizens (32%), British citizens (13%), or held ILR (6%), some may have acquired these in the aftermath of their experiences of violence. The database does not capture how users' immigration status changed over time.

Territorio as a concept and method that understands bodies and territories as part of a continuum (Cabnal 2010; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020). Conducted remotely in their own homes, women drew their silhouettes on a body-size piece of paper. Responding to specific questions, they mapped their feelings, emotions, sensations and memories through drawing and writing. Participants discussed and analysed the finalised maps during five debrief video conference sessions with two women each.

The twenty survivors participating in my research were all cis women from nine countries in Latin America[68]. Most migrated to England with or to join their partners, whilst others were fleeing abuse or looking for better economic opportunities. Some were onward migrants, moving here after a period in another European country. Most participants held a regularised immigration status at the time of their interview. However, many were previously undocumented or had a precarious or dependent status when they experienced abuse. Some were of Indigenous descent, Black or white, whilst the majority were racially mixed. Most women identified as heterosexual and were working in precarious, low-paid jobs (e.g. cleaning, housekeeping, cooking).

I conducted, recorded, transcribed and analysed all interviews and discussions in the participants' native languages, Spanish or Portuguese (except when participants switched between English and their languages). I only translated to English specific quotes included in the findings. Data were analysed thematically as part of an iterative and circular process (Kitchin and Tate 2014), which occurred during and after fieldwork.

Embodied Territorialisation of Border Violence

Expanding on feminist geopolitics and geographers' interest in the scale of the body and its relationship with territorial struggles and bordering practices, I explore how territory becomes reinscribed on Latin American women's bodies in this section. The gendered and racialised necropolitical effects of state and intimate border violence territorialise migrant women's bodies (Mbembe, 2003; Wright, 2011). They are experienced in embodied ways—physically, psychologically, emotionally and spatially—in a relational continuum (Kelly, 2013). Latin American migrant women's bodies are included through exclusion as territories of exception where sovereign power and violence are exerted (Agamben 1998). With migration they are

[68] Brazil, Colombia, México, Venezuela, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Argentina.

marked by the violence of borders at the state and intimate territorial scales (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Gilmartin and Kofman 2004; Hyndman 2007; 2012; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Smith, Swanson, and Gökarıksel 2016). Bridging feminist and decolonial feminist geographers' perspectives, I unveil the particular embodiments of border violence, that is, how women's lived experiences of violence associated with immigration regulations and the territorial context are manifested in bodily sensations, emotions, feelings and embodied memories (Longhurst 1995; Moss and Dyck 2003; Pile 2010; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020).

Body-Territory maps drawn by research participants expressed how their bodies were simultaneously affected and territorialised by state and (state-sponsored) intimate border violence. As migrant women, they felt neglected and/or intimidated by a system that was outright hostile and indifferent to their suffering, used against them by their partners, sometimes even when they had regularised status. The migration context (e.g. immigration status, limited English and supportive networks, and unfamiliarity with the system and city) was used by abusers to literally 'suffocate' their dreams and goals and heighten feelings of impotence linked to difficulties of navigating a foreign and hostile system. Findings from other studies with migrant and minoritised women in this country echo the experiences of my research participants, here explored in an embodied manner (Anitha 2010; McIlwaine and Evans 2018; Lopes Heimer 2019; McIlwaine et al. 2019).

Lorena, a Brazilian woman of indigenous descent who was fluent in English and had a British spouse visa, described how the weaponisation of her nationality and immigration status made her throat feel suffocated (see figure 1 - '*sufocada*' in Portuguese). As she explained, her dreams were suppressed by an intersection of state and intimate border violence arising from the territorial power granted to her mixed-race British husband to abuse her over a 'piece of paper' and the anxiety-inducing limbo she was left in by the Home Office after separation.

> This is what happened to my dreams when I came here […] because of my nationality and my immigration situation, someone was able to suffocate everything. […] And you know it is not you because you are capable and intelligent, but you don't have the stability, and you need a piece of paper, and that piece of paper is given to you by that person.
>
> (Lorena, Brazilian, Indigenous descent, 30 years)

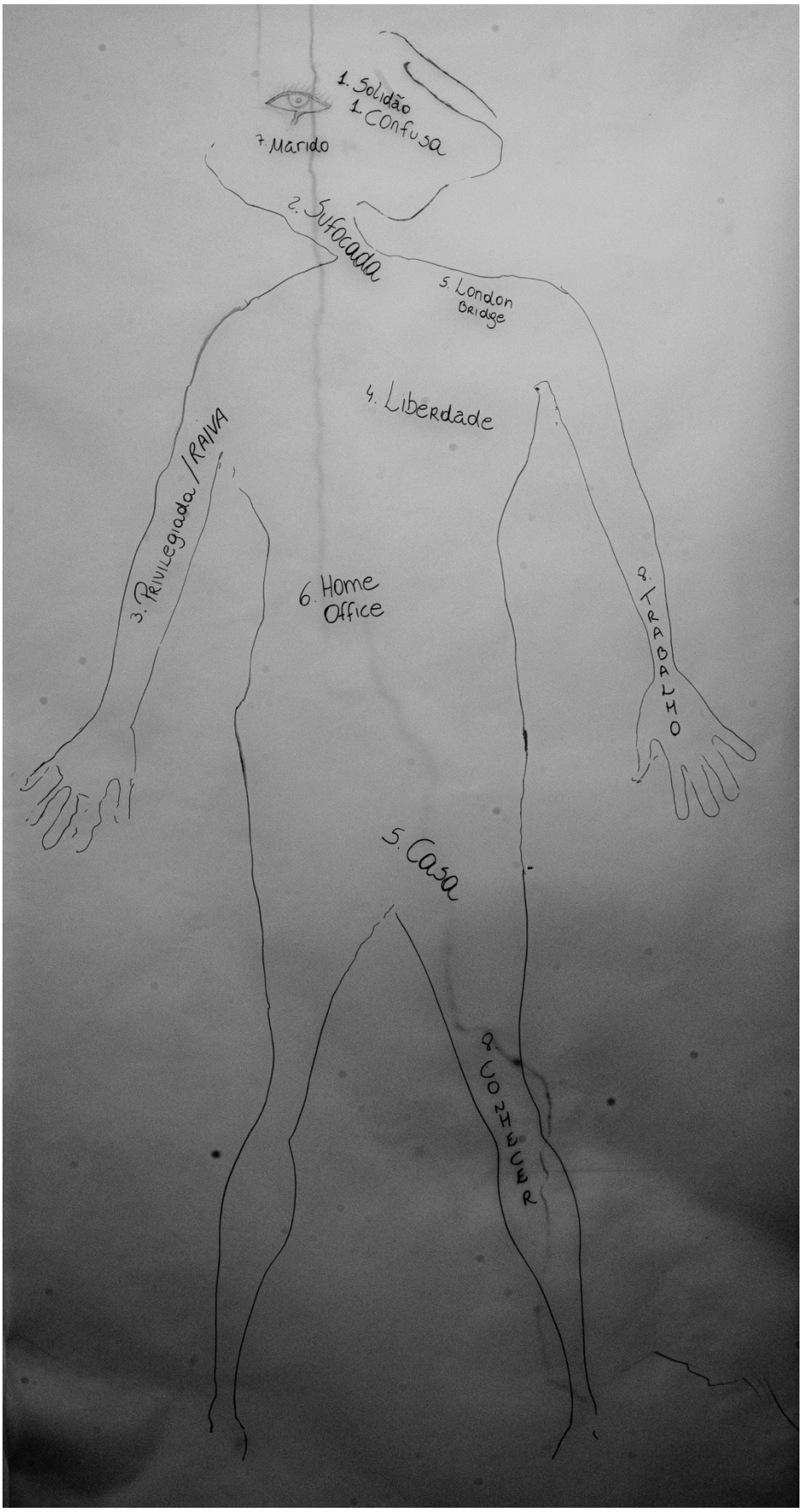


Figure 5.1 Lorena's Body-Territory map

Quite interestingly, Jaqueline promptly agreed with Lorena, albeit from the position of a single mother who spent over ten years undocumented in this country. During that time, she felt her *'feet and hands were tied'* as a direct consequence of both state border violence and intimate partner violence. She was depressed, destitute and impoverished whilst still being abused and harassed by the father of her daughter, who was also undocumented and from Brazil.

> It is like they try to kill your dream. We don't know what is waiting for us when we leave our country, we live with so many dreams, and we are faced with so many laws, rules and difficult situations. I saw myself with my feet and hands tied […] because I waited for a piece of paper for ten years.
>
> (Jaqueline, Brazilian, mixed-race white and Indigenous descent, 45 years)

Jaqueline also described how the combination of intimate violence and state border violence led to bodily pain. The stress, humiliation and sadness arising from these became embodied in her muscles and as tension in her neck (see figure 2 where she indicates her neck with the number three), as she explains below:

> I used to have a lot of pain in my neck. I think it was the stress. It's like you retract the muscles. Because I was humiliated when I went to court, but also with the visa, it made me very sad. They denied it so many times. I was so stressed. As if it was not enough what I was going through emotionally and financially because my daughter and I practically starved, we didn't have the right to anything.

As Jaqueline indicates, the embodied effects of violence on her body are not only linked to abuse from her ex-partner but are directly associated with specific state institutions. For example, the humiliation experienced at the Family Court and the psychological distress of having her visa application denied time and time again by the Home Office. Similarly, Lorena placed the Home Office right at the centre of her belly in her Body-Territory map. After separation, she struggled with anxiety, felt viscerally in her stomach every day, for months. She associated these with the Home Office, its silent treatment and sovereign power to decide whether she would be allowed to remain in this country.

> Do you know when you feel butterflies in your stomach? From anxiety? The Home Office made me take medication for anxiety. Every time I think in the Home Office, I feel something weird, anxious, from waiting, waiting and not knowing what will happen. An uncertain future, not being able to make any plans, that thing of, when is this paper going to come? […] I felt anxious every day, here in my stomach.
>
> (Lorena, Brazilian, Indigenous descent, 30 years)

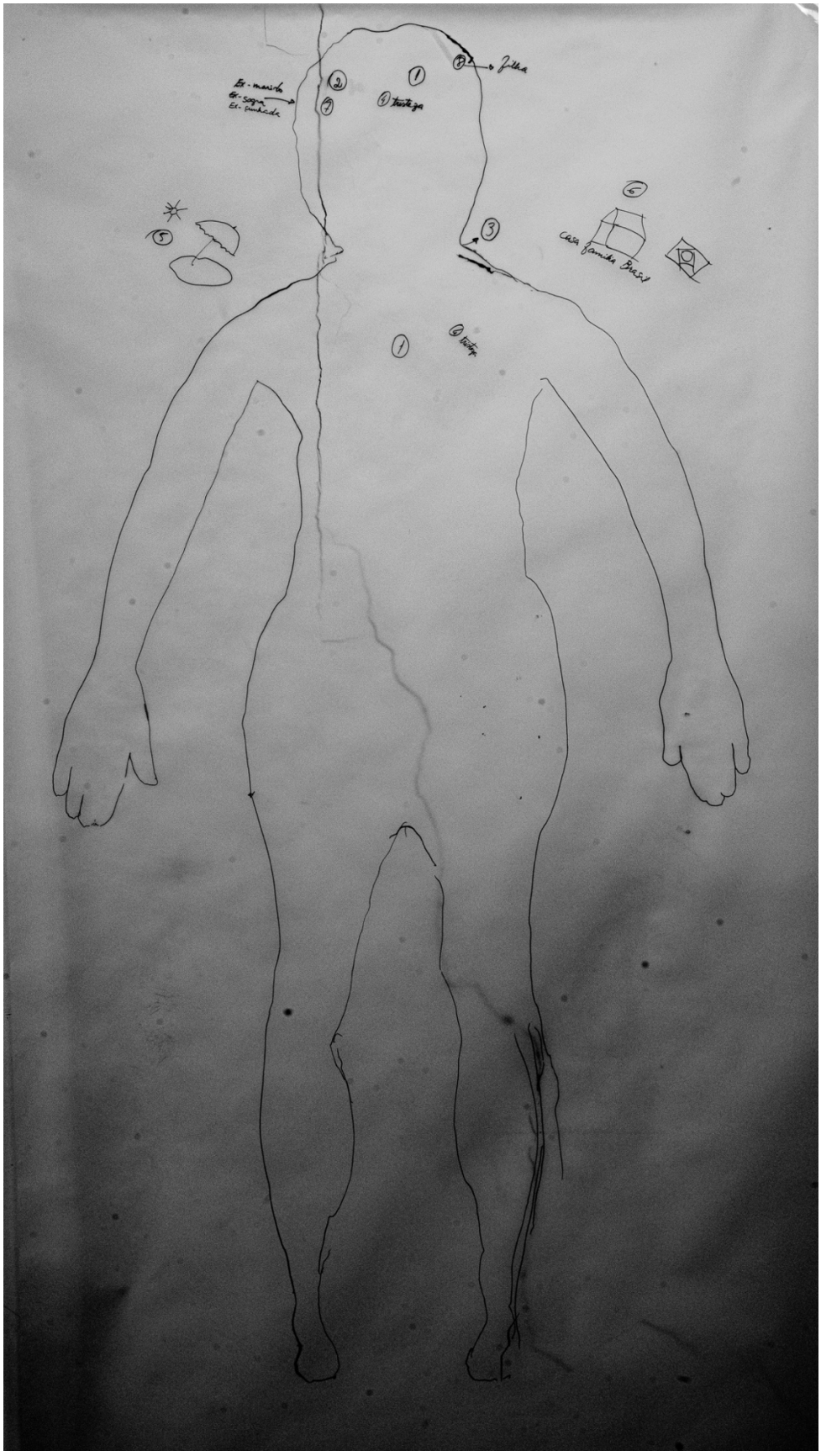


Figure 5.2 Jaqueline's Body-Territory map

The embodied territoriality of violence was also prevalent in discussions amongst participants who reflected on how they might have been able to act differently in their home country. The territoriality of violence, specifically associated with being a migrant woman in England, led to feelings of impotence, helplessness, and fear. Tainara spent nearly five years undocumented, homeless and destitute with her young daughter whilst being harassed by her ex-husband. She located her embodied feelings relating to border violence on her left foot, where she wrote the word '*England*' (see figure 3), explaining that:

> It is on the foot because the foot is what carries us. It is where I was stepping. If I were walking on Brazilian soil, I would not feel this because I would be able to seek help from authorities and I would be able to speak up.
>
> (Tainara, Brazilian, white, 41 years)

As Tainara explains, in her home country she would at least be able to confidently speak in her language, differently than in England, where the police and social services misinterpreted and disbelieved her. In her map, she wrote feelings linked to this country's border violence: *disregard, fragility, distrust, small, shame, frustration, poverty, helplessness and nostalgia* (*'saudade'* in Portuguese*)*. These directly relate to her lived embodied experiences as an undocumented migrant woman fleeing violence. Even though she is white, as a Brazilian working-class woman who was undocumented and unable to speak English, she was met with suspicion and disregard by the authorities she sought help from. Ultimately, she was left unprotected and exposed to conditions of premature death (Gilmore 2007).

> It was that type of disregard like, 'So, do you have any marks?' […] I had some bruises, but then it was, 'Ahh, we need more evidence'. They don't believe much in us. If you don't know how to speak [English], they look at you differently. I felt very small because many times I asked for help and was denied. […] I had a list of more than 300 organisations, some responded and others didn't, 'Ahh, you are illegal'. If you are illegal, nobody helps you.
>
> (Tainara, Brazilian, white, 41 years)

The racial capitalist gendered necropolitics of border violence produces bare-life (Mbembe 2003; Wright 2011; Agamben 1998). The intersection of gender, class and geopolitical identity/status worked together under a racialising logic against Tainara, dehumanising her otherwise white body. Organisations meant to support survivors of violence denied her help due

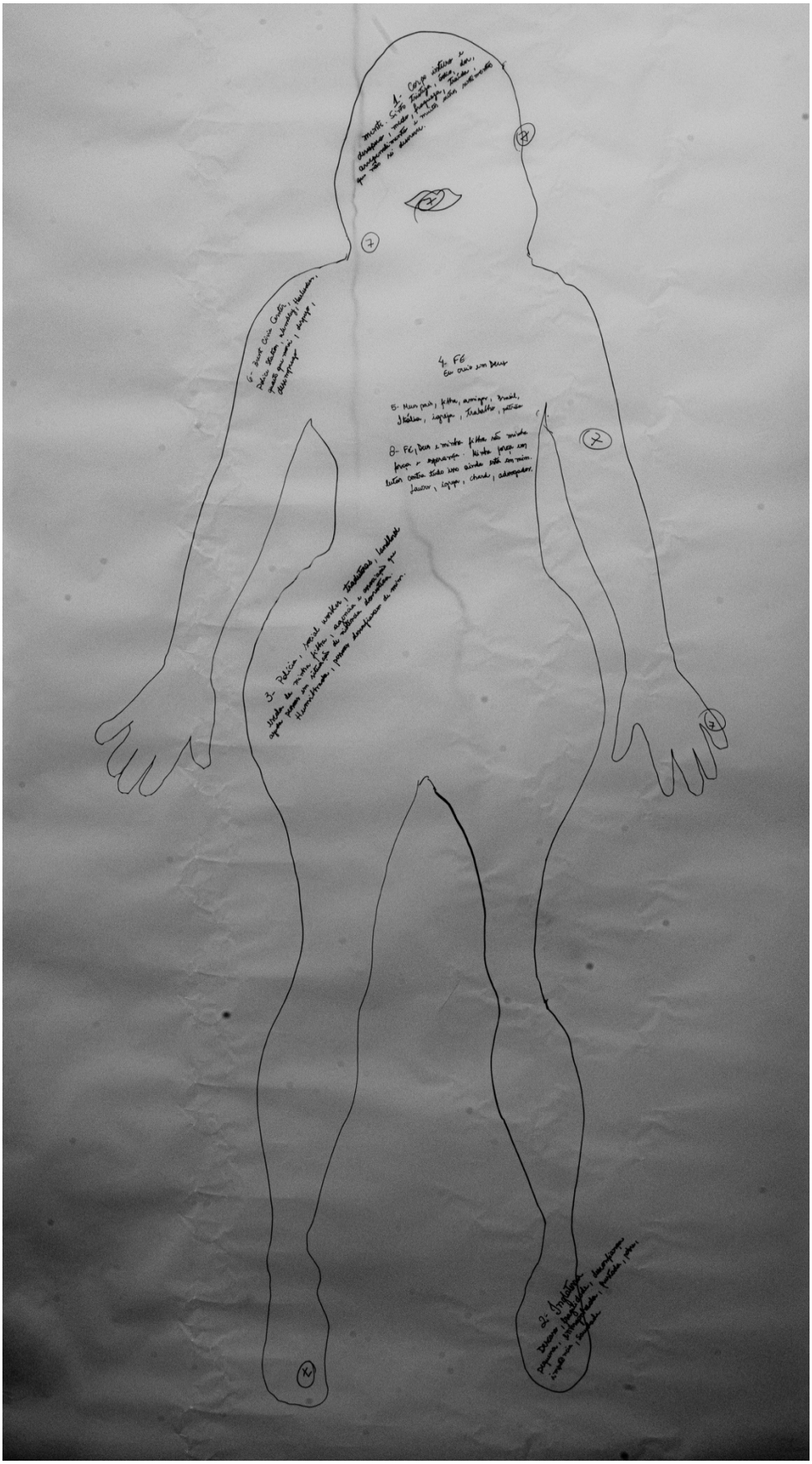


Figure 5.3 Tainara's Body-Territory map

to her undocumented status, whilst the police disbelieved her and dismissed her bodily evidence of abuse. As Tainara later rightly affirmed: '*My impression is that the police only acts when you're already dead, when someone calls to say a guy managed to kill his wife*'.

Interpersonal and state violence intersect and meet on the body. Their shared systemic roots and mutually reinforcing nature are visible in participants' Body-Territory maps, showing how their bodies were territorialised as states of exception, reduced to bare-life.

Connecting State to Intimate Border Violence

The UK immigration system's design has gendered effects on migrant women experiencing IPV. It widens hierarchical power relations and enables the weaponisation of the threat of *state border violence* (e.g. forced destitution, separation from children, detention, deportation) in the form of (state-sponsored) *intimate border violence*. Threats of deportation are the most explicit and widespread manifestation of intimate border violence. A study by Imkaan (2010) found that 92% of 183 migrant survivors experienced *threats of deportation* from their partners, a trend confirmed more recently by McIlwaine et al. (2019)

Nearly all survivors with an insecure immigration status who participated in my research were directly and indirectly threatened with deportation as a tool of control. Their partners also regularly stated that they 'brought' their wives to this country and that they 'depended' on them. For women on spouse visas, 'dependency' is produced and maintained by immigration law, with legislation extending the probationary period under a British spouse visa making this worse (Dudley 2017). Differences in citizenship and immigration status enable Anglo-European men to inflict intimate border violence against Latin American women more easily. The violent, necropolitical operating logic of the UK border regime can, however, also be used by and against those with more and less insecure statuses.

Attempts at controlling women through border violence occur even when women have independent and settled residency status in the form of ILR, a British or EEAA passport – through the discursive and material production to 'illegality'. A woman's racialised social perception as a 'colonial immigrant' (Grosfoguel et al. 2015) may be used by white Anglo-European men to exert intimate border violence. Assumptions of 'illegality' regarding immigration regulations may sometimes discursively produce it. For example, Safira, from Colombia, suggested how whenever her English boyfriend felt he was losing control, he became aggressive and insidiously tried to weaponise border violence against her. Even though she had a regular resident status as a naturalised Spanish citizen, he would call her 'illegal', implying that

he could deport her if she tried to leave him. Coloniality and the immigration system work together to produce 'undocumented' status as a racialising/racialised legal category that can be strategically projected onto colonial migrant women regardless of their actual status.

> Sometimes he would say that I was here without papers […] I had already told him, but he never saw my passport. He thought that I was lying. He used to try to find things to manipulate me so that I'd stay with him. […] It was like he was threatening to report me to immigration. He wouldn't say like that, but he would use this as a threat, like, 'Don't you think you're going to go far, cause you're illegal'.
>
> (Safira, Colombian, mixed-race white and Indigenous descent, 49 years)

These felt like empty threats since Safira was not undocumented and was aware of it. However, in many cases where abusive partners are migrant women's only source of information, they may fear deportation even when they have a regularised immigration status. Even when women already have ILR, perpetrators may deceive them, making them believe that they are undocumented and can be deported at their word. Although 'illegality' is only discursively produced, it leads to material consequences. Front-line workers interviewed for this research recalled cases where the effects of the psychological abuse linked to border violence were severe and long-lasting, trapping women in abusive relationships for years as they feared deportation even when they had ILR.

> Perpetrators always threaten women, 'I'm going to deport you' as if they have that power. The way that they get to your mind doesn't matter if you are irregular or not. I remember this Colombian woman I supported in the refuge […] I had to bring her to four different immigration lawyers because she could not believe she could not be deported by her partner […] It is a big issue with the system because what happens when a woman needs to deal with a mainstream organisation or the police and statutory services, and they ask, 'What is your immigration status?'. She is going to say, 'I'm illegal'. And later she is going to show her passport, they will see that she has ILR and she will be suspicious […] many times I had to go to places and say, 'She is not illegal', and they, 'No, she told me, she is hiding something'. She is not hiding anything, this is a result of years and years of violence, of using her immigration status as a weapon […]
>
> (Olivia, Venezuelan front-line worker)

As the Venezuelan front-line worker Olivia points out, long after women flee their abusers, some may continue to think they are 'illegal', a belief that creates fear and anxiety, severely restricting their mobility. This discursive production of 'illegality' through intimate border violence may work to undermine a woman's immigration status before public authorities and even mainstream services. The public system is not designed to identify this form of interpersonal

abuse but rather to reinforce it along a continuum (Kelly 1988) of intimate and state border violence. Under the hostile environment, public authorities are expected to act as *de facto* border guards (Griffiths and Yeo 2021; Yuval-Davis et al.2019), trained to be vigilant and presume migrant women's intent to deceive them, therefore working in tandem with perpetrators' attempts to misinform and criminalise survivors. The racialised nature of immigration categories means that a lack of whiteness may increase a Latin American woman's vulnerability to state suspicion, reinforcing abusers' attempts to manipulate their status.

Another common manifestation of intimate border violence is the material (re)production of 'illegality', purposefully maintaining a woman's undocumented status by refusing to sponsor her visa. This is a well-documented practice among abusive men with citizenship or settled status (Dudley 2017; McIlwaine et al. 2019)—Anglo-European men in particular, but also Latin Americans with dual citizenship or ILR. Intimate border violence may, however, be used as a tool of control against undocumented women, even by abusers who are (or have been) undocumented.

Tainara's experiences illustrate this form of intimate border violence whereby women are literally pushed into 'illegality' by abusive partners. She migrated from Brazil to the UK with savings and all necessary documentation to apply for her Italian citizenship, which she would then extend to her daughter and use to sponsor her husband's visa. However, sometime after they moved to London, her husband stole all her money, preventing her from regularising their status. She ended up living undocumented and in precarity for years to come.

> He stole all the money I brought to go to Italy, when I was ready to go to Italy he simply said, 'You're not going'. […] and I was like, 'But this money will also benefit you because once I get my passport, I'm going to apply for your spouse visa, we will be able to work, everyone will become legal' […]
>
> (Tainara, Brazilian, white, 41 years)

Tainara not only had to endure severe and ongoing psychological, emotional, financial, sexual and physical violence from her husband, including murder attempts but also bear the consequences of state border violence. Unable to access benefits or find stable work as an undocumented person, after leaving her abuser, she continued to live in poverty in an overcrowded and precarious accommodation under the threat of criminalisation, detention, deportation, and separation from her child.

Survivors who are literally or discursively brought into 'illegality' often live under the constant threat of suddenly having their lives fragmented. Abusive men instigate and capitalise on women's fear of authorities, since women with insecure immigration status tend to be hesitant to report abuse to the police (McIlwaine et al. 2019). Their mistrust is well-founded since evidence suggests that the police prioritise immigration enforcement over victims' safeguarding, treating migrant survivors as potential immigrant offenders first (HMICFRS 2020). The UK immigration regime empowers men to abuse migrant women, regardless of their status, but in particular when they are undocumented or are made to believe so.

Border Violence at the Scale of the Home

Border violence against migrant women is intimately connected to the geopolitics of home (Brickell 2012a; 2012b). The home is not only a physical space where most forms of IPV take place but also strategically deployed to perpetrate violence and control women's mobility. Homelessness and the threat of homelessness is a pervasive reality in the lives of migrant survivors in England (Banga and Gill 2008; Lopes Heimer 2019), which is structurally produced in housing legislation through hostile environment policies and the NRPF condition (Mckee et al. 2021; Griffiths and Yeo 2021).

Threats of eviction are used to instigate fear and discipline migrant women, often intertwining with threats of deportation to their 'home countries'. This dynamic was present in Lorena's relationship. Every time she started a conversation about separation, her British husband threatened her with immediate eviction and with calling the Home Office to report that they were no longer together.

> When I used to tell him that I wanted to leave, he would get really nervous and aggressive, and we would start arguing again. And then he would say, 'Ok, you should leave then, but I want you to leave this house now'. […] He used to say to my face: 'The moment you cross that door, I'm going to call the Home Office'. […] The word Home Office was always in his mouth.
>
> (Lorena, Brazilian, Indigenous descent, 30 years)

Abusers embody immigration law to regulate women's bodies across scales and in a continuum. Border control at the national-territory scale was used as a threat to trap Lorena in the home-territory, where her husband continued to abuse her. Whenever Lorena's husband realised he could lose her, he reasserted his border power over her body and his ability to

withdraw her right to remain within various territory-scales, from the home to the national territory.

In the absence of visa dependency, abusive men may materially produce 'illegality' to discipline women's 'unruly' mobility. It is common for Anglo-European abusive men to threaten, attempt or even destroy women's residency documents and passports as a form of punishment and measure to regain control. This happened to Azucena, a Latin American woman who acquired Greek nationality in a previous marriage. Her British partner destroyed her documents to punish her for enjoying a social life outside the home. She recalls that her European ID disappeared the day after she went to visit some friends and left her British partner by himself at her place. Luckily, she still had her Greek passport to prove her status. However, her partner later destroyed this when she arrived home late after an evening out with a friend. Azucena was made undocumented; she had no proof of her status and lacked the means to apply for a new passport.

State border violence arising from the interconnectedness of immigration and welfare systems aids abusive men in prolonging their abuse and trapping women in the home. After leaving their partners' abuse, migrant women may be pushed back, by homelessness and poverty, into the same or other violent relationships. This is a pressing reality for women with insecure status, particularly undocumented and single mothers, whose priority is providing a roof for their children.

Homelessness and destitution, produced by state border violence, can be strategically deployed by abusive men to manipulate women into returning home. For example, when Tainara left her abuser, she had a small daughter and was undocumented, unable to access any form of welfare support. She had difficulties finding informal work as a cleaner and struggled to make ends meet. She managed to rent a small room for her and her daughter, but its ceiling suddenly fell in, leaving them with nowhere to go. Her husband used this as an opportunity to manipulate her into moving to a room he promised to vacate. Still, he kept a copy of the key to continue entering and harassing her regularly.

Intimate and state border violence overlap at the scale of the home. Perpetrators use threats of homelessness, destitution and deportation to exert power and control over women's bodies, restrict their mobility and trap them in the home where abuse may continue with impunity. Even after women leave their abusers, violence persists in its structural forms, feeding a cycle of abuse that spatially subordinates migrant women to a position of homelessness that may be exploited to exert interpersonal abuse.

Conclusion

Territorial sovereignty is symbolically and materially manifested and reasserted through power and control over migrant women's bodies by state and non-state actors. This paper has explored how coloniality and gendered necropower is structurally embedded in the UK immigration regime, underpinning and enabling specific (re)configurations of border violence against migrant women (Quijano 2000b; Mbembe 2003; Wright 2011). Tracing the works of border violence has revealed the violent process of re-territorialisation of national borders across multi-scalar spatialities and how they reinscribe migrant women's bodies as annexed territories of exception (Agamben 1998).

Border violence connects state and intimate partner violence in a relational continuum; they cross and meet on the scale of women's bodies whilst enabling power and control across global, national, and intimate scales (Kelly 1988; Dowler and Sharp 2001; Hyndman 2012; Pain and Staeheli 2014). My research participants' Body-Territory maps shed light on the shared roots and mutually reinforcing nature of state and intimate border violence. They show how border violence(s) by intimate partners and state structures lead to similar territorialising effects on migrant women's bodies, dehumanising and reducing them to bare-life. This is illustrated by survivors feeling literally and metaphorically suffocated, having their dreams destroyed and their hands and feet tied, leading to various visceral effects. The embodiments of border violence reveal how migrant women are reduced to bare-life to protect colonial wealth, territory, and infrastructures (Mbembe 2003; Wright 2011; El-Enany 2020).

The UK border regime produces intimate border violence by creating threats of state violence that can be exploited within abusive relationships. My empirical material reveal how intimate border violence manifests through threats of deportation, deployed directly and indirectly against women with insecure, dependent and undocumented statuses but also against migrant women with secure and permanent status. Working as a racialised/racialising notion, 'illegality' is discursively and materially produced by abusers to exert power, working in tandem with the operating logics of the hostile environment. In particular, the home is a privileged site through which border violence operates, with individual abusers' threats of eviction and deportation working to maintain migrant women trapped in abusive homes. This abuse is structurally sustained by immigration, housing and welfare policies that create 'illegality', poverty and homelessness. Severely exposed to violence and premature death conditions, migrant women embody the figure of the living dead, kept alive but in a state of injury (Mbembe 2003), included through exclusion as body-territories of exception.

* The incorporated paper ‘Bodies as Territories of Exception’ ends here with the above chapter.

CHAPTER VI – THE SPATIALISED COLONIALITY OF ABUSE

Introduction

Racial, sexed/gendered, capitalist hierarchies of humanity are structurally rooted in the colonial modern capitalist gendered world system (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b). This system emerged with the invasion and colonisation of the Americas and has since continued to be reproduced through modern coloniality as its power matrix. In chapter 5, I analysed how the reproduction of modern coloniality embedded in the UK immigration regime occurs in racialised gendered ways at various scales. The state border regime reinforces and heightens the disposability and criminalisation of migrant women's bodies and extends itself through performative acts of violence, embodying the logic of immigration policies within intimate relationships. In this chapter, I investigate modern coloniality in more detail by unveiling racist sexualised capitalist territorial discourses and practices that dehumanise Latin American migrant women, perpetuating and legitimising violence against them. To understand the dynamics, causes and consequences of this form of violence, I turn to what I term the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*. This emphasises how violence against Latin American migrant women is historically and currently underpinned by coloniality, operating intersectionally and spatially in a continuum across scales and time, from colonialism into the present. This chapter centres on the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* in the context of Latin American women's migration to England. My analysis draws on interviews with Latin American women and the Body-Territory maps they produced (see chapter 3). In particular, I focus on the accounts of survivors whose perpetrators were European or British. I also build on reflections from Latin American front-line workers I interviewed, mainly those with many years of experience supporting and advocating for Latin American migrant survivors in England.

My analysis shows that intimate and state acts of violence have a performative power to maintain colonial hierarchies of humanity intersectionally structured through the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*. That is across relationships, where abusers are white European/English men and Latin Americans. However, for the latter unequal power and control lie predominantly on colonially derived 'sex/gender' differences and expectations (albeit not solely since differences in class, race and immigration status play an important role when present). Whilst European and British men may ground their abuse in notions of sex/gender inferiority, they also

firmly build on their intersecting racial, class and geopolitical status to reassert power and control.

The geopolitical power assigned to British men (and European men, to a lesser extent) in England arises not only from their citizenship status but also from the socio-political privilege and legitimacy associated with being socially perceived to be native to a territory-metropole as opposed to the colonised South(s). The Global South (or Souths in the plural) is an imagined geographical space, comprising those territories and territorial identities that have been globally subjugated within the gendered colonial/modern capitalist world system as the colonised 'periphery'. As Sousa Santos (2016b, 18) notes, the South is 'a metaphor for the human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism on the global level'. It is a South that represents many Souths and is not confined to the Southern hemisphere; it also lives in the geographic North. Latin American migrant women in England are an example of a South in the North. Within this territory, their bodies carry and represent the South. Colonising discourses associating Latin American territorialities with 'uncivilised' and 'backwards cultures' intersect with race, sex and class representations. These are weaponised against Latin American migrant women in England in ways that dehumanise, perpetrate and legitimise violence against their bodies.

Coloniality manifests as colonial cultural othering discourses and practices informed by territorial relations and imaginaries, which materialise on women's bodies(-territories) as violence. The analysis of the empirical material reveals how racist sexualised representations of Latin American women embedded in colonial geo-territorial imaginaries are in themselves a form of discursive violence providing ground for further violence to occur - at intimate and state levels. My argument theoretically draws on notions of territory and territoriality, particularly the Latin American indigenous concept of *Cuerpo-Territorio* (Cabnal 2010; Ulloa 2016; Cruz Hernández 2016; Haesbaert 2020). I embrace Halvorsen's (2018) proposition for an open and decolonised territory definition. This means that whilst I adopt Latin American theories and practices of *territorio*, I also recognise Western conceptions of territory linked to state sovereignty (Haesbaert 2007; Gonçalves 2003; Cruz 2006; Sandoval et al. 2017). Territory is understood as material and/or discursive appropriation and representation of space in socio-cultural-political ways by a collective or individual (Segato 2006; Sandoval et al. 2017; Haesbaert 2007). Territory is not fixed; it is produced and reproduced through ongoing processes of (re) territorialisation at multiple scales, which may entangle and overlap with other forms of territorialities (Haesbaert 2007; Brenner 1999; Halvorsen 2018).

Following the notion of *Cuerpo-Territorio*, I argue that coloniality-derived violence perpetrated by the state and Anglo-European men against Latin American migrant women is a form of invasion, colonisation and (re) territorialisation of their bodies. *Spatialised coloniality of abuse* re-enacted and (re) territorialised through violence sustains and reproduces the link between global and embodied scales in a continuum (Kelly 1988) across multiple spatialities and temporalities. Although Kelly's (1988) notion of a continuum has been widely applied to the study of violence against women (Moser 2001; Boesten 2017), including from a transnational migration perspective (McIlwaine and Evans 2020), I specifically mobilise it concerning the coloniality of abuse to shed light on its reproduction through violence from the scale of the body to the global in a continuum.

The colonial invasion and subjugation of *Abya Yala*/Latin America territories are reproduced at the territory-scale of Latin American migrant women's bodies. These two forms of historical and contemporary colonisation operate at different spatial and temporal scales whilst using similar discourses and violent techniques underpinned by spatialised coloniality – of power, gender, and abuse - as a matrix of power (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b). Within this modern colonial frame, Latin American women are sexually dehumanised, not as women but as females or racialised sexed animals (Lugones 2010). *Cuerpo-Territorio* emphasises the ontological unity between bodies and territories based on indigenous cosmological notions of relationality and reciprocity towards nature and territories. In a migration context marked by colonial relations of domination, *Cuerpo-Territorio* sheds light on how similarly to where Latin American migrant women come from, their bodies are treated as resources to be extracted from, as territories to be annexed, subjugated and disciplined.

Cultural Racism and the Spatialised Coloniality of Abuse

Anglophone research on violence against migrant and racialised women from various backgrounds have been marked by culturalist arguments (see Chapter 2, section 6). Essentialised notions of culture have been problematically and selectively deployed to explain the causes of VAW among racialised communities in ways that pathologised them (Raj and Silverman 2002; Latta and Goodman 2005; Brownridge and Halli 2002). Global South migrant cultures are directly and indirectly portrayed as intrinsically more prone and tolerant to VAW. Cultural stereotypes are variously emphasised according to racial and nationality differences. Broadly, racialised men (Black men, in particular) tend to be represented as inherently violent and sexual predators, whilst racialised women are pictured as passive and submissive (e.g. South and East Asian women) or rather aggressive (e.g. Black women).

Academic research on violence among Latin American migrants has followed a similar trend (see, for example, Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017; Page et al. 2017; Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014). In particular, US-focused research has represented Latin American migrant women not only as more patriarchal and traditional but also family-oriented; and Latin American migrant men as exhibiting a culturally rooted form of hypermasculinity termed 'machismo'[69] (Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014; Page et al. 2017; Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017; Harper 2017). Whilst UK-focused research is more limited and has not centred on culture, the role played by Latin American' migrant machismos' (McIlwaine 2010, 291) and 'travelling patriarchies' (McIlwaine and Evans 2020, 13) have been overly emphasised. To some extent, these place the causes of violence outside host societies.

Racially deploying culture helps to justify and relativise violence against racialised women, a move that Grosfoguel et al. (2015) suggest is an academic form of cultural racism enacting coloniality. In internalising blame for domestic violence within migrant and non-white populations, its responsibility and root causes are externalised to somewhere outside the Global North, which, as a result, become absolved as 'innocent'. The use of monolithic and pathologising views of culture to explain violence against migrant women, Latin American women included, seems to have been sustained within academic research due to two interconnected main reasons. Firstly, studies have focused mainly on intra-community violence whilst empirically and theoretically neglecting abuse perpetrated by Anglo-European white men against migrant women. Secondly and consequently, such a focus on abuse within migrant communities has empirically enabled researchers to take on a 'culture-blaming' (Burman et al. 2004, 335) attitude towards violence. Theoretically approaching 'culture' as fixed and timeless, those studies fail to seriously account for the role of colonialism in shaping contemporary non-Western 'cultures'.

Much of the above literature seems to reproduce a specific form of culturalism that reifies culture. This is something Mitchell (1995) explicitly criticises cultural geographers for, given tendencies to assign an ontological status to culture. Culture is argued to have been treated as a 'thing', an explanatory cause for material differences, and a measure to classify and hierarchise peoples and their associated geographies. Mitchell's arguments echo important postcolonial and decolonial critiques of discourses on culture, particularly regarding race and gender (Said 1989; Abu-Lughod 2008; Fanon 1980; Grosfoguel et al. 2015; Cumes 2012).

[69] For a critique of Anglophone use of 'machismo' as a culturally racist terminology see Cowan (2017).

Instead, Mitchell (1995) calls for the study of the idea of culture, which, similarly to 'race', should be studied as an imposition, a system of power which gets reproduced and legitimised.

To counter the above tendencies in what concerns the study of violence against Latin American migrant women, in this chapter, I empirically focus on the dynamics of abuse perpetrated by European and British men (mainly, but not exclusively, white) and the colonial imaginaries that provide ground for and institutionally extend this abuse. I adopt a decolonial feminist theoretical perspective bringing together various frameworks. I bridge Black and third-world feminist theorisations (in particular, the concept of intersectionality) with decolonial theories (in particular, those put forward by MCD theorists). Drawing on feminist geopolitics (Joanne 2014; Dowler, Christian, and Ranjbar 2014; Pain 2014b), I approach the coloniality of power (Quijano 1992) and the coloniality of gender (Lugones 2008) through multi-scalar lenses (Dowler and Sharp 2001). These are essential to analytically understand how violence operates intersectionally (Crenshaw 1989; 1991b) and spatially to reproduce hierarchies of power and humanity firmly grounded in the historical imposition and ongoing reproduction of the colonial/modern capitalist gendered world system (Lugones 2008).

This framework enables me to distance myself from and challenge academic reproductions of cultural racism. I unveil how racism is embedded in the violence perpetrated against Latin American migrant women in its cultural and multiple forms. Violent practices and discourses dehumanise us in racist sexualised ways, under the 'dark' side of the colonial/modern capitalist gendered world system (Lugones 2010), not as gendered but rather sexualised female animals. In a Global North context of migration, sexualised capitalist racial/'cultural' discourses and practices violently dehumanise Latin American women, pointing toward what I refer to as the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*. I conceptualise the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* as the spatial analysis of how violence is perpetrated and legitimised against colonised migrant women as a cause and consequence of our dehumanisation along intersecting sexualised, racialised capitalist oppressive axes. By exploring the specific dynamics of violence Latin American migrant women experience, the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* which mediates and creates the conditions for violence to occur, becomes visible. This coloniality of abuse operates at multiple scales. It is marked by spatialised coloniality of power and gender linked to specific border-cultural-territorial dynamics of power that create and exacerbate abuse conditions in the context of migration.

I draw on Grosfoguel et al.'s (2015) re-conceptualisation of racism as the enactment of coloniality, here understood as historically reproduced across multi-scalar scales and

embedded into systems and institutions (see Chapter 2, section 3). Racism is 'a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority, politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced' (Grosfoguel et al. 2015, 636) by the colonial/modern gender capitalist world system (Lugones 2008). It operates intersectionally along sex/gender and class axes. Racism presupposes ongoing racialisation, conceived as a process of 'marking of bodies', occurring through skin colour and culture, religion, ethnicity, and language (Grosfoguel et al. 2015, 637). Although the UK did not directly colonise Latin America yet, within this colonial space, Latin Americans are considered to be 'colonial immigrants' (Grosfoguel et al. 2015, 642). In this context, we continue to be perceived under the frame of the colonial/modern gender capitalist world system, therefore being subjected to ongoing racist racialisation and sexualisation (Grosfoguel et al. 2015, 642).

The racialisation process of Latin American migrant women in England cuts through our bodies, marking us in violent ways by (re)constructing us along various hierarchies of inhumanity according to our internal group differences. The term 'Latin American women' has a colonial origin; it is a territorial identity rooted in the geo-historical experience of colonialism. It is used to refer to a group that, as a result of colonisation, is highly heterogeneous regarding skin colour, culture, religion, ethnicity, and language. Our process of racialisation necessarily reflects that. As Lugones (2008, 3) contends, following Quijano's theorisations, 'coloniality permeates all aspects of social existence and gives rise to new social […] geocultural […], [and] 'racial' identities'. Racial, class, and territorial differences mean that Latin American migrant women in England experience varying degrees of racist sexualisation, something which, in turn, influences the dynamics of abuse each may be subjugated to.

Colonial Imaginaries of Latin American Migrant Women

Colonial imaginaries of Latin American women historically rooted in colonialism continue to be enacted into the present, informing their experiences of violence in this country. These bear on how they are abused within intimate relationships and perceived in the wider English society, permeating how public authorities understand and respond to their violence cases. Racist hyper-sexualisation and exotification of Latin American migrant women's bodies point towards a homogenising process of 'tropicalisation' (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1997, 8) from every day to intimate relationships. By tropicalisation, I mean 'to trope, to imbue a particular space, geography, group, or nation with a set of traits, images, and values' (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1997, 8). This process may become more or less accentuated along specific racial and geo-territorial lines being underpinned by the stereotyped notions of 'latinidad' and

'tropicalism' (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1997; Molina and Valdivia 2010; Beserra 2005; Piscitelli 2007) associating Latin American female identities with dance, music, racial hybridity, curvy bodies, and an uncontrolled and dangerous sexual drive.

Studies focusing on Latin American women in other European countries have explored and identified how they navigate hypersexualised, erotic and exoticised representations that impact their economic and social lives directly and indirectly (Núñez-Borja and Stallaert 2013; Padilla 2011; 2007; Guizardi 2013). Similar othering stereotypes persist in the English context and are often transposed and exploited in dynamics of abuse within violent relationships with white men. These colonial fantasies' dehumanising and performative effect is to effectively re-construct Latin American women as *female animals*. Violence against Latin American migrant women gives continuity to their historical dehumanisation within racist, sexualised terms. As Lugones (2008, 13) contends, within the colonial modern gender system, gender has functioned as a marker of humanity and civilisation, reserved for white people.

> [Colonised females] were understood as animals in the deep sense of 'without gender,' sexually marked as female, but without the characteristics of femininity. Women racialised as inferior were turned from animals into various modified versions of 'women' as it fit the processes of Eurocentered global capitalism.

As front-line workers indicate, Latin American women are persistently treated as sexually available and 'looking for something', be it sex, money, the right to stay in this country, or all of those things. In particular, the dehumanising colonial gaze directed at Latin American women and their bodies is visibly expressed through active hyper-sexualisation and exotification. This is clearly illustrated in the below passage by Olivia, a Venezuelan woman with over 14 years of experience supporting Latin American migrant women who experience violence.

> That's a very big difference in being Latin American in the UK, this idea that we are exotic and sexy and always looking for something. […] We are perceived as the exotic creatures, beautiful exotic creatures… because most of the time we are mestizas, we are not white, we are not black, we are not indigenous, we are bits of many things, and we are normally, we are on our own in this country. […] In terms of how society perceives you because we are here on our own, 'how you dare, a woman from an exotic country, you are here on your own, you are here without proper papers, right? That means that you are looking for something, you are looking for money, you are looking for sex, that's why you are here, and that's how I'm going to treat you'.
>
> (Olivia, Venezuelan front-line worker)

Contemporarily, Latin American women are differently positioned along racist sexualised hierarchies of (in)humanity according to their race and nationality. Their perceptions resemble the historical over-sexualisation of non-white, colonised women, often depicted as perverts, promiscuous and bestial by the colonisers (Stoler 2010; McClintock 1995; Levine 2003). Olivia suggests that while 'mestizas' racial ambiguity serves as a strong base for sexual exotification, being Black and/or Brazilian aggravates this even further. This plays out in terms of exposure to high levels of sexual violence from their partners and institutional violence and disbelief from authorities – through presumptions that 'they asked for it'. Claudia, a Brazilian front-line worker with over eight years of experience, also discussed this.

> Some of my clients, who are Black women, gave birth and were raped by their partners as soon as they arrived home. I have a client who had a C-section, she experienced violence in the hospital, obstetric violence, and as soon as she got home, she was raped. Two, three days after she gave birth. And this I see a lot with my clients who are Black. Sexual violence is much more crude against Black women.
>
> (Claudia, Brazilian front-line worker)

Hyper-sexualisation and exotification are rooted in the violence Latin American women experience from white European/British perpetrators. The starting point of their relationships is often the exotification and sexualisation of Latin American women's bodies, with an overt focus on their physical appearance and a desire to 'eat' their bodies. In particular, the racist sexual objectification of Latin American Black women is visible in their white partners' attitudes, expressing a wish to sexually 'consume' their bodies whilst also despising and dehumanising them for their origin and colour of their skin. As hooks (1992, 23) suggests in her essay 'Eating the Other', the commodification of race and ethnicity in contemporary societies means that white people may seek sexual encounters with the Other as a 'resource for pleasure' to meet their desires for contact with the 'primitive' without having to relinquish their position of power. They may use non-white bodies, Black bodies in particular, as an 'alternative playground' to 'affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other' (hooks 1992, 23). This is evidenced in the dynamics of abuse recalled by Olivia.

> I remember a Venezuelan woman, she was a Black woman. She was in our refuge, and she was married to an Italian man, and every time her mother-in-law used to come to London, she had to move out of the house because her mother-in-law didn't want to live with Black people. Her husband used to tell her, 'because you are Black, you understand that you are less than us, right?... please go to your friend's for a week while my mum is here'. And she used to tell him, 'why did you marry me? Why you got married?'. 'Well, because I like to fuck Black pussies'. And I remember Brazilian women used to tell me more or less the same thing when the perpetrator was not Black, not Latin American. The exoticism around Brazilian women, and if you are

> Black […] I remember this woman […] she had a white partner, and her partner used to tell her, 'you are nothing, look how you look, look at the colour of your skin'.
>
> (Olivia, Venezuelan front-line worker)

In addition to cultural racism, sexualised racialisation within intimate relationships heavily draws on skin colour as a marker of (in)humanity, with Black women placed at the bottom of this hierarchy (Grosfoguel et al. 2015). For Black Brazilian women, sexualised racialisation based on skin colour intersects with cultural racist imaginaries rooted in 'tropicalism' (Guizardi 2013; Beserra 2007; Piscitelli 2007). In the context of migration, their national identities become associated with carnival and 'prostitution'/sex work.

Colonial dehumanisation and exotification based on race and sex sometimes manifest as crude physical and sexual violence, and more subtly through sexualised colonial fantasies embedded into psychological/emotional abuse. Discursively produced as 'sexual animals', abusive white men may, for example, withdraw communication and physical touch to reassert and distance themselves from Latin American women's inferiority, reaffirming their own humanity and superiority. As seen in the passage below, psychological and emotional violence from a white man took the form of depriving his partner of physical touch and verbally humiliating her. Reasserting his Latin American partner's 'sexual animality', this man simultaneously distanced himself, through relational opposition, from her supposedly impure and inhumane status.

> I remember this case, it was a woman that the man never touched her, in terms sexually, never, ever. He was ignoring her all the time. […] he was acting like she wasn't there. […] she was getting mad, it was like she was a ghost in the house. And at some point, when he talked to her, it was: 'ahh obviously, you are an animal, right? You are an animal from this exotic country, you need to be fucked, right? You need to be this. Let me tell you something, I'm not doing it because I'm not an animal'. […] yes, that man was not touching her physically, was not sexually abusing her, but the way he was playing with her mind, abusing her mind […]
>
> (Olivia, Venezuelan front-line worker)

Coloniality in the migration context combines the dimensions of sex, race and class with geopolitical status. This is solidified in the colonial discursive figures of 'gold-diggers' and 'papers-seekers', commonly projected onto Latin American migrant women. Perceived as 'underdeveloped' and 'poor', however, 'sexy', Latin American women are imagined as somewhat 'predators' trying to 'seduce' and take advantage of rich white men to improve their economic status and/or to guarantee residency rights. As my participants suggest, the gold-digger

stereotype is mainly deployed against Brazilians and Latin American Black women, whose race tends to be associated with a poorer background.

> If it is a Black woman, like many Black women who I've supported, after the violence starts, there is always something like, 'ahh your family just wanted to take advantage of me, just wanted to get out of this situation'. It's never only about the Black woman, it is like she is carrying her whole family within the relationship.
>
> (Francisca, Brazilian front-line worker)

Those colonial gendered imaginaries work as a base for intimate partner abuse and produce pervasive suspicion among public authorities meant to support Latin American survivors. Scapegoating ideas of migrants attempting to 'abuse' the system reshapes in a two-folded gendered way. Latin American women are implicitly suspected of entering relationships with Anglo-European men as a means to 'take advantage' of them and ultimately 'take advantage' of the immigration and welfare systems (e.g. seeking to secure their immigration status and receive welfare benefits).

> Latin American women, particularly Brazilians, are always treated like the gold-digger looking for a white man, you know? Wanting something. And it's not only the public services but the whole society, which always sees these women, not the men, as the problem.
>
> (Olivia, Venezuelan front-line worker)

The process of racialised sexualisation is further dehumanising for Latin American women who are trans; within a modern/colonial binary understanding of sex/gender, they are positioned as complete 'aberrations' (Lugones 2008; Butler 1990). Their Latin American and transgender identities work intersectionally to stereotypically frame them as sex workers, treated as 'impossible victims' of sexual violence and other forms of IPV. As Latin American front-line workers suggest, their violent dehumanisation stretches across intimate and institutional scales, with high levels of sexual and physical violence and violent practices that deny their gender identity as women.

> For me, when I think about the worst case that I have seen in my life, the worst ones that you say, 'there's no way out, how can this be happening?', these are the cases of Latin American women who are trans. […] The physical violence they experienced from their partners was brutal, the violence from the system, including the police, was brutal, and the violence from the carceral system, was outrageous.
>
> (Juana, Mexican front-line worker)

Colonial racialised gendered imaginaries inform Latin American women's experiences of intimate partner violence and state violence. The colonial frame through which we are socially perceived in the English colonial space sustains and reproduces a continuum (Kelly 1988) of violence from intimate to institutional forms. In the following section, I further explore how various facets of coloniality embed and manifest themselves in a spatial continuum of violence.

The Spatialised Coloniality of Abuse at the Intimate Scales of the Home and Body

Abusive relationships between white Anglo-European men and Latin American women mirror and reproduce colonial territorial dynamics. Like colonisers invaded, exploited and subjugated our lands and body-territories under colonialism, Latin American migrant women's bodies are treated as a territory of conquest within the English colonial space. This is not exclusively but particularly emphasised within relationships among partners from countries with direct histories of colonisation, where a re-enactment of the coloniser-colonised relationship of conquest and dominance occurs at the intimate scale. As clearly identified by front-line workers, the violent dehumanisation of Latin American women by Anglo-European men, Portuguese and Spanish in particular, parallels the notion of *Cuerpo-Territorio* ('Body-Territory') (Cabnal 2010; Cruz Hernández 2016), linking the colonisation of our native territories to the colonisation and invasion of colonised women's bodies. As Segato (2016b) contends, intimate violence expropriating women's control over their body-space functions as a symbolic sovereign act that coincides with Carl Schmitt's (cited in Segato, 2016) definition of sovereignty as legislative control over a territory and the body of those annexed to this territory. Territorialised by violence, Latin American migrant women's body-spaces are treated as annexed territories, controlled and abused by their partners who act as their sovereigns. This reveals how coloniality works spatially within the dynamics of abuse.

> Their type of abuse is like colonisation. It's palpable, you can see; you can prove that it is practically the same. The only difference is that one is perpetrated on a territory, and the other is against a person.
>
> (Alice, Brazilian front-line worker)

As she recalled cases she supported of Brazilian women abused by Portuguese men, the front-line worker Alice identified an intimate reconfiguration of colonisation. Within those relationships, Portuguese men often consider Brazilian women a colonised territory to exploit and extract from, and against which they wage war at first sight of disobedience. Brazilian

women were treated as servants, expected to fulfil all their partners' reproductive needs: cooking, cleaning, pleasing them sexually, and sometimes working to pay their bills. Failure to meet colonial gendered expectations has been met with threats of deportation and also murder. A sense of complete ownership over women's body-territories (its instrumental functions and life) is performatively expressed through such threats: control over their mobility and access to the territory-metropole and the coloniser's discretionary sovereign power to kill or let them live.

> It was very colonial, very. It was like, 'I'm your coloniser, I'm your owner, you are my territory, I do whatever I want with you, and if you don't do what I want…'. It's like they have to take, really extract, 'whilst I am taking something from you, everything is ok, but when you can't give me what I want, there is a war happening'. […] He threatened her with everything, 'if you don't do this, I will stab you with this knife'. […] It was not only a threat 'I'm going to send you back to Brazil', but it was also physical threats, threats of murder, you know?
>
> (Alice, Brazilian front-line worker)

Patterns of abuse show how white Anglo-European men weaponise Latin American women's colonial difference (Mignolo 2002; Lugones 2010) to exert emotional and psychological violence in ways that reproduce coloniality of being and doing (Quijano 2000b; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Lugones 2010). As identified by Francisca in several of her cases, this is seen in how abusive Portuguese men judge and subordinate Brazilian women's ways of being. This goes from aspects of their culture, such as demonising their afro-Brazilian religions and despising their food and ways of cooking, to their locally-specific ways of speaking Portuguese.

> It is a colonial prejudice, completely, in every possible nuance. Based on the fact that a woman speaks a 'wrong' Portuguese, that she eats 'pig' food, or because her religion is 'macumba', how they say, it is a religion from the 'devil'. Every aspect of our culture is judged, from how a woman speaks, how she cooks, and how she educates her children. Everything is marginalised, despised because in their vision, their culture is superior, you know? […] I had a client, the man would spit on her food every day because that food was 'pig's food', 'you need to cook Portuguese food' […]. Or, for example, 'why are you talking like that? You can't teach my son to speak like that, this is not the correct way of speaking'.
>
> (Francisca, Brazilian front-line worker)

Although the above may be accentuated among white Portuguese and Spanish perpetrators, racialised, gendered abusive dynamics are similarly reproduced by other white European and British abusers. As Segato (2016b) suggests, sovereign power does not rely solely on physical violence; its main feature is not the power to kill but rather the moral and psychological subjugation of the other in ways to turn them into an audience of the discretionary death power

of the dominator. My analysis concurs with Segato (2016), who suggests that instead of extermination, colonisation is the ultimate goal of the sovereign, for it enables the display of the sovereign power to kill or to let live before those kept alive. A closer look at white men's abusive practices sheds light on how racial colonial oppression intersects with sexualised emotional and psychological abuse, control and humiliation in ways that reproduce and display the sovereign power of subjugation at the intimate scales of the home and women's bodies. As the Mexican front-line worker Juana noted, the all too common gendered/sexist verbal attacks within abusive intimate relationships, such as name-calling women a 'bitch', 'whore', 'ugly', 'fat' or 'useless', are in these cases accompanied by racialised colonial insults. These discursively interpellate (Butler 1990) Latin American women to occupy an inferior and dehumanised status. The verbal violence contained in statements such as 'underdeveloped', the N-word, 'your filthy food', 'I brought you here from your little town', has a performative effect (Butler 1990; 1993) of subjugating and repositioning Latin American women's difference within colonial hierarchies of humanity according to the 'dark' side of the colonial gender capitalist world system (Lugones 2008; 2010). Apart from putting colonised women 'back in their place', this type of violence is directed at 'disciplining', 'civilising' or 'moralising' them to abide by the cultural standards of the new colonial territory they live in and are now understood to be 'annexed'. This is discussed and illustrated in length in the following section, particularly concerning English/British men.

> It is like a mini-colonialism in the home, through which they basically want to modify your life, no? Your food, your music, your style, your identity. Because in the end, your identity is rubbish, you are underdeveloped whilst I'm a white man who will tell you how to do things, right?
>
> (Juana, Mexican front-line worker)

The coloniality embedded in intimate partner violence discussed by Juana in the above excerpt is illustrated by the abuse and humiliation experienced by Elaine, a Black working-class woman from Brazil who was married to a white Portuguese abusive man. The insidious nature of the abuse she described suggests how it worked to strip her of humanity. Although never directly physical, the abuse she experienced was profoundly dehumanising. Her husband threatened to kill her in multiple ways, including hanging her with a rope he frequently displayed to intimidate her and reassert his power over her life. He stereotyped her in sexist, racialised ways, deprived her basic needs, and purposefully left everything messy and dirty to ensure she was constantly cleaning after him.

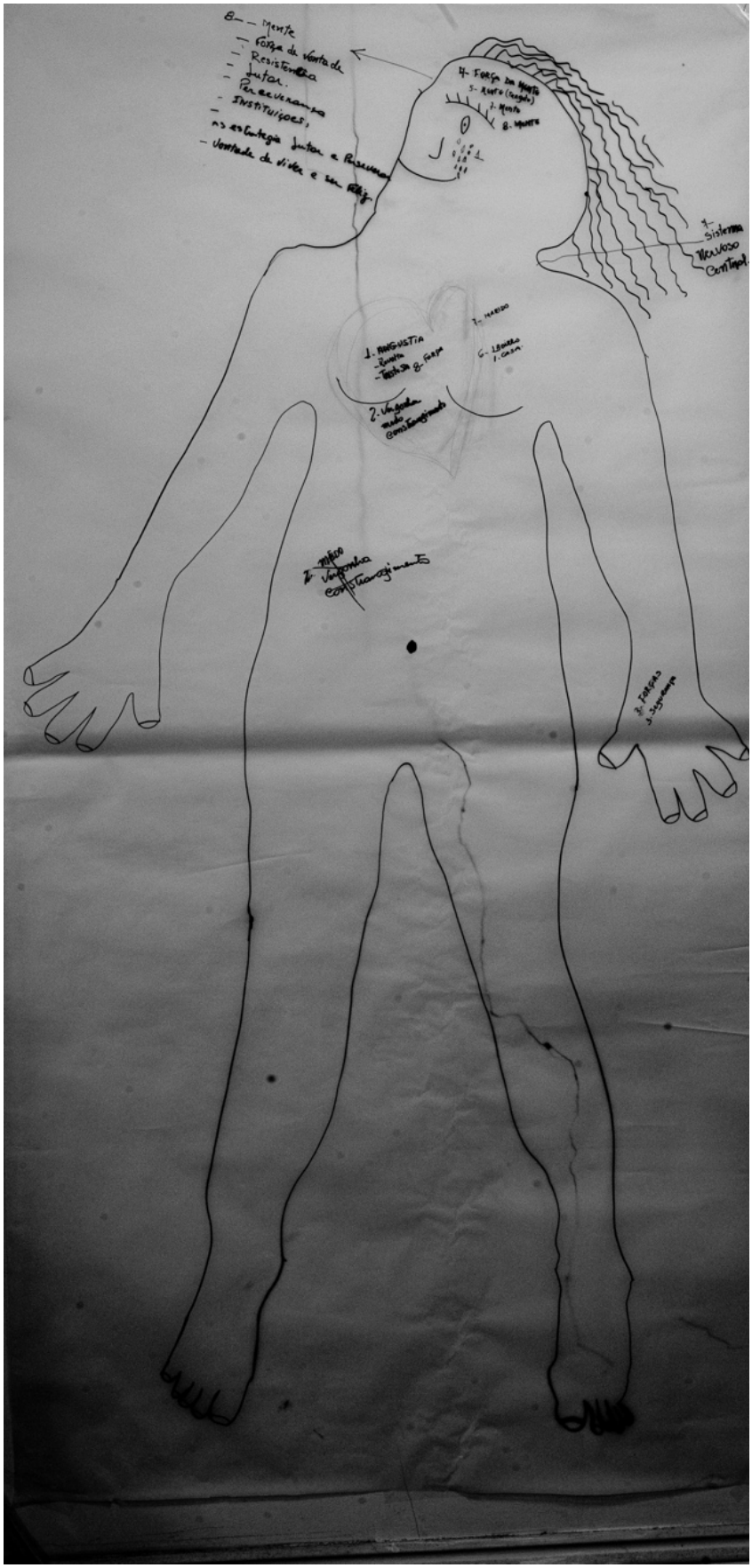


Figure 6.2 Elaine's Body-Territory map

> He used to eat bread and throw all the crumbs on the floor on purpose. At times, I had just finished cleaning the kitchen, and then I would come back… […] He would throw the chopping board, bits of bread and salami on the floor. That's how he is, he would do everything on purpose so that I would always stay there cleaning […] When he used to tell me off, he used to say, 'you can't drink water from here, you can't eat this bread, anything'. When he was drunk, he wouldn't let me eat, either drink water or milk, nothing. I suffered so much at the hands of that man.
>
> (Elaine, Brazilian, Black, 63 years)

Elaine's husband sometimes forced her to sleep in the kitchen, sat on a chair. When he allowed her to go to bed, he would wake her up with kicks in the middle of the night. He frequently swore at her and called her a '*bitch*' because '*all Brazilian women were a bitch and worth nothing*'. He projected stereotypes of Brazilians as 'slut gold-diggers' on Elaine even though she was never financially supported by him. When Elaine called the police after her husband threatened to kill her, he disclosed his prejudices to the police officers stating that '*Brazilian women are worth nothing, they are all sluts, they only want money*'. He was neither arrested nor removed from the house, and instead, Elaine eventually ended up moving out as she feared for her life. More than a year after separation, she admitted to fearing her ex-husband deeply. The psychological and emotional dehumanising violence she experienced became imprinted on her whole body and nervous system - particularly in her mind, heart, and stomach (see figure 6.1). Looking back at her Body-Territory map, Elaine reflected, '*sometimes I still wonder, how can a human being be so evil with another?*'. As Aimé Césaire (2000) suggests, in the process of dehumanising the Other, the coloniser loses their morality and dehumanises themselves.

Coloniality embedded into psychological and emotional abuse involves a process of active sexist racialisation mobilising and intersecting with colonial geopolitical imaginaries. As the observations of front-line workers and Elaine's experiences illustrate, coloniality of abuse at the intimate scale subjugates Latin American women's bodies through sexist racialisation based on skin colour, cultural practices, class and geo-territorial associations. Elaine's husband deployed racial and sexist attacks at her as a Black Brazilian woman, which repositioned her as inferior and deserving of his dehumanising acts of violence. He deprived her of her basic needs whilst expecting her to fulfil his, under the ongoing threat of murder.

The (Re-)Territorialisation of Women's Bodies

In the previous section, I have analysed how the coloniality embedded in the violence perpetrated against Latin American women at the intimate scale involves a process of active colonial re-signification and subjugation of their bodies which connects to global territorial

imaginaries. In this section, I further develop my analysis of the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* by suggesting how space is marked by and implicated in reproducing coloniality through processes of (re) territorialisation of Latin American women's bodies. In the context of migration to England and focusing on abuse by British men against Latin American women, I shed light on how *spatialised coloniality of abuse* embeds violence in a continuum connecting geopolitical and body-political territorialities.

In England and other European colonial spaces of migration, colonial territorialities associated with Latin America are projected onto Latin American women's bodies and ways of being. Symbolically defined in hierarchically inferior terms, Latin American women are perceived to require discipline. Within colonial territory-spaces, everyday and intimate forms of violence can be mobilised as strategies of (re) territorialisation. Abuse is, sometimes, a tool used to 'domesticate' Latin American women's colonial differences, to 'civilise' them according to the territorial-cultural 'norms' of the country they migrated to and are seemingly 'annexed'. As Haesbaert (2007; 2020) contends, territoriality as a political-cultural strategy of control and appropriation of space may take material but also a more abstract and immaterial ontological dimension. In this sense, territoriality manifests itself not only through material control of access to a space but also through the symbolic control of territorial identities and imagined territorial communities. This is expressed in how Latin American women's bodies are symbolically (re) territorialised through everyday and intimate acts of violence, constructing their body-geographical territorial identities in explicitly colonial racialised sexist terms (as discussed in previous sections). In attempts to define, discipline and control, British men may discursively inferiorise Latin American women's bodily expressions and ways of being and doing that divert from white European standards. These are judged against their cultural and capitalist markers of civilisation and superiority.

This dynamic emerged from the abuse Gisela experienced from her husband, a white British man. They both met whilst living in Chile and were in a relationship for two years before deciding to relocate to England and get married. The violence Gisela experienced was primarily psychological and emotional. Although she described her relationship in Chile mainly in a good light, as she recounted her story, she also identified some signs of abuse back then. Her partner would lower her self-esteem with comments about her ways of dressing, presumably expecting her to dress 'better', with more expensive clothes. She often felt subtly coerced to do things his way and had the impression that he wanted to change her and did not like her for who she was. Her partner recurrently complained about Chileans, complaints which were directed to Gisela after they migrated to England. For example, he started scrutinising her bodily expression,

complaining that she 'spoke with her hands', - something common among Chileans, according to Gisela. Back in Chile, he used to say that Chileans were lazy and lacked ambition, and once in England, he started criticising her for that, implying she lacked motivation to work, which made her feel unworthy. Gisela spent her first months in London unemployed, looking for a job. During this period, her husband called her daily to monitor her and ensure she spent her time 'productively' according to his own standards. Due to her limited English ability and lack of professional network, Gisela could not find a job in her field as a designer and started working in a café and as a nanny. This is a familiar reality among recently arrived Latin American migrants. However, her husband blamed her and even called her *lazy*. Below, Gisela describes the psychological effects of coping with structural disadvantages as a migrant woman whilst being unsupported, verbally attacked and humiliated by her husband.

> I do not understand how I sank so much with him, how I got so low to the point of not even wanting to draw or design and stopped believing in myself as a person. I stopped believing in myself, I felt like I could not achieve anything. Yes, because imagine arriving in a country where I did not speak the language, I had to start working in whatever job I could get. And he had a really good job. I migrated badly, and I couldn't even ask him to help me with my homework because he would get angry, he would say, 'why can't you do it on your own?'.
>
> (Gisela, Chilean, white and Indigenous descent, 34 years)

Similar to Gisela, Lorena's British husband also started to abuse her insidiously soon after she relocated to live with him in England. They met whilst he was on holiday in Brazil for a few months and decided to get married and settle in a small town close to London. Lorena described how he constantly made her feel 'weird' and out of place in England, criticising how she dressed and trying to meticulously control how she did things.

> He thought I was strange [...] he would constantly say that the way I did things was wrong and strange. Even the way I cut the onion. He had a phrase that he would always say: 'you are in England now, that's how we do things here'. And it was about really silly things, like, I don't know, a glass that is for Prosecco and a glass that is for wine. I never had that in Brazil, never. So I would end up putting wine in the other glass [...]
>
> (Lorena, Brazilian, Indigenous descent, 30 years)

Lorena's husband reminded her that she was in England to mould her behaviour, a form of controlling that suggests a specific form of territoriality, a way of embodying territory by performing seemingly mundane domestic activities in a predetermined manner. His control reveals a subtle process of (re) territorialisation embedded in gender, class and geo-territorial dynamics. As a woman, Lorena's husband expected her to perform gendered domestic chores

according to his middle-class British territorial standards. But, Lorena explained she never had different types of glasses in Brazil, a statement that locates her geographical origin and class position within it.

Front-line workers also identified similar patterns of territorial projections within abusive relationships between European men and Latin American women. Whilst perpetrators may initially refrain from directing racist comments towards their partners, colonial views relating to their territorial identities are progressively weaponised against them to exert emotional and psychological abuse and control. Francisca vividly recalled this as she referred to cases of Brazilian women abused by white Portuguese men.

> They will often start by saying things about your people. I had a client who described how in the beginning, her husband would always talk badly about Brazilians but not about her, and slowly this started to transform. She used to say: 'At first I couldn't understand why he hated Brazilians, but I was Brazilian', you know? When they used to live in Portugal, everything he saw Brazilians doing was wrong, Brazilians threw trash on the floor, Brazilians were dirty, Brazilians were uneducated, Brazilians were wretched and criminals. And this verbal abuse was not against her at first but was then re-directed towards her, she eventually became the target for all that.
>
> (Francisca, Brazilian front-line worker)

Colonial territorialities are projected onto Latin American women by their partners' relatives and friends. Diana's experiences of violence clearly illustrate how coloniality embeds violence in a spatial continuum marked by processes of (re) territorialisation underpinned by race, sex/gender and class across multiple spatialities and temporalities. She met her husband, a white middle-class English man, back in her country, Mexico. They lived together for a few years before he convinced her that they should relocate to England for better economic opportunities. When Diana arrived in this country, they initially lived at her in-laws' house in a small English town that she described as 'very conservative'. It was home to wealthy white families, some of which had a history of slave-ownership. The migrant population was small and primarily concentrated in precarious jobs, such as cleaning and catering. Diana felt insidiously discriminated against from the outset, with stereotyped images of migrants being projected onto her body, making her frequently feel undermined and looked down upon. At home, her mother-in-law was patronising and used to imply that Diana was ignorant and unfamiliar with basic things because she came from Mexico.

> And obviously, it is not a situation that people tell you, no, 'I won't serve you', 'you can't sit close to me', or 'go to the back of the bus'… it's very subtle, but you can notice. People behave politely, they are not rude in your face, but they make comments, they say things, and you can understand the tone they are using. It's not that they find you disgusting, they are truly certain, they know that you are inferior, they don't doubt it, they know it. It's about how they speak to you and what they say. The family, the mother […] she'd explain simple things to me, what did she say to me once, 'look, that is pepper, you use it like this.' […] She would say things like that, make comments about my clothes. She gave me a cashmere sweater and then said, 'ahh, this must be like the best thing you have in your closet'. She would always speak to me as if I was a child and as if I could not understand […] always, it was constant. You could also tell how unhappy they were about the situation, it was like, 'does she have to be Mexican? Couldn't you marry the Australian you were with before?'
>
> (Diana, Mexican, white and Indigenous descent, 23 years)

In her words, Diana suggests how her experiences of English racism spatially connected multiple scales. From her country of origin and the English town where she moved to and was 'politely' looked down upon by strangers to the intimate space of the home, where she was similarly 'politely' patronised by her in-laws. Racism was experienced intersectionally based on gendered and class readings or her geo-territorial identity as a Mexican migrant woman. These were manifest in infantilising attitudes towards her, comments on her ways of dressing, assumptions that she could not afford good quality clothing and apparent discontent regarding her Mexican nationality. Progressively, Diana became a target of more crude forms of racist abuse. Her husband's friends started making racist 'jokes' that bluntly restored colonial hierarchies. They said she came from a backwards country and referred to Mexicans as 'savages'. Her husband never reinforced such views whilst he lived in Mexico, however, in England, he slowly started weaponising these against her.

> Obviously, he didn't say anything like that to me when we were in Mexico. But over time, it reached a point in the relationship that he started saying things like that, that Mexicans were savages, that my relatives were criminals and rapists. He knew that my mother and my sister had been raped […] and that is what he told me, 'it's that they are all rapists in your family.' […] It got very ugly, very bizarre, towards the end, we went out with his friends, and they humiliated me and made jokes about me.
>
> (Diana, Mexican, white and Indigenous descent, 23 years)

Diana's husband deployed racist colonial fantasies of colonised people as 'savages' along sex/gender lines, reinforcing stereotyped portrayals of racialised men, Mexicans in particular, as rapists and criminals (Cowan 2017). He also used her experience of sexual abuse as a base for gaslighting, frequently dismissing her by saying she was 'dramatic' and mentally unstable as a result of sexual violence-related trauma. Being racially stereotyped by all those around her

had a direct impact on Diana's confidence and self-esteem. She started self-doubting and questioning whether she was, in fact, inferior. As she reflected on her experience during our interview, she articulated how totalising views of her country were projected and felt onto her own body.

> Being in this place, being surrounded by everyone who was thinking that, made me doubt: maybe, maybe I don't know anything, maybe I'm useless, maybe I'm a savage or not even that. Now I see things differently […] But there was a moment when yes, I thought that. Now I understand the place Mexico occupies in the collective consciousness, the stereotype that comes to mind when people think of Mexico. […] the media and all that, they have painted many images of places that remain in people's minds. It's like someone paints a picture of you and you can imagine it, it is a burrito, an unpaved road, a ball of coca leaves, or a cake, you know? Or a taco. I don't know, I feel that even the violence that he felt entitled to inflict on me, I feel it is because I'm Mexican. I feel that if I was English, it would have cost him a little more work, and he could not have said many of the things he said and done the things he did. Somehow I don't think things would have happened this way […]
>
> (Diana, Mexican, white and Indigenous descent, 23 years)

The continuum of abuse experienced by Diana in this country suggests a direct transposition of colonial territorial views from the macro territorial scale of her country to the scale of her Body-Territory. This process of (re) territorialisation connecting multi-scalar territorialities and temporalities has the performative effect of restoring colonial hierarchies and re-enacting relationships of conquest through her body. Colonial difference was re-defined and weaponised at the intimate scale, alongside border-territoriality (see Chapter 5). Once Diana and her husband resettled in England, the new territory in itself became conducive to violence. As a Mexican woman, Diana became an easy target of abuse in a territorial migration context of coloniality, stemming from immigration policies and widespread racist sexualised territorial representations of Mexicans and migrant women more generally.

The experiences of Gisela, Lorena, Diana, and many other women supported by Francisca brings to light the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* ingrained in the dynamics of violence perpetrated by Anglo-European men against Latin American women in England. The *spatialised coloniality of abuse* connects territorialities and geo-territorial identities across multiple scales from the body, intimate, local and national to the global – from colonial to contemporary times. Colonial territorial views broadly applied to Latin America, as a peripheric territory of the South, are used to reposition women's body-territories within a colonial frame and control them. This form of abuse tends to start or intensify after migration and resettlement in England, a territory-

metropole in the North, where women's body-territories are subjugated and disciplined by their partners to align with the colonial territoriality of this space.

From Intimate to State Forms of Spatialised Coloniality of Abuse

The *spatialised coloniality of abuse* experienced by Latin American women in England spans from everyday, intimate to institutional forms of violence in a relational continuum (Kelly 1988). In this section, I discuss and illustrate how the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* works through institutions meant to protect Latin American women from abuse. This framework invests privileged abusers with the power to continue perpetrating abuse against their partners through institutions. Building on their male, class, racial and/or geopolitical privilege, abusers capitalise on Latin American women's fears of public authorities. They threaten and warn that they will be disbelieved, seen as 'crazy' and 'aggressive' by institutions with the power to criminalise, deport and/or separate them from their children. Intimate and institutional violence collude and reinforce each other in a continuum as Latin American women attempt to leave abusive relationships. Such forms of intimate and institutional violence are rooted in coloniality and further reproduce it. This section provides a glimpse of how this plays out in Latin American women's interactions with various agencies, from social services and the police to the courts.

Apart from fears about immigration status and their partners' threats (Dudley 2017; Jolly 2018; McIlwaine et al. 2019; Farmer 2020), Latin American survivors are scared that social services will remove their children because they have been victims of violence. Front-line workers discussed how women are often subtly victim-blamed by social services and seen as 'bad' mothers for 'allowing' violence to be perpetrated against them in the first place. In particular, social services seem to scrutinise Latin American migrant women's motherhood abilities according to white gendered colonial standards associated with a specific form of English territoriality. As Juana suggests, Latin American women's embodied expressions are encapsulated into territorial gendered colonial imaginaries linked to Latin America as too emotional and dramatic.

> They misinterpret women, when women talk about their circumstances and emotions, they are treated as drama queens, like in a Latin American soap opera: 'she is a drama queen'. Or she is crazy, and her mental health is too unwell. I'm talking about social services and children's services, they are super judgmental and even dismissive of our identities.
>
> (Juana, Mexican front-line worker)

Deemed 'hysterical' and 'unstable', social services may use such stereotypes as a rationale to consider Latin American women unable to protect and care for their children. Their motherhood practices are judged in ways that reposition their colonial difference (Mignolo 2002; Lugones 2010) as hierarchically inferior, unfitting and even dangerous. According to Juana, social services are more prone to deploying such a colonial bias against Latin American indigenous mothers. Their caring practices are meticulously scrutinised, from how they educate their children, to how they dress and feed them.

> Especially in cases of indigenous women, they are severely judged by social services as bad mothers. Practices that, for us, may be normal or ancestral or part of our identity are judged as barbarian. Absurd things, like the type of food that you give to your child […] Or that you are covering the baby too much… I've read in social services reports that 'the baby is too covered, and she is suffocating him with blankets'. How can you assess the capacity to be a good mother through that? And I've never read these sort of things in social service reports of white English women, never, never seen such a comparable raw judgment of their motherhood as I've seen towards Latin American indigenous women. It's a way of judging, simply looking at you, hearing you, and they conclude that you come from another planet where nobody knows how to do anything.
>
> (Juana, Mexican front-line worker)

Social services may become a source of institutional colonial violence and intimidation in the context of implicit and explicit threats of child removal being justified through such a colonial framing. Coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres 2007) is institutionally reproduced to frame Latin American women's emotional expressions and motherhood practices marked by colonial difference (Mignolo 2002; Lugones 2010) as inadequate and in need of fixing.

Coloniality institutionally embedded in the police force also sets the ground for disbelieving Latin American women's experiences of violence, which may frequently lead to their criminalisation (see also McIlwaine et al. 2019). The police may often read Latin American women as too emotional, 'hysterical' or even 'aggressive' (see Evans and McIlwaine 2017 about Brazilian migrant women). Latin American women, Black women, in particular, divert from normative images of passive victimhood due to the sexist racialisation of their bodies and the embodied expressive ways they may respond to violence. As Black Feminist authors have suggested, the paradigmatic imagining of a victim of abuse is identified with passive, white, cis, middle-class, heterosexual womanhood, leading to harmful consequences for those whose background and embodied expressions do not fit into this model (Goodmark 2008; Ferraro 1996; Crenshaw 1991; Hayes 2013). The combined effects of being a Latin American migrant woman, Black, unable to speak English, and responding to violence by fighting back can

potentially be disastrous. Their images and narratives oppose that which came to be known by the police, courts and the wider English society as the normative standard against which victimhood is measured.

> It is not the same when a Latin American woman who is white or mestiza approaches the police, and when it is a Latina Black woman, no, forget it. To start with, because there is this stereotype that Black women like arguing […] 'this woman is aggressive'… so if she is married to a man who is white, you can imagine, right? She is not even aggressive, but violent, and everything else they may say.
>
> (Lidia, Colombian front-line worker)

Being Black, trans, unable to speak English and resorting to physical self-defend are key factors commonly used by white European and British male abusers to incriminate Latin American women. When one or more of those variables are at play, abusers seem more likely to be believed. Front-line workers recounted several cases in which those contexts contributed to women being arrested and taken into police custody. Even though most were subsequently released without charges, this is a profoundly traumatic event that can later impact social services reports and family court decisions.

> There is more discrimination against migrants, it is not just one or two cases, I have seen several cases where the perpetrator called the police to say the woman was the abuser when she was not. And when they can't speak English, instead of calling an interpreter, they simply drag women out of their homes. We are talking about women who cannot express themselves because she was not offered adequate support, and instead, she was assumed to be the problem. Because they can't speak English, or because they are Black, for example. […] By the time an interpreter arrives, it's been 24h, you know? Some women ended up sleeping in a cell. I had a case where a woman peed on her pants because she was not allowed to go to the toilet. It is traumatising. And then what do the police say? Sorry and nothing else. And this continues happening.
>
> (Claudia, Brazilian front-line worker)

Transgender status is also a major factor contributing to the dehumanisation and criminalisation of Latin American survivors. For example, Juana recalled the case of Samantha, a white Brazilian trans woman who was undocumented and a sex worker. Her partner was a white English cis man who did not help her regularise her status and used to abuse her physically. During a violence incident, Samantha fought back against him, and he called the police claiming she was the perpetrator. Samantha spoke very limited English, and the police ended up arresting her. Being criminalised as a migrant trans woman later led to further

institutional violence in the form of sexist transphobia. Samantha was sent to a male prison and denied her hormonal treatment.

Similar to Samantha, some Latin American women I interviewed were also criminalised by their police, who chose to believe their partners instead. This happened to Fernanda, a Brazilian woman of white and indigenous descent. Her white Portuguese husband tried to kill her several times. He was once arrested and brought to court, but he was later acquitted. He continued to abuse Fernanda, and regardless of the previous allegation, he managed to criminalise her following her attempt to escape his beating and threats. As Fernanda tried to leave the house with her new-born baby, the door accidentally closed against her husband's hand, causing an injury he later used to evidence violence. He used this to incriminate her, calling the police and claiming that she attempted to kill him with a screwdriver.

> I will never forget Rosa. He used my own phone to call the police. When the police arrived, I was sat there crying. He spoke very good English, so he told his version to the police. Before they arrived, he took a screwdriver and rubbed against his hand to stain it with blood and then threw it under the chair where I was sitting, so he told the police that I had injured his hand with that. And that was enough, the police took him away to take his statement and told me to stay at home. I spoke no English, nothing, not even a word. So he went and told his story, performed his little play […] and when my daughter arrived from school I told her what happened, I was full of bruises, my eye was injured, he cut my face […]
>
> (Fernanda, Brazilian, white and Indigenous descent, 52 years)

Intimate and institutional violence collided on Fernanda's body underpinned by the differentiated weight of a racialised migrant women's injured body (described as covered by bruises, with cuts on the face and an injured eye) compared to a white European male one (whose hand was injured). As Fernanda suggests, her husband's 'very good English' in contrast with her inability to speak 'even a word', also played a significant role in her husband's ability to legitimise his narrative to criminalise her. Although she could not speak English and was not provided with an interpreter, when her eldest daughter arrived from school, she desperately tried to explain Fernanda's version. Yet, and despite Fernanda's bodily injuries, the police failed to believe her. Fernanda's new-born was handed over to her abuser, she was arrested and spent the night under police custody.

As the above illustrates, police responses to incidents of violence are marked by coloniality, intersectionally mediated by race, sex/gender, geopolitical status and language abilities. Cis male whiteness, English fluency, class privilege and British or European nationalities may translate into higher levels of credibility as these are conceived as markers of humanity. In

contrast, police responses to violence among Latin Americans have seemed to play out differently. Front-line workers' observations and interviews with survivors suggest a tendency for Latin American on Latin American cases of violence to be dismissed as a community problem, leading to delayed actions or a complete disregard for victims' safeguarding.

Coloniality is also spatially embedded in British criminal and family courts, where positive outcomes for Latin American migrant women seem to be extremely rare to be achieved. Their experiences in court leave them with a deep sense of injustice, feeling humiliated and violated in ways that mirror the interpersonal abuse experienced by their partners. As Smee (2013) notes in her intersectional analysis of the British criminal justice system, as Black and Minority Ethnic women seek formal justice, they must negotiate not only sexist stereotypes regarding VAWG but also language barriers and the potential of being targets of institutional racism. Unsurprisingly, studies have shown that Black women tend to be disbelieved in courts and have their cases dismissed (Goodmark 2008; Collins 1998b; Crenshaw 1991). Latin American migrant women who may be privileged in terms of race, language ability and immigration status are in a stronger position to leave their abusers and navigate hostile immigration and family court systems, yet they are also faced with the coloniality of violence embedded in these institutions. This can be discussed in the context of Hermana's experiences in the family court, a Mexican middle-class white woman participating in this research. The institutional violence she experienced during family court proceedings cross-cut every aspect of her existence as a migrant woman from the South, whose English (albeit fluent) is her second language and who, although originally middle-class, has, for the most part, lost her economic status upon migration. This contrasts with her white and wealthy English ex-husband, who worked at a bank and could afford renowned lawyers to represent him.

> He is now using the family court to continue his abuse, to practically request my deportation, to decide that I am a liar. […] I'm being completely discriminated against. The reality is that the court is treating me like that: you are Mexican, I don't believe you, you are Mexican and a woman, a Mexican, actress, no. Activist? Even less so. He works in a bank and is white and English, so they believe everything he says just because he says it. And everything I say, even though there is evidence from competent authorities, like the Home Office, they say 'no, this is not enough, we need to see everything, everything you said to the Home Office, all the disclosure'. And it is not only that the court wants to see it, but the court also wants me to show it to my abuser, so they can do a cross-examination of what I say and see if what I say is supported by what happened. They are going to put me through X-rays, through X-rays. The only thing I have in my favour is that I haven't lied, that everything I have said is everything that has happened. Now, are the laws in my favour? No, the laws are against me because although the laws should protect me, in practice, it is: 'let's get rid of all these immigrants, all these people'.
>
> (Hermana, Mexican, white, 38 years)

As Hermana described her interactions in court, it was striking how she was conscious of the colonial gaze through which the court observed her and undermined the legitimacy of her accounts compared to her husband's claims. Even though Hermana is white, her whiteness was foreclosed by English male middles-class whiteness, with coloniality working through the axes of gender, class and geo-territorial identities to hierarchically position them at a different level of humanity and credibility. The court disbelieved her through violent colonial projections whilst enabling her husband and his lawyers to continue to abuse her through cross-examination.

> So the court is now saying that I lied, that violence didn't happen. And this is just because I said that he never abused me physically. It all comes down to a phrase that I said: 'he never abused me at his hands'. Because I meant hands in the literal sense, hands, but this is a phrase that they use here to talk about violence in general. I did a literal translation, but I always explained that he never abused me physically because I managed to escape. But because I said, and it's written in a paper, that 'he never abused me at his hands', this is being used to say that I'm contradicting myself, which is not true.
>
> (Hermana, Mexican, white, 38 years)

Hermana explained that the court questioned the legitimacy of her violence claims based on a linguistic nuance in a statement submitted to the Home Office. The court failed to consider that English was Hermana's second language, enabling language differences to be weaponised against her to invalidate her experiences of abuse. Coloniality embedded interpersonal and institutional violence in a continuum across Hermana's body (Kelly 1988). Hermana summarised this in the metaphor she chose to describe how the court's decision to allow her cross-examination as allowing her body to be put through 'X-rays'. Seemingly inoffensive, X-rays penetrate the body's soft tissues in an invasive manner that may cause severe consequences when exposure is high. Unsurprisingly, Hermana mapped the severe long-term harmful effects of coloniality-derived intimate and state violence on her Body-Territory map (figure 6.2). As she drew and explained, her body has been marked by ulcers, fatigue, chronic pain, ongoing stress, fear and panic attacks. She associated these with her husband and the family court.

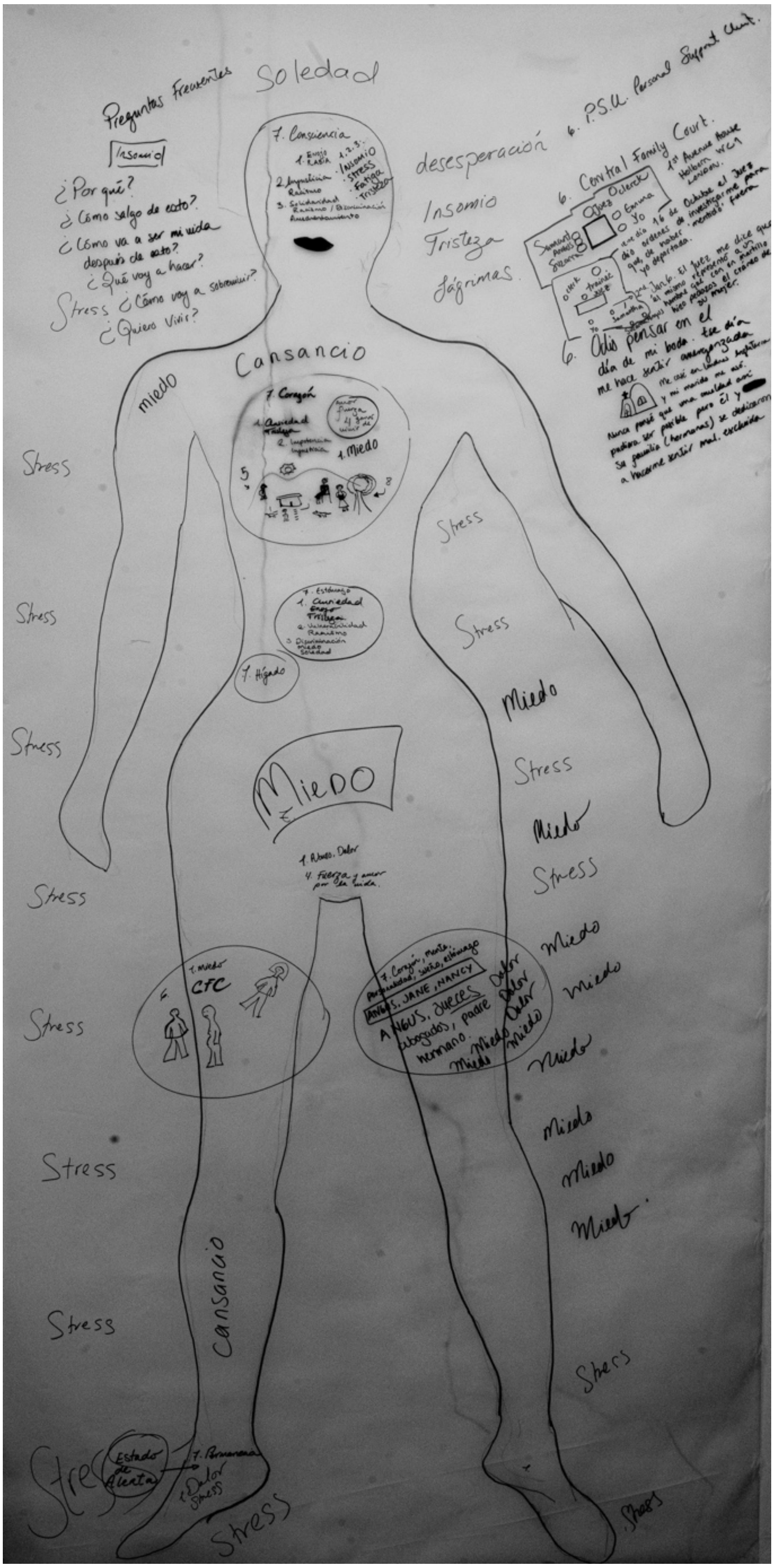


Figure 6.2 Hermana's Body-Territory map

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed how coloniality informs imaginaries, discourses and practices that perpetuate and justify violence against Latin American migrant women in various forms. Violence dehumanises Latin American women and repositions them within racial, sex/gender, and capitalist hierarchies of (in)humanity reproduced from colonialism until the present through coloniality (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b). Through violence, coloniality operates in a relational continuum (Kelly 1988), connecting multi-scalar (Hyndman 2001; Dowler and Sharp 2001) spatialities and temporalities**.** Intimate, every day and state violence against Latin American migrant women in England is structurally underpinned by the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*. I define the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* as a spatialised power matrix informing and connecting violence against racialised migrant women from the past into the present across multiple scales and in a relational continuum.

The *spatialised coloniality of abuse* manifests as a specific form of colonial territoriality that sustains abuse. From the global territorial imaginaries of the colonial/modern world system (periphery vs metropole or South vs North) and national-territories to the intimate scale of abusive relationships and the embodied territorial scale of women's bodies. This is expressed through border regulations and practices (see Chapter 5) and how territorial imaginaries and discourses structurally invest white European and British male perpetrators with power and privilege to dominate their Latin American migrant partners in England. They are empowered by a Global North territorial context and a set of imaginaries that position them as significantly superior to migrant women. This goes beyond citizenship status, emerging from a supposedly moral and cultural superiority linked to metropolitan territories. Territory is performatively produced and reproduced in material and discursive ways to maintain colonial representations and unequal power relations through direct and indirect acts of violence. Drawing on Quijano's (2000b) and Lugones' (2008; 2010) conceptualisation of coloniality, the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* is a spatial analysis of how the causes and consequences of violence against racialised women are historically and presently informed by coloniality. Operating through discursive and material dehumanising practices along the intersectional axes of race, sex/gender, class and geopolitical status, the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* connects past and present forms of violence. This is evidenced in how Latin American migrant women are subjected to intimate, state and everyday processes of hyper-sexualised racialisation in the Global North, (re)constructing them as 'sexual animals' and as territory to be invaded and subjugated. This process of sexist racialisation is a marking and (re) territorialisation of their bodies (Grosfoguel et al. 2015) that is not only based on sex and skin colour but is informed by

territorial imaginaries associated with their specific geopolitical status, languages and geo-cultural practices.

In line with decolonial theorists, I argue that references to Latin American cultural practices must recognise the significance of the colonial invasion in attempting, yet, only partially succeeding to subjugate alternative indigenous and Black diaspora ways of being, doing and knowing. References to culture must account for the colonial difference, conceptualised by Mignolo (2002) and understood by Lugones (2010) as decolonial resistance, the border-zone, the space in between the colonial impetus and that which has not been quite suppressed. Latin American migrant women's colonial difference is that which becomes hyper-visible in a Global North context. It is that which continues to be tainted through civilising colonial discourses sustaining coloniality and perpetrating violence. Colonial difference is weaponised against Latin American women through intimate and state acts of violence, repositioning us as culturally inferior and uncivilised. Through violence, Latin American women's ways of being and doing are attempted to be subjugated or suppressed in a movement that gives continuity to the colonial project, reproducing coloniality across spatial and temporal scales, from the body to the Global and from the past until the present.

CHAPTER VII – SPATIALISED EMBODIED RESISTANCE(S) TO VIOLENCE

Introduction

> When they moved us out of that house, we thought they would place us in a flat, not a hostel room like that one. 'Well, if you don't like it, go back to your country or sleep on the streets with your children if you don't accept it'. […] It was like they put me that mark again, saying, 'it's your fault that you were abused'. I cried so much on the street when I left the council that day like it's not possible that even here I'm being chased with that. And that was it. I had to accept it because where would I go with my kids?
>
> […]
>
> I told her [a nurse from Cuba] some of my story, and she said, 'if you remove your uterus, you will be given a house quicker'. And I replied, 'what does my uterus has to do with a house?', so she explained, 'because this surgery is a more serious, more high risk, the system will have to consider you differently'. I was in this country for less than a year. I didn't know the laws or anything. I called the doctor and asked him to remove my uterus. […] and I woke up without my uterus and several tubes around my body. I stayed in bed for six months, but the month after my surgery, I got a house for my children and me.
>
> (Amanda, Costa Rican, white, 40 years)

Amanda's territorial struggles illustrate how migrant women's bodies are simultaneously a target of violence and a place from which resistance to its multi-scalar workings is possible. Severe physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, economic and state violence(s) were inflicted upon Amanda's body from an early age until late adulthood in Costa Rica. She resisted this violence in various covert and overt ways, including by seeking help from formal and informal sources. That failing, she resisted violence through migration within her country and also transnationally, first to the US, where her asylum application was rejected and later to England. Amanda moved to London with her two sons as a last resort to escape her ex-husband's death threats. Despite being a dual citizen (she had a French passport) and a single mother, she was initially told she did not qualify for housing support when she arrived in London. Upon evidencing her experiences of violence imprinted on her body (see chapter 5 and her Body-Territory map in figure 7.1), she was eventually housed in temporary accommodation with her children. This was a spacious house where they lived for six months until they were suddenly transferred to a small room in a mixed-gender hostel with people with complex needs such as drug addiction. This occurred around the same time Amanda was scheduled for surgery, as her health deteriorated due to her overworking as a cleaner since her arrival. In addition to suffering from fibromyalgia, Amanda's uterus - a part of her body that was targeted with physical and sexual violence since childhood - started haemorrhaging, and she was due to have surgery to reconstruct it.

In the hospital, Amanda met a nurse from Cuba, with whom she shared some of her story and ongoing struggle with housing out of despair and since they could communicate in Spanish. This nurse explained to Amanda the conditional violent ways the welfare system works in England and that by removing her uterus, rather than reconstructing it, she would be likely to secure a house faster.

Resisting from her *Cuerpo-Territorio*/Body-Territory (Cabnal 2010; Cruz Hernández 2016; Zaragocin 2018a), more precisely from and with her uterus, was the way Amanda found to navigate the violence by the UK's state. This violence was manifested through a system making welfare and housing support conditional on complex bureaucratic rules, immigration status and severity of the bodily injury. As migrant survivors in this country, in addition to IPV, Latin American women's bodies also have to resist state violence in their struggles for survival, space and basic life-saving resources. When contextualised within multiple spatial and embodied constraints, Amanda's decision to give up her uterus to secure a home for her and her children can be understood as an act of resistant re-territorialisation – rather than reduced to violence. As the decolonial feminist geographer Sofia Zaragocín (2018c; 2018b) suggests, within certain territorial struggles, the body generates distinct forms of territoriality through specific body parts, such as the uterus. In her research with Epera women in Ecuador, this author illustrates how they embraced the uterus as a territory from which to resist and confront spatial violence and slow-death collectively. Zaragocín refers to this process as a 'geopolitics of the uterus'. Similarly, it was from her uterus that Amanda precariously resisted territorial state violence in the form of homelessness and dispossession. Yet, her power to decide over her uterus was limited by past and ongoing violence inflicted on her whole body, and more specifically on this organ. It was also informed by the embodied experience of being dispossessed and displaced from multiple territories at other scales.

These territorial struggles are imprinted on Amanda's body, made visible through her Body-Territory map. Where once lived her uterus, she drew a knife, blood, scars and her home. On the right outside of her body, she placed multiple homes she was dispossessed from (as a result of both intimate and state violence in Costa Rica and England), an aeroplane and the names of countries and cities where she fled to escape violence. Amanda's map effectively traces multi-scalar spatialised embodied forms of violence(s) and also resistance(s) that *territorialised* her uterus and *Cuerpo-Territorio* in various territories, both viscerally and symbolically (Haesbaert 2007; 2020; Zaragocin 2018c). As Pereira (2017) suggests when discussing decolonial resistance as a territorial strategy: *those who resist create a territory of resistance*. He explains, however, that this does not necessarily mean closing off or protecting one's territory at all costs.

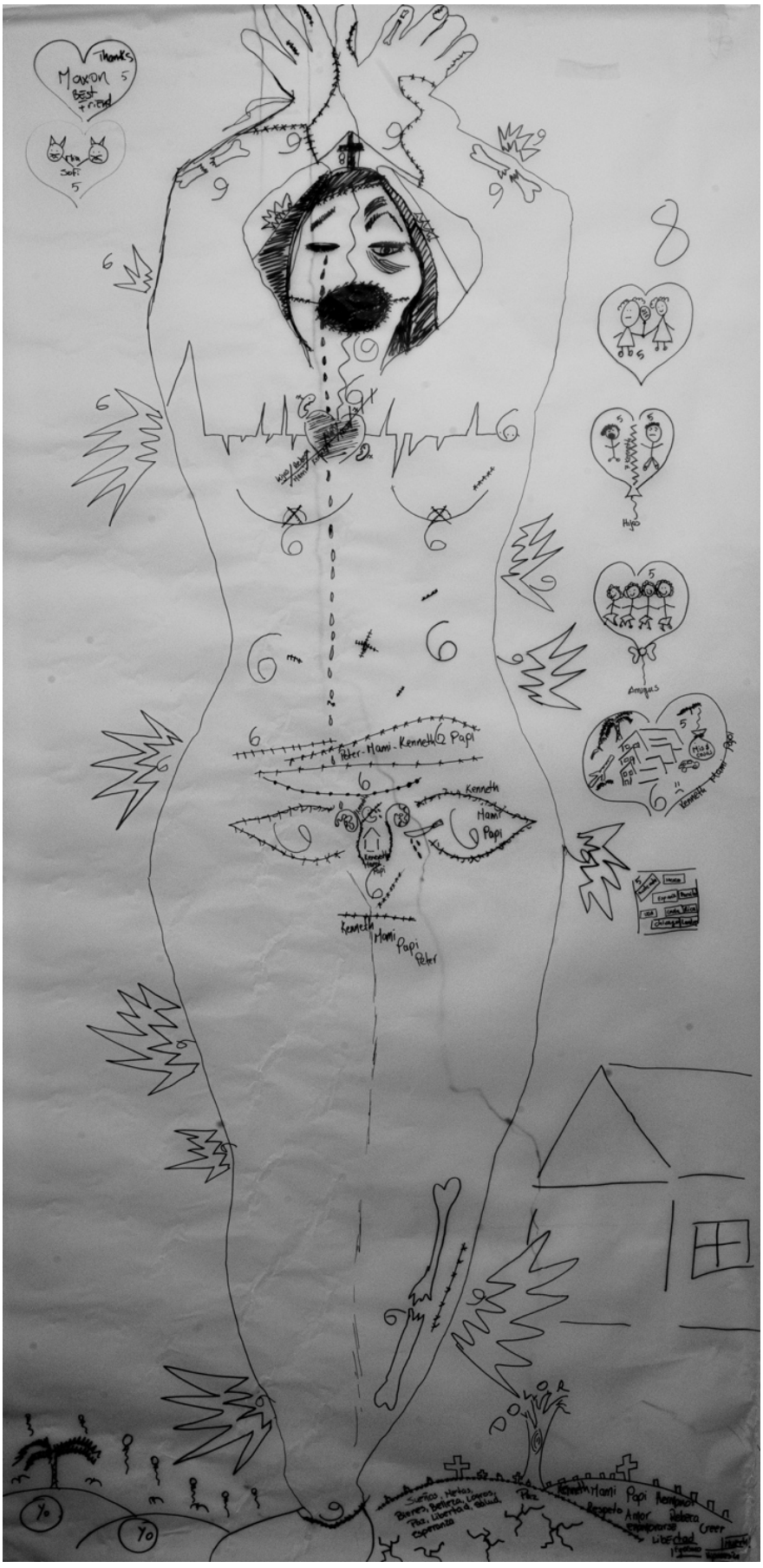


Figure 7.1 Amanda's Body-Territory map

Instead, he recognises it as a form of resistance that engages with and attempts to access multiple territories through tactics of what Haesbaert (2007, 19) calls 'multi-territoriality'. As painful and violent as it was, Amanda's decision to remove her uterus was a territorial act of resistance that mobilised multiple territorialities. By reclaiming the power to decide over her body, she re-territorialised it and the larger territory this body occupies. In enabling access to a secure, stable and suitable house in this country, this embodied act of re-territorialisation provided Amanda and her children with a material and symbolic sense of home and belonging, generating a particular form of territoriality.

In this chapter, I put forward the concept of *spatialised embodied resistance(s)* as a practice and analysis of spatial embodiments of resistance. Resistance is understood to be a dynamic and relational process operating across a multi-scalar continuum. This analytical construct helps challenge views of migrant women who experience violence as passive victims, instead recognising how their resistance is spatially constrained and contingent on spatialised embodied colonial imaginaries. Latin American migrant women's bodies in England are made particularly vulnerable within this colonial territory of migration. Here they navigate mutually constitutive forms of intimate and state violence(s), the multi-scalar workings of *border violence* and the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* (discussed in chapters 5 and 6). *Spatialised embodied resistance(s)* conceives resistance processes as spatialised and territorial (Porto Gonçalves 2006; Haesbaert 2007; 2020; Pereira 2017; Vela-Almeida et al. 2020), embodied (Smith, Swanson, and Gökarıksel 2016; Zaragocin 2018b; Caretta and Zaragocin 2020; Pain 2020) and in the plural (Piedalue 2017). As women resist, they are constrained by the spatial context, having to negotiate territories and processes of territorialisation at various scales. Resistance processes are embodied; they occur – viscerally and symbolically - through the body, being mediated by how different embodiments are read and experienced in specific territorialities. Resistance is also plural, involving acts of *r-existence*/resistance (Porto Gonçalves 2006; Haesbaert 2007; Pereira 2017) that are individual, embodied, and collective, operating across scales. I am expanding on feminist geographers' and other scholars' calls to analyse women's resistance to violence as shaped and constrained by socio-spatial processes (Brickell and Maddrell 2016; Fluri and Piedalue 2017; Pain 2020). Existing analyses of this kind have mainly been applied to Global South contexts (e.g. India, Rwanda, El Salvador, Brazil, South Africa, etc.) (van Schalkwyk, Boonzaier, and Gobodo-Madikizela 2014; Mannell, Jackson, and Umutoni 2016; Piedalue 2017; Hume and Wilding 2020; McIlwaine et al. 2022). These contribute to refuting victimising passive representations of Global South women by shedding light on their often-ignored resistance practices. However, spatially focusing on the South risks reinforcing

dichotomous colonial geographical imaginaries (Said 1979; Coronil 1996; Jazeel 2012) despite some analyses explicitly disrupting culturalism in favour of more structural explanations (Piedalue 2017). Ultimately, historical representations of the Global South as an imagined space of violence and gendered socio-structural and cultural constraints in contrast with the Global North (seen as a progressive and safer space for women) are left unaltered. I aim to disrupt that by accounting for how material and discursive spatialised manifestations of the coloniality of abuse shape and limit migrant women's resistance(s) to violence(s) in a Global North context. My focus is on the resistance practices of Latin American migrant women who have migrated and settled in England. Methodologically, my analysis draws on data triangulation from participant observation at the Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA); in-depth interviews with ten Latin American front-line workers and twenty Latin American survivors of violence; as well as ten survivor-made Body-Territory maps (see chapter 3 for an extended discussion of the methodology).

More broadly, I bring forward a decolonising intimate geopolitics of resistance which builds and expands on feminist geography spatial analysis of violence and its engagements with multi-scalar intersectional power structures, feminist, embodied and intimate geopolitics (Massaro and Williams 2013; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Piedalue 2017; Zaragocin 2018a; Hyndman 2019; Smith 2020). This chapter responds to a need for conceptual clarity and further theorisations of resistance that are spatially informed and thoughtfully engage with women's bodies and embodiment (Rajah and Osborn 2020; 2021). Feminist geographers have increasingly turned attention to and called for closer examination of the body and corporeal processes within contexts of violence (Pain 2014a; 2020; Fluri and Piedalue 2017; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020). In the following, I situate the concept of *spatialised embodied resistance(s)* within the literature and define it in the context of my analysis. I then examine how Latin American migrant women's resistance(s) are embodied and territorial by identifying three main sets of practices they deploy, sometimes as part of a larger strategy. Firstly, I unveil how through (im)mobility strategies, Latin American migrant women re-territorialise the spaces they occupy, starting from their own bodies whose rights to be mobile are reclaimed when they move and when they choose to be – temporarily - immobile. I then turn to Latin American women's *re-existence* practices involving silent self-management tactics and hidden non-compliance directed at survival. These are often strategically deployed as they wait under conditions of violence until they may be ready to leave. Lastly, I explore collective forms of embodied resistance manifested through informal and formal community networks in London and beyond. In particular, Latin American women's *Cuerpo-Territorio*/Body-Territory maps make visible how multi-scalar

affects, spatialities and temporalities are embodied as collective sources of strength and support, helping them *re-exist* and resist violence from a gendered colonial diasporic location.

Spatialised Embodied Resistance(s)

Academic scholarship from the 1970s has largely been guilty of representing women who experience IPV through the long-standing lenses of passive victimhood (Hammer 2002; Enander and Holmberg 2008; Goodmark 2008). In her 1979 book, Lenore Walker introduced the *battered women syndrome's* theory, which popularised the idea that enduring intimate violence for a sustained period leads women to develop 'learned helplessness'. According to this theory, victims only react to violence as a last resort, with 'learned helplessness' making them submissive, passive, weak and unable to leave abuse even when they wish to do so (Goodmark 2008; Hayes 2013; Walker 2017). In turn, the feminist anti-violence movement from the 1970s contributed to crystallising the paradigmatic image of a victim of IPV through a universalist appeal that maintained the focus on white, cis, middle-class, heterosexual women (Goodmark 2008; Ferraro 1996; Crenshaw 1991; Hayes 2013). As a result, practical support and protection for women who experience IPV are contingent on their ability to fit into normative victimhood ideals mediated by intersectionality (Goodmark 2008; Ferraro 1996; Crenshaw 1991), sexualised colonial, racial and cultural imaginaries (see chapter 6). Failure to be recognised as a victim places racialised migrant women at high risk of being framed as aggressive, re-victimised and criminalised by abusive partners' counter-claims of violence (Day and Gill 2020).

Gondolf and Fisher's (1988) *survivor theory* challenged the notion of 'learned helplessness' and prevalent passive images surrounding women experiencing abuse by focusing on how women actively resist violence.[70] Nonetheless, although this theory helped debunk stereotypical ideals of passivity, its narrow focus on help-seeking acts overshadowed more subtle forms of resistance. Other authors have since extended this survivor focus to shed light on women's covert and overt personal strategies to resist ongoing violence and control from within abusive relationships (Abraham 2005; Rajah 2007; Stark 2009; 2009; Hayes 2013; Pain 2014a).

The persistence of dichotomous narratives of victims versus survivors throughout women's IPV scholarship call for more nuanced conceptualisations of resistance. Victims and survivors

[70] I critically expanded on that in chapter 6 by showing the specific ways in which the spatialised coloniality of abuse embedded into state institutions (e.g. the police, social services and courts) fail racialised gender colonial migrant survivors.

are not fixed and opposite positions. Neoliberal and culturalist understandings of resistance to violence have been particularly detrimental to how marginalised women are portrayed. Marginalised, racialised and migrant communities are often represented as more prone to and accepting of violence, with Latin American migrants in Anglophone countries often assumed to hold 'traditional patriarchal cultures' (Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017, 669). Academic research on Latin American migrant women experiencing violence has sometimes discursively approached them through a passive culturalist lens. In particular, Latina American women are suggested to be held back by 'values related to devotion to family and gender role conformance' (Harper 2017, 1), 'familism' (Page et al. 2017, 531), or 'marianismo' (Kyriakakis 2014, 1098)[71]. These studies contribute to the view that cultural prescriptions work as barriers impeding women from resisting violence and seeking help (Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014; Page et al. 2017; Finno-Velasquez and Ogbonnaya 2017; Harper 2017).

Evidence suggests that BME and Latin American migrant women generally take longer than white British women to seek help, report and leave abusive relationships (Imkaan 2010; Evans and McIlwaine 2017). Nonetheless, intersectional structural barriers to accessing services should partially explain that (Crenshaw 1991; Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Evans and McIlwaine 2017; 2022). In addition, this can also be due to a critical act of refusal to engage with violent institutions that have historically victimised them and their communities (e.g. through state border violence and the institutionalised coloniality of abuse). As Hume and Wilding (2020) suggest, agency is a complex process constrained by contextual factors and is often read as passivity when it does not fit a dichotomous neoliberal model. Openly responding to IPV by reporting and leaving abusers is not always possible, even when women wish to cease abuse. Indeed, sometimes the consequences of responding as such are too high for migrant and racialised women in this country.

I echo critiques of neoliberal framings of agency and resistance to IPV, narrowly confining these to individualised acts of help-seeking, reporting or leaving violence (Hume and Wilding 2020; Mannell, Jackson, and Umutoni 2016; Rajah and Osborn 2020). A rational choice and instrumental action framework cannot account for the interplay between bodies, embodiment and the spatial context of structural and state violence. Indeed, such a framework 'assumes

[71] As this author puts it, this refers to 'Latino family and gender-based expectations […] that women sacrifice self-interest and show deference to their husband's authority'

that [all] women have somewhere to go, and that the neoliberal state, communities and families can and will provide protection' (Hume and Wilding 2020, 250).

Saba Mahmood (2011) has firmly critiqued liberal feminism's prescriptive tendency to encapsulate all forms of agency into an understanding of resistance as political subversion against oppression or the very state of being free from oppression. Following this author, I call for an embodied and spatially nuanced grasping of resistance(s). Informed by Mahmood's (2011, 18) definition of agency, 'as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable', I am attentive to how spatial and embodied power relations work as constraints under conditions of coloniality. Rather than focusing on discreet acts, I conceive resistance as a dynamic process that varies in scope, scale, openness and intent and which can be cumulative and incremental in ways that may or may not become an engine for change and transformation (Pain 2014a; Lilja and Vinthagen 2018; Rajah and Osborn 2020). For conceptual and analytical clarity, I find it helpful to differentiate between resistance as a form of agency that opposes and may transform conditions of oppression and resistance as *re-existence*. The latter is a form of agency based on one's existence and primarily aimed at survival, which may or may not ultimately contribute to subverting oppression. The term *re-existence* builds and adapts the Latin American notion of *r-existência (in Portuguese)*, popularised by the Brazilian geographer Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves (2006). The author defines it as a particular form of existence and rationality acting or reacting from a circumstantial, unique geographical and epistemic position in between logics.

In the following, I trace the *spatialised embodied resistance(s)* of Latin American women through an analysis that works 'against culture' (Abu-Lughod 2008, 466) and focuses on resistance as a 'diagnostic of power' (Abu-Lughod 1990, 48). As Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) suggests, critically engaging with Foucault's idea that power and resistance are intimately intertwined requires us to be attentive to how unconventional practices of resistance signal specific sites of power and struggle and vice-versa. Recognising embodied and spatialised power relations and violence(s), my analysis traces resistance practices emerging from zones in between and collective places. As Lugones (2010) suggests, the logic of coalition and multiplicity is central to understanding resistance to coloniality from the fractured locus of the *colonial difference* (Mignolo 2002).

My analysis contributes to advancing scholarship that disrupts common culturalist racist tropes of othered marginalised communities as more patriarchal and accepting of gender-based violence (Pain 2014a; Fluri and Piedalue 2017; Hume and Wilding 2020). In particular, I

move feminist geopolitics' multi-scalar explorations of corporal geographies of violence (Pratt and Rosner 2012; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Pain 2014a; Fluri and Piedalue 2017; Smith 2020) toward a decolonial direction. I map Latin American women's resistance practices from and through the body to engage with the constraints of the spatialised coloniality of abuse and the multi-scalar workings of border violence.

I build on these works to put forward the notion of *spatialised embodied resistance(s),* a spatialised embodied analysis of practices of resistance attentive to the multi-scalar spatial and embodied character of violence(s) and, therefore, also resistance(s). This recognises and explores how intimate and state violence cross scales and is imprinted but also resisted by and from the body. Attention to spatialised embodied resistance shifts the focus to resistance practices that are often rendered invisible or are not perceived as a form of resistance because they are 'outside the spectacle' (Piedalue 2019, 16). This reflects a political commitment to desire-based research (Tuck 2009), moving beyond suffering narratives and spectacularism as measures of authenticity to recognise creative, small-scale, and non-spectacle acts of resistance yielded from within positions of oppression and marginality (hooks 1989). The embodied dimension of resistance acknowledges how certain bodies are made more vulnerable to specific forms of violence in a given space because of their intersectional bodily markers. Bodies are racialised, 'sexed', and classed in specific socio-spatial contexts under hierarchical normative standards of humanity brought forward by coloniality (Quijano 2000a; Lugones 2010; Grosfoguel et al. 2015)

(Im)Mobility Strategies of Spatialised Embodied Resistances to State and (State-Sponsored) Intimate Border Violence

As illustrated through Amanda's experiences, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Latin American women's resistance to intimate and state forms of violence occur within territorial struggles in which they resist the territorialisation of their bodies with their own bodies (Haesbaert 2007; 2020; Zaragocin 2018c; 2018b). As the *spatialised coloniality of abuse* and *border violence* move to territorialise women's bodies, they resist this with their means of re-territorialisation. They resist through visceral, material, and symbolic acts of re-territorialisation of their own *Cuerpo-Territorios* (Cabnal 2010; Cruz Hernández 2016; Zaragocin 2018a; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020), which work in tandem with the re-territorialisation of the space their bodies occupy. Embodied territorial resistance to violence occurs across scales, and sometimes, opposition to one form of territorial control may expose women to another.

In this section, I explore how Latin American migrant women's (im)mobility strategies (Conlon 2011; Bermudez and Oso 2019) can be conceived not only as spatial (Bermudez and Oso 2019) but also as embodied strategies of resistance to state and intimate border violence. I expand feminist geopolitics scholars' recent interest in reconceptualising waiting as an active process, as 'an intentional act amidst migrant (im)mobility' (Conlon 2011, 358; Mountz 2011). Nonetheless, feminist geopolitics theorising of stasis and waiting within dynamics of (im)mobility have mainly focused on refugees and people seeking asylum, a migrant group from which my analysis shifts away (Hyndman and Giles 2011; Mountz 2011).

By strategically and sometimes temporarily deploying immobility, Latin American women reclaim their bodies as mobile, bodies that fight to remain where they migrated to by waiting and *re-existing* from within an abusive home and legal limbos. As they take control over their bodies, they re-territorialise them and the territory-space they inhabit both materially and symbolically. For example, to counter state border violence and legally stay in England, women in a precarious immigration situation may strategically decide to remain in abusive relationships to avoid being forced to return to their home countries. Conversely, others may choose precisely the opposite, returning to their countries or migrating to other countries to escape violence from their abusive partners. As they adopt such spatial and embodied (im)mobility strategies (Conlon 2011; Bermudez and Oso 2019), women exercise their limited agency, making assessments of intimate and state violence and sometimes shifting from one to the other. These are embodied territorial struggles, for their colonial gendered racialised migrant bodies are often only 'allowed' to stay in England under conditions of violence, as bare-life (Agamben 1998; Pratt 2005). Territorialised through border violence as an annexed territory under a state of exception, both state and intimate forms of violence are inflicted upon these *Cuerpo-Territorios/*Body-Territories as control and legal abandonment (Agamben 1998; Pratt 2005). To cease intimate embodied territorial control, their bodies sometimes migrate back out of the UK's territorial borders, and other times they stay under conditions of violence, waiting. Their waiting is a refusal to leave, a refusal to be displaced; waiting is a resistance strategy of (im)mobility (Conlon 2011; Mountz 2011). Their waiting is strategic until they acquire conditions that enable them to leave abuse without a significant risk of state border violence in the form of forced deportation. They resist from and with their bodies as they wait, leave or migrate.

Leaving this country is one route to resisting and escaping from abusers and spatialised memories of abuse – in the form of geotrauma (Pain 2020). Staying is another. Staying is a form of resistance in a country where immigration laws and systems, similarly to their abusive partners, represent a permanent threat of removal and a constant reminder that they do not

belong (see chapter 5). In this context, remaining in England is a form of resistance to both state and intimate border violence, an act of re-territorialisation of this territory through their bodies' insistence to remain and reclaim it. For example, Lorena's experience of abuse was directly linked to her visa dependency since she was here on a British spouse visa. Her husband used it to threaten her with deportation to prevent her from leaving him. Whilst such border violence maintained her in an abusive relationship for nearly five years, waiting and refusing to leave became part of her long-term resistance strategy against violence, her own way of taking 'revenge'. Lorena knew that after five years of living in this country under a spouse visa, she would qualify for Indefinite Leave to Remain. Acquiring ILR would enable her to leave her husband while guaranteeing her residency rights, despite his threats.

> I think this is also what fucked me up because I'd always find reasons to stay: you need to think that you are not from here, he is going to call the home office, and this and that. Even when I was angry, my revenge was to stay. I'd think that as a form of revenge: 'I'll stay in this country, I won't leave'. So, my experience of abuse with him was a hundred per cent linked to my visa. If I had the opportunity to get another visa, work permit, anything, I'd be out of that house the next day. I'd tell myself: 'if you want to make everything you went through for three years worth, then you need to stay another two years […] to complete the five years.
>
> (Lorena, Brazilian woman, Indigenous descent, 30 years)

Finding ways to reclaim their bodies' right to be mobile and remain in this country's territory after separation from their husbands is something that, as Latin American migrant women suggest, makes them feel stronger and in control of their bodies. Against all odds, many do stay and reassert their right to self-determination over their bodies and their bodies' mobility. In this process, they create new meanings and spatial relations with the various territories they occupy, starting from their own migrant women's bodies. This is also captured through Gisela's experiences of post-separation territorial resistance. When she decided to separate from her psychologically abusive English husband, he promised to help her. However, he subsequently wanted to file for divorce - even though this would compromise Gisela's spouse visa and ability to remain in the country. To his surprise, she decided to stay in England and resisted state and intimate border violence by refusing to divorce. When I asked Gisela about her decision to stay despite the many difficulties she experienced in this country, she simply explained that this decision came from her heart and made her feel stronger (see Gisela's Body-Territory in figure 7.2). This decision came from her insides as a form of self-determination. Determining herself in what territory her body lives and builds a life in seemed to give Gisela some sense of agency and control over her mobility.

> At first, he said he would help me with everything he could. But he started asking me for a divorce, so I said I'd not do it because I didn't want to leave [England]. He was surprised when I told him I'd not leave […] he thought I'd go back to Chile; he didn't know that I am actually very strong. […] Something in my heart said no, you shouldn't go, fight! Something in my heart said it was not the moment. […]
>
> (Gisela, Chilean woman, white and Indigenous descent, 34 years)

Similarly, Hermana also decided to stay in this country after separating from her abusive English husband. Despite the loneliness she experienced as a migrant woman going through violence, she expressed a desire to use this as fuel to rebuild her life in this territory in ways meaningful to her and her community. This suggests an embodied community-based process of re-territorialisation in which Hermana seeks to regain control over her spatial relation with this territory by feeding into and strengthening a collective spatialised embodied process of resistance. From her embodied position as a Mexican migrant woman, she told me how she wanted to strengthen the Latin American diasporic community in London, the people and spaces that make women like her feel less lonely and isolated.

> I'm going to work; I'm going to continue living here. I want to do it, Rosa. I want to be a voice for Latin American women in this country. I do want to be a voice. […] My life radically changed, and I feel that I'm starting to live a new life in which the woman I used to be has stayed behind for some reason, you know? I saw myself in moments of a lot of loneliness, but this loneliness made me stronger and made me understand that my strength is my community, my friends, my family. […] But until you are in touch with that loneliness, you don't realise it. […]
>
> (Hermana, Mexican woman, white, 38 years)

The embodied territorial struggles migrant women engage, as they navigate and resist violence, mobilise not only the embodied and transnational scales but also local ones. They negotiate similar processes with moving cities, neighbourhoods and homes. When analysed in the context of *spatialised embodied resistance(s)*, transnational, internal, local, and community-centred forms of migration or deciding to wait and stay can be conceived as (im)immobility strategies of resistance.

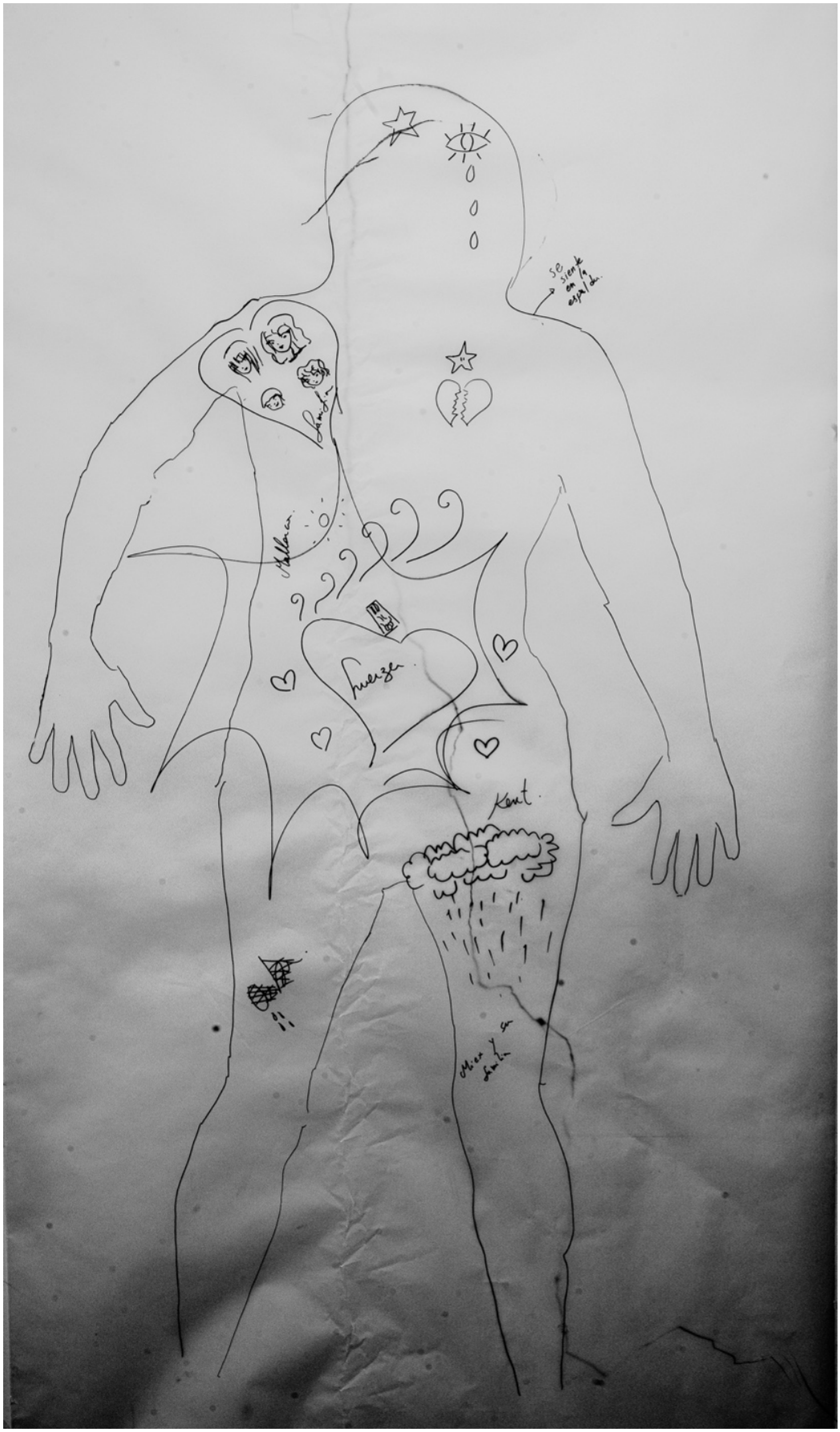


Figure 7.2 Gisela's Body-Territory map

Contextualising Leaving and Reporting within Embodied Spatialised Entanglements

The resistance to IPV scholarships tends to narrowly frame leaving and reporting as the most appropriate response to abuse (Rajah and Osborn 2020) whilst failing to consider these are not always viable options. For some women, staying with their violent partners - at least for some time - might be safer than leaving and reporting them. Authors have emphasised this in relation to Global South contexts (Piedalue 2017; Hume and Wilding 2020; Mannell, Jackson, and Umutoni 2016); however, less attention has been paid to how similarly embodied spatialised constraints play out for migrant survivors in a Global North country such as England. As the journeys and reflections of my research participants suggest, Latin American migrant women in this country remain in abusive relationships for various reasons that may connect but also go beyond emotional embodiments and attachments emerging from dynamics of abuse. Their intersectional embodied markers of humanity structurally mediate access to information, spaces, resources, and exposure to other forms of intimate and state-sanctioned violence in England. As suggested by Bonita, an Indigenous descent Argentinian survivor whom I interviewed, unrealistic expectations that women should promptly leave abusive relationships disregard the spatialised embodied context within which Latin American migrant women can resist violence. These contribute to their further stigmatisation.

> This stigma or taboo is really damaging for women who experience violence and say, 'I was with my abuser for ten years', and people say, 'why didn't you leave if he hit you? You should have left the first time he hit you'. But it's just not like that, it's complicated. Then, you also need to add all the intersections that any given situation has, no? Do I have papers? I don't have papers, and I have a small son. How can I leave? Where am I going to go? With whom will I leave my son when I go to work? […]
>
> (Bonita, Argentinian, Indigenous descent, 41 years)

The conditions within which women resist violence, as well as its consequences, vary according to both spatial and embodied entanglements. Latin American migrant women in this country who may wish to report ongoing abuse to the police are at high risk of being re-victimised by institutionalised violence. This includes, but is not limited to, detention and deportation (if they are undocumented or have an insecure status), institutionalised transphobia (if they are trans), racism (particularly if they are Black or indigenous), child removal and criminalisation (particularly if their abusive partners are white and English and they are racialised or do not

speak English), homelessness (if they live with their abuser), as well as general disbelief, neglect and stigmatisation (see chapters 5 and 6).

As a result, migrant women may often hesitate to report abuse to the police and pursue a criminal justice route. The nature of state border violence and institutionally embedded spatialised coloniality lead them to be fearful or distrusting of state authorities. Nonetheless, many migrant women seek emergency help from the police, particularly under extreme incidents of intimate partner violence. For migrant women, calling and reporting abuse to the police is often a desperate act that may help reduce the immediate risk of violence, though it rarely prevents future abuse. Indeed, most of my research participants (16 out of 20) reported the abuse to the police, often multiple times, despite language barriers and fears relating to criminalisation and child removal due to immigration status.[72] Even though undocumented women are more fearful of public authorities, several do end up reporting abuse (Nye, Bloomer, and Jeraj 2018; McIlwaine et al. 2019; Day and Gill 2020). However, when their abusers are also migrants, their cases tend to be treated as a 'community problem', with police action delayed or simply not taken. As authors suggest, non-interventionist attitudes toward violence among migrants could be underpinned by culturalist perceptions assuming violence to be entrenched in the social fabric of migrant racialised communities (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Das Dasgupta 2005; Volpp 2002; Burman et al. 2004). Reports of IPV are also likely to be dismissed unless there is clear bodily evidence of physical violence. This has been the case for migrant women participating in my research even when other forms of material evidence were presented. For example, despite being undocumented, Jaqueline called the police more than five times to report ongoing threats, stalking and harassment from her Brazilian ex-partner. However, no action was ever taken. Similarly, when she was still undocumented, Tainara approached the police multiple times due to harassment by her Brazilian ex-husband. Although she had dozens of threatening messages from him, the police failed to consider these as evidence.

[72] Three of them did not make a police report mainly because the psychological and emotional nature of their abuse was subtle (i.e. Rocio, Laura, Giovana). One of them (i.e. Bonita) did experienced severe and visible forms of abuse, however, fear of detention and deportation due to undocumented status stopped her from calling the police.

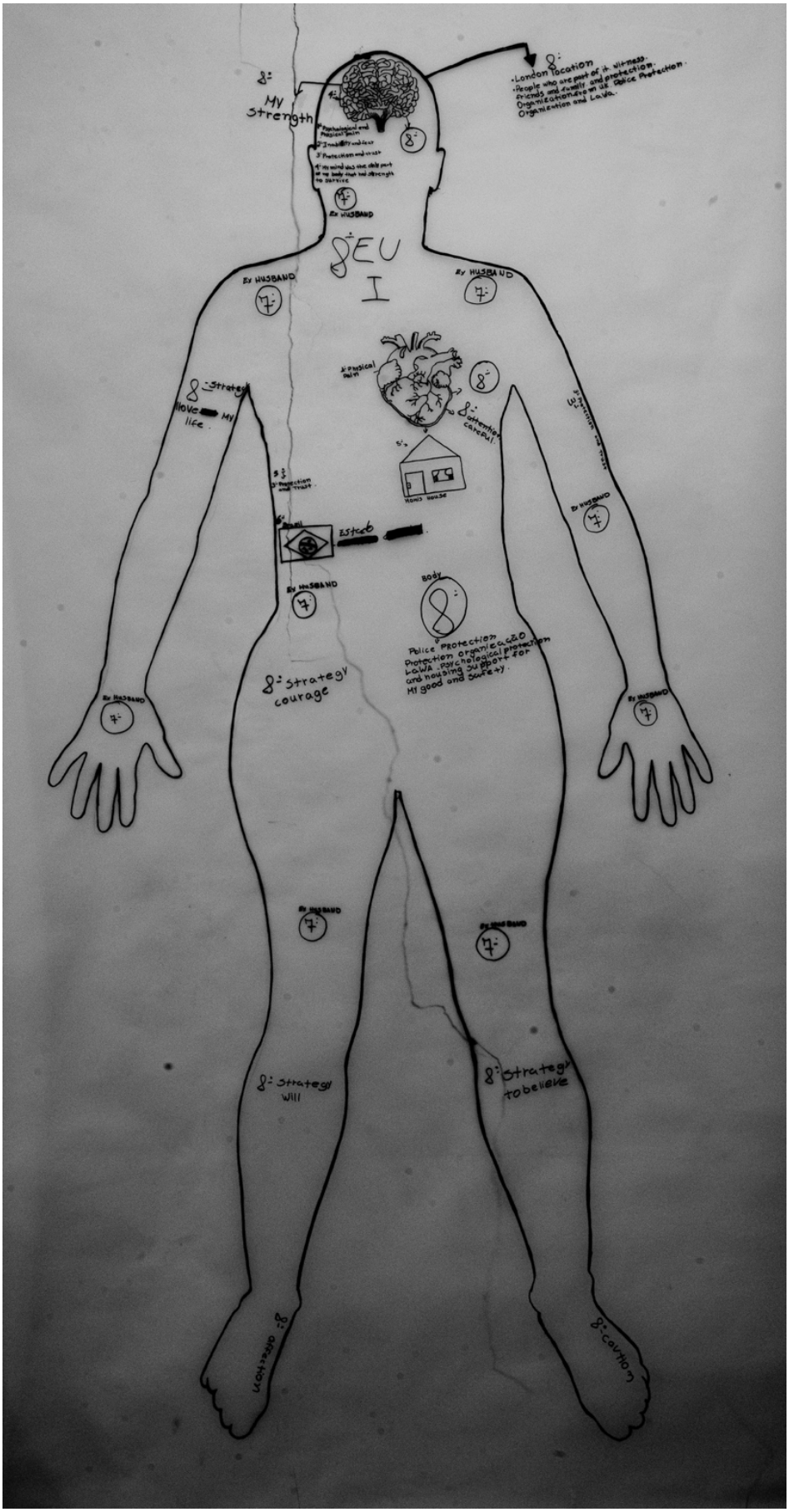


Figure 7.3 Eduarda's Body-Territory map

> I remember going four, five times to the police and telling them everything, that he was sending me loads of messages, threatening me, harassing me. Sometimes I'd arrive at the [tube] station, and he was there, he started following me like a psychopath. He was sending me messages 24h a day threatening me. I started going to the police showing the texts, but they'd say: 'ahh sorry, but for me to be able to help you, there needs to be evidence'. I'd say: 'but what's evidence for you? It's just when I get a mark on my neck?'. You know? Every time I reached for help, I was disbelieved, it was like I was telling them a lie, trying to take advantage […]
>
> (Tainara, Brazilian, white, 41 years)

In spite of visa dependency and limited English ability, Eduarda, a Brazilian woman who held an EU family visa, also reported her Brazilian husband to the police three times before and after moving out as he abused and threatened to kill her. As she described: '*if I did not reach for help, he would have killed me*'. The police only took Eduarda seriously when she returned to the station for the third time, begging for help and showing hundreds of threatening text messages as evidence. The police gave her a tracker and started patrolling her street and monitoring her daily until Eduarda could move to one of LAWA's refuge. This made her feel trust and protection, embodied in her mind and chest on her Body-Territory map (figure 7.3).

Apart from intimate violence from their partners, women like Eduarda, Tainara and Jaqueline must *re-exist*/resist and challenge state violence embedded in police inaction and disbelief. Having to resist violence at various scales simultaneously means that migrant women sometimes do so in 'non-conventional ways', as Lidia, a Colombian front-line worker I worked with, puts it.

> Women resist, but they sometimes resist in a non-conventional way, resist by not wanting the case to go further […] for many reasons, it could be due to disbelief or because they don't think it's going to go anywhere. Or simply because they are not yet at the stage to act and leave the relationship […]. They simply don't want anything to happen with their husband.
>
> (Lidia, Colombian front-line worker)

As seen from the above excerpt, resistance to violence can be manifested as scepticism and refusal to engage with the criminal justice system. This is linked to but goes beyond distrusting the police and criminal courts. Refusing to engage with the police may be an act of self-preservation to prevent re-victimisation. Whilst some may refuse to make a report, others may withdraw support from investigations and change their statements. In doing so, migrant women are exercising their agency. As Hume and Wilding (2020) suggest, women's non-

engagement with the state is a critical act rather than evidence of their passivity and acceptance of violence.

Police victim-blaming attitudes towards survivors, particularly those with previous allegations of abuse, may discourage migrant women from seeking help. This is what happened to Azucena, a white Venezuelan migrant woman. She was victim-blamed by the police, whom she called after her British partner threw a glass at her and threatened her with a knife. The police removed Azucena's partner from her home in London; however, just before they left the scene, one of the officers said: *if you let him into your house again, it is your fault because we already took him out'*. Soon after, Azucena's partner returned home with the spare keys he had kept; unsurprisingly, she decided not to call the police again.

In some instances, women withdraw or change their statements as a refusal to accept the violent consequences of the criminal justice system –for themselves and sometimes also for their abusive partners. This may be common when abusers are the father of their children or when they empathise with abusers' life stories and experiences of oppression. There is, however, little room for women's agency in criminal justice processes once they report to the police (Lewis et al. 2000; Day and Gill 2020) – particularly if there is evidence of a physical assault.

Re-existence: Silence as a form of agency aimed at survival

Migrant women's silence in the face of violence should not be confused with uncritical acceptance and conformation of gender norms (Rajah and Osborn 2020). As discussed in the previous section, it is unrealistic to assume that all women who reject the violence they experience should and can respond overtly, such as by leaving their partners and reporting abuse. The risk of intimate and state violence significantly increases for Latin American migrant women openly challenging abuse and attempting to leave the relationship. With this in mind, women make ongoing risk assessments based on their specific embodied location to decide their course of action, whether to stay or when to leave. In this section, I turn to how silent tactics of self-management and hidden non-compliance can be conceptualised as migrant women's *re-existence* to violence (Porto Gonçalves 2006; Haesbaert 2007; Pereira 2017). *Re-existence* is a form of agency directed at survival, at 'maintaining one's existence' (Rajah and Osborn 2021, 5). This may or may not be accompanied or give rise to more overt resistance practices and become part of a long-term strategy.

Due to the interconnected nature of intimate and state violence, migrant women's capacity to survive and resist abuse is contingent upon their ability to adapt, to become resourceful and resilient. As Sarah Ahmed (2014, para. 27) puts it, in a system that distributes life-saving resources unequally for those exposed to injustices or conditions of death, the simple act of coping can be considered 'a collective refusal not to not exist'. To survive and manage abuse for long periods, migrant women engage in various silent and small, hidden strategies to prevent intimate violence from escalating and state violence from being weaponised against them. This may involve placating tactics, such as using their knowledge of their partners to find ways to please and calm them down, and self-management practices, such as becoming more docile, silencing, and accepting some forms of abuse to prevent others from happening. Lidia suggested this as she commented on some of the ways Latin American women she supported managed to survive IPV.

> I think that women, Latin American women learn how to play with what they know about their partners. They know their partners are violent, but they know the things that calm them down. Perhaps at first, they are not very conscious that this is what helps them keep themselves safe, but then they realise and say, 'ok, I know that if I do that, he will calm down, I know that if I agree with everything he says he will calm down'. In a way, I think we are very resourceful; we make use of what we have at hand.
>
> (Lidia, Colombian front-line worker)

As Lidia and other front-line workers noted, women's initial response may be to silence, resisting abuse in cover ways rather than openly fighting back and trying to escape. This is particularly the case when violence has not yet reached extreme levels that make them fear for their or their children's lives. Nonetheless, contrary to myths representing Latin American women as passive, they often fight back overly, both verbally and physically. However, as front-line workers suggest, this type of reaction tends to occur after a prolonged period of abuse or as a direct response to a specific life-threatening incident of physical violence. Some women I interviewed described fighting back by physically threatening the abuser, pushing him back or engaging in a physical fight after being physically assaulted and threatened. Others also recounted having run, shouted back, threatened to call the police, and screamed for help in the face of physical abuse and death threats. When migrant women physically defend themselves, the situation may frequently worsen. Although sometimes perpetrators temporarily back off in terms of physical violence, other forms of violence and control often escalate soon after.

Physically defending themselves make migrant women vulnerable to criminalisation and other forms of state violence. Evidence suggests that abusers strategically use mandatory arrest policies and the police's incident-led approach to their benefit through filing counter-claims of violence (Day and Gill 2020; Cuomo 2021). When women fight back, they also risk being encapsulated into colonial stereotypes and creating evidence that their partners can use to frame and criminalise them. Migrant women abused by white and British partners are likely at higher risk of arrest when they defend themselves physically (see Fernanda's case in chapter 6 – and also Day and Gill, 2020). As the Brazilian front-line worker, Francisca, suggest, this is a reality that some women are aware of and actively negotiate.

> The most frequent reaction is also silencing and accepting because they know that, especially white men, they are aware of the Latin American stereotype. Even before women react, they are already being stereotyped, you know. It's just she starts saying, 'I don't want to hear what you are saying, I don't want to argue' she is immediately called hysterical […] They will always use this against her. I remember a man that used to say to her partner: 'if you go to the police, they will treat you as crazy'.
>
> (Francisca, Brazilian front-line worker)

Silence is a small act of *re-existence* against the spatialised coloniality of abuse. In a context where Latin American women have become hyper-aware of how stereotypes are weaponised against them (see chapter 6), silence emerges as a refusal to be framed within colonial imaginaries that further expose them to state violence. Therefore, silence is part of a survival strategy to manage both intimate and state violence.

As fighting back leads to negative consequences for survivors, they may shift to a covert approach to *re-existence*. This is seen in how Tainara coped with her husband's extreme control, physical abuse and death-threatening behaviour whilst undocumented and destitute. She was aware and critical of the social stigma, and victim-blaming that survivors of IPV experience and reasserted throughout her interview that placating, silencing, and apologising are important tactics of survival deployed in the face of intimate and state (border) violence. For survivors without material conditions to leave their abusers, these tactics help manage and contain their hard-to-predict behaviour. As Tainara metaphorically suggested, abusers, act as animals ready to attack at any given time and confronting them may lead to escalation.

> There's a general tendency to disbelieve us. My impression is that people say, 'this woman has no shame, she is the wife of a criminal, she likes being beaten up because if the man slapped her in the face, why didn't she leave the house?'. Wait, it's because there's also a financial situation, and you also know that wherever

> you go, he will come after you. It's the same thing if there's an animal and he is agitated, and you start poking it, he is angry, are you going to continue poking it until it will come to eat you alive? So, you just don't. You must keep the animal calm. [...] So you agree with everything he says because if you say no, imagine what happens? If you confront, it's worse, I know that because I tried confronting him before. I tried with words, and I got a big slap, a kick, a big push. So, if I respond to him, he's going to hurt me. So, when he'd say something, I'd be like, 'it's ok, you're right, I didn't mean that'. So, you start lowering yourself and apologising.
>
> (Tainara, Brazilian, white, 41 years)

Women's capacity to cope with and manage abuse through silencing and accepting are tactics strategically deployed to enable them to become more resourceful. *Re-existence* to violence can sometimes become part of a broader resistance strategy through which migrant women 'buy time' to strengthen themselves and plan their exit. These help women survive while they prepare to leave by gathering information, resources, and building a support system. Such a process can take several months or even years, depending on their immigration status, English ability, financial status, isolation levels, and access to community support. Time to prepare for their exit is crucial considering the structural constraints migrant women in England face. Otherwise, Latin American women are vulnerable to falling victim to state violence and other abusive men after they leave their abusers. This was noted by several front-line workers I interviewed, and Claudia's words below illustrate that. She is a Brazilian woman supporting Latin American survivors for more than eight years.

> They deal with violence by accepting many things, which is also a means of survival whilst they buy time to plan. This is something I work a lot with women I support. We live in a society that is problematic when it comes to economic conditions and support for women who are survivors. So, it will not help if a woman comes here today and I simply say 'leave him today'. Where is she going to go if the government does not give support for her to leave the abuser? […] So instead, I need to work with women and make a plan, sometimes work months until she is ready to go so that she does not end up on the streets, she does not end up homeless. Because there is also this other form of abuse at play, the structural oppression that we live under, because sometimes leaving may be even worse than living with the perpetrator. Unfortunately. […] Unfortunately, sometimes, it is. We can't put her at further risk when she has no external support. So, what do we do? We work with her, whilst she is still with the perpetrator, to strengthen her enough for her to be able to leave him.
>
> (Claudia, Brazilian front-line worker)

Re-existence was a vital tactic within Bonita's story of resistance to violence. She remained in an abusive relationship, quietly re-existing for several years until she became emotionally and practically ready to separate from her abuser. At the time, she was ineligible for state welfare support, and feared seeking help from the police and being deported because she was

undocumented. Bonita had a small son and did not receive help from his father, who also used to abuse her and was now in prison. Those conditions led her to stay with her new abusive partner for eight years. Living with him guaranteed a 'roof' for her son and that her son would be looked after whilst she was at work. However, as violence prolonged and increased, Bonita started preparing herself for separation through small hidden acts of disobedience. Her partner used to control all her income, so she secretly kept small amounts every month without him noticing. She termed this as *auto robándose* (*'self-stealing')* since, in practice, her income never belonged to her. Bonita also informed herself and became aware that when her son turned seven, she would finally be able to regularise their immigration status. As her son was getting older, he became more independent and soon would not need as much adult supervision. These changes of circumstances, her ongoing strategic acts of quiet *re-existence* and some level of community support eventually enabled her to move out – something she did without warning her abuser.

> I stayed put with my abuser because that's how I could provide a roof and food for my son. And then, when I finally left, it was because my son was turning seven, so I knew the school would allow him to take the bus by himself in year five. He was older, so he could stay at home by himself, he could heat his own food, he knew how to do it. […] I also could apply for the visa, the one for when children are seven years, I informed myself, so I knew that. […] I planned for several years. Every time he'd hit me, I'd think, 'I need to leave, but well, I can't leave yet because my son is only four, because he's five, because he's six'. When he was about to turn seven, I said, 'I can't take it anymore, I can't take it cause one day he's going to kill me' […] During a whole year, I stole money from myself, fifty, a hundred pounds, without my partner realising. I managed to save a bit of money and then some friends helped me with the rest for the deposit on a flat.
>
> (Bonita, Argentinian, Indigenous descent, 41 years)

When they decide to leave, migrant women often plan their exit secretly for some time, sometimes years, during which they resort to *re-existence* to survive. This may take longer if they do not have strong support networks, making it much harder from a practical and emotional perspective. Whilst some women plan and wait for 'the right moment' for years, sometimes they end up leaving abruptly, triggered by a recent change of circumstances or an incident of violence. Triggers leading to shifts in women's understandings of violence and their *re-existence* tactics may emerge from changes in individual circumstances, severity and effects of violence, and bodily reactions (Rajah and Osborn 2021). As illustrated by Bonita's process of resistance, small and quiet acts of *re-existence* can have cumulative effects, build capacity, and create space for more open forms of resistance (Pain 2014a; Rajah and Osborn 2020). Attention to the 'incremental and unspectacular' (Piedalue 2019, 7) character of

resistance enables us to honour the role of silence as a practice of self-management, small non-compliant acts, and hidden individual and collective planning strategies within its process. The act and 'timing' of leaving must be situated within a broader process of resistance vis-à-vis a context of embodied spatialised constraints posed by state border violence and the spatialised coloniality of abuse.

Collective Embodiments of Resistance

Latin American migrant women's resistance to violence cannot be understood as an individual but rather a relational process in which collective embodied strategies arise in various forms and spaces. As Had and Lewis (2014) suggest, academic research tends to neglect the role of communities in relation to IPV or rather reproduce a racialised view of communities as oppressive entities enacting and normalising violence. Some studies have reinforced this in relation to Latino communities, whilst others empirically contradicted them (Kyriakakis 2014). Indeed, polarised representations of communities, as entirely benign or oppressive, call for more nuanced analyses of collective resistance (Haq and Lewis 2014).

Latin American community networks and spaces in England can be vital sources of support, care and resistance for Latin American migrant women experiencing violence. These can help them challenge violence, practically escape it and rebuild their lives. However, stigma and victim-blaming are sometimes also reproduced within those. This can vary according to specific community spaces, nationality groups and their history of migration. Informal support networks of friends, family, churches, online groups and neighbourhood spaces with solid community presence can provide information and become a bridge to more formal sources of community support (NGOs) but which themselves also offer direct support. Nonetheless, Latin American migrant women use these cautiously, given the shame and stigma surrounding intimate partner violence. It can be particularly concerning and isolating for women whose abusive partners are from the same national community and may access similar networks.

S*patialised embodied resistance(s)* are collectively manifested in several sites, across which 'community' may feature in ambivalent ways and also as powerful collective sources of both *re-existence* and resistance. These include informal, semi-formal and formal community spaces, such as churches, workspaces, Latin American women's grassroots groups, NGOs and online groups. Throughout and beyond those spaces, Latin American women informally build networks of care and resistance in collectively embodied ways. For this analysis, I limit my focus to how collective spatialised embodied resistance is manifested in two broad ways. Firstly, I explore collective embodied resistance(s) within Latin American migrant women's informal and

formal networks and argue that these are profoundly connected and mutually constitutive. Secondly, turning to my research participants' *Cuerpo-Territorio*/Body-Territory maps, I explore how to re-exist and resist Latin American women embody collective and spatialised sources of strength and resistance connecting multi-scalar affects, spatialities and temporalities. This becomes visible through a focus on their bodies. Latin American women resist in an embodied and territorial manner as they create collective spaces of resistance through formal and informal networks and embody multi-scalar collective sources of *re-existence* and resistance. Through these processes, Latin American women re-territorialise the spaces they occupy, creating embodied community territories of resistance within a territory-country historically hostile to their bodies. At the same time, they re-write their bodies as a Body-Territory of resistance connected to various territorialities that provide them with strength.

Collectively embodied resistance(s) of Latin American migrant women's informal and formal networks

Latin American community organisations, particularly those specialising in violence against women, such as LAWA (the organisation with whom I collaborated for this research) and LAWRS, are part of a critical formal community support network. Being led by and for Latin American migrant women, they were borne out of informal networks of resistance and continue to rely on them heavily. The work of these grassroots NGOs represents a form of collective embodied resistance against intimate partner violence and state violence, particularly the gendered racialised abuse of border violence (state and state-sponsored – see chapter 5). Piedalue's (2017, 565) notion of plural resistance is here useful to understand that collective resistance practices by front-line workers and survivors 'contest multiple forms of violence simultaneously'. In addition to being 'caring communities' (Turcatti 2021), those organisations are *communities of resistance,* through which reciprocal care and resistance practices emerge in the face of multiple forms of intimate and state violence(s). Front-line workers' advice and advocacy support help Latin American women make sense of their experiences of violence. Together they co-create safety plans and navigate hostile immigration, welfare, and justice systems – e.g. liaising with the home office, the police, local councils, social services, and courts. The spatialised coloniality of abuse institutionally embedded in those institutions means that racialised migrant survivors encounter multiple barriers and violence(s) as they seek support and protection from the state and advocate for themselves or their peers (see chapter 6). In the context of an ever-increasing hostile environment in which women's generic services sometimes disregard or even side with state structures that oppress migrant women (Day and

Gill 2020), the role of Latin American women's NGOs as *communities of resistance* against state and intimate (state-sponsored) border violence must not be underestimated.

The ability to access formal sources of collective resistance embodied within Latin American migrant women's organisations varies. This is influenced by how long a woman has been in this country, how well-connected she is to members of her community, and how much information and access she has to specific community spaces. These factors vary significantly across geographical location, migration pathways and nationality groups. For example, national groups with a long migration history to the UK tend to have more robust community support networks. Onward Latin American migrants (McIlwaine 2020; McIlwaine and Bunge 2019) who arrived via Spain or Portugal may also be more aware of intimate partner violence and how to reach out for help, given their previous experiences in those countries. The level of community support a Latin American woman can access is also more limited in other parts of England outside of London. The vast majority of the Latin American population is based in London and so are Latin American and other migrant organisations that provide specialist support. This includes the only two Latin American women's specialist services (LAWA and LAWRS) and the only three Latin American women's refuges from LAWA.

Disclosures of violence are mediated by embodied relationality, through which trust is built, and support is offered. Informal networks of women feed into formal networks of support and are reflected in levels of early community referrals to Latin American specialist NGOs. A large portion of LAWA's referrals is from word of mouth, with many of their refuge residents being referred by former residents. An effective informal system of peer-to-peer referrals seems to have been generated as Latin American women relate to each other in embodied ways, disclosing violence and informally providing information and advice to each other.

> I think our women are very resilient […] I don't know if it's because of the network we have in our community. It's hard to see sometimes, it's not very palpable, but it's strong. Just the fact that a woman might say to the other, 'there is this organisation that helps women who are experiencing this'. Many of our clients, it's funny cause we're in the age of technology, but I'd say 99% of clients get to know us not via social media but rather word of mouth. For me, this is amazing because it says a lot about our community […]. It could be that they have seen us on Facebook, but it's this contact, the fact that another woman tells them that makes a difference […]
>
> (Lidia, Colombian front-line worker)

Apart from informal referrals, the practical care and support Latin American women provide to one another is a collective embodied form of solidarity and resistance to violence in itself. This

goes from assisting with safety planning and escaping violence, providing temporary shelter, and accompanying to appointments, to simply helping someone find a job or a place to live, providing childcare whilst women are at work, lending money, fundraising, and collectively buying items of basic necessity. These initiatives are seen among friends, acquaintances, and even strangers who show solidarity through, for example, online groups. Online community groups are places where practical support is readily offered to Latin American survivors in need. At the same time, these expose how a lack of community awareness can sometimes lead to the reproduction of patriarchal dynamics and victim-blaming discourses in those spaces. This is something the Brazilian front-line worker, Claudia, reflects on and strategically works with to support survivors as part of her role as a case worker at LAWA.

> I'm part of Facebook groups where I see women attacking other women, you know? But at the same time, I also see others where women come together to help other women exit violence. They pay for a hotel and buy stuff for the kids. If I post a message saying, 'I'm supporting a mother that needs nappies', soon after four, five packs of nappies arrive here. So, there's some support, but there's also the other side. Which I also think it's due to the lack of awareness about domestic violence [...]
>
> (Claudia, Brazilian front-line worker)

Community-centred IPV prevention initiatives focused on raising awareness are extremely limited, and the chronic underfunding of the VAWG sector, particularly the BME specialist sector (WBG 2019; Sisters For Change 2017; Imkaan 2016), has inevitably led to a priority focus on crisis intervention (WBG 2019; Sisters For Change 2017; Imkaan 2016). However, a few initiatives are helping break up barriers hindering a wider community response to violence. An example is the Change Makers program at LAWA, which initially started with Spanish-speaking Latin American women only and was subsequently implemented with Brazilians. In Lidia's view, although the programme is not exclusively tailored to survivors of violence, it fulfils the purpose of strengthening Latin American women's community network and creating a space where they can talk about their experiences of violence and structural oppression, breaking up shame and stigma.

> Programmes like change makers, I think in both programmes [with Spanish-speaking Latin Americans and with Brazilians], some women are survivors of violence and joined because of that. These are women who became a spokesperson for others, you know. So, in a way, it's been fulfilling its purpose […] That's why I think the work of building a network at the end works well in our community.
>
> (Lidia, Colombian front-line worker)

Indeed, building and strengthening informal networks of Latin American women who are in solidarity with each other is in itself a work of building communities of resistance that can collectively prevent and oppose violence (Piedalue 2019; McIlwaine et al. 2022). As the front-line worker Juana eloquently puts it, effective resistance to violence is primarily of a collective rather than an individual nature, which she sees reflected in the stories of Latin American survivors she has supported. Even though access may be limited, spatialised and contingent on different variables, multiple forms of collective resistance are already enacted within the Latin American community. As Juana suggests, the mutual support Latin American women grant each other, both in a professional capacity and informally, out of embodied empathy and solidarity, is an essential source of collective resistance.

> I think resistance comes in a group […] The only way to survive is in a group. Histories of success of women who broke the cycle of abuse and could have the life that they wanted are because they had another woman by their side doing basic things like taking care of their children, sitting by their side and listening to them. Even when it basically seems like they're not practically doing anything, they are doing something […] to give them a safe space in their living room where they can cry, where they can talk, where they can be advised to go to a specialist organisation, this is already a lot. I think that the support that Latin American women, who are not professionals from the sector, give to one another is something very important.
>
> (Juana, Mexican front-line worker)

Informal and formal community resistance practices are more intimately interconnected than they may seem. Most Latin American front-line workers have experienced violence in the past, learned from their experiences and built strategies to navigate hostile systems, which they now use in their work to support other survivors in a personal and professional capacity. Most Latin American front-line workers interviewed for this project disclosed having experienced intimate and/or state violence in their home countries and as migrant women in England. Vanessa, a Brazilian I interviewed as a survivor who also worked as a front-line worker, experienced intimate partner violence from her English ex-partner and father of her two sons. Vanessa described how at the time, she felt numb, and it was thanks to her limited support network that she could receive government income support (initially refused for months based on an incorrect assessment), be re-housed after an eviction, and rebuild her life as a single mother.

> I learnt a lot […] I became a magnet for women who have gone through violence. I personally helped many women after what happened to me because, of course, I learnt a lot, even before I started studying, I learned how to work around the system. To get what you need from the justice, the benefits from the welfare system. Because the women who I helped were migrants […] we had to bypass, to fight. To get anything,

> you need to go through your MP. Nowadays, when I see we're having trouble with a case or some injustice, we send an email to the MP […]
>
> (Vanessa, Brazilian survivor/front-line worker, white, 31 years)

Sometime after Vanessa reached some stability, she went on to informally support other Latin American survivors - whom she randomly met in public spaces - based on what she learned from her own experience. As described in the above excerpt, she felt she became a 'magnet' for Latin American women who experienced violence, suggesting how informal networks of collective resistance are formed through embodied relationality. This later led her to start volunteering at LAWA and subsequently become employed as a VAWG case worker.

Multi-scalar embodiments of community resistance

Collective resistance to violence occurs in viscerally embodied ways that connect people, places and communities across scales and temporalities – something that can be visible through a focus on women's bodies. This is illustrated in how Latin American women participating in this research mapped their collective strategies and sources of *re-existence*/resistance on their Body-Territory maps. Their maps point towards a spatialised embodied collective process of resistance that helps women decolonise their bodies from multiple forms of violence, re-territorialising them in the process of collective reclaiming a sense of belonging.

Bringing together multiple scales, women drew memories of people and places who have given them strength and helped them resist, heal and move forward in the face of violence. These were not always located in this country, providing them emotional power from afar – and, sometimes, also unknowingly - as most of their families remained in their home country. Many women's maps identified family members (e.g. parents, siblings and children) in or close to their hearts or minds alongside friends, who they trust, love and feel supported. Places included countries where they travelled to flee violence and their home countries: the house, church, sun and nature around which they grew up and lived; and their current homes where some felt stable and at peace.

Some women identified specific Latin American organisations that offered them support to escape violence, recover and find stability, as well as public institutions they felt at times protected by. Eduarda, a migrant woman from Brazil, emphasised love, care and support as specific collective embodied strategies of resistance. She referred to vital practical and emotional support received at LAWA's refuge (where she still lived) and the police protection

she was eventually granted against her ex-husband's ongoing harassment. These gave her strength and made her feel supported, protected and cared for. However, to ultimately heal from the embodied trauma of violence, Eduarda described practising self-love and self-care, suggested as embodied strategies of *re-existence*/resistance. She made a point to locate these in her whole body (see Figure 7.2).

> I have identified it everywhere in my body because it is inevitable, the care, the attention, the love. I love my life. Psychologically, I need to love myself, if I don't love myself and don't care about myself, nobody else will. And this is how I protect myself, by loving myself. This is the strategy.
>
> (Eduarda, Brazilian, mixed-race, 32 years)

As migrants, the Latin American women I interviewed tended to be resistant to disclosing their experiences of violence to their families back home. They did not want to preoccupy their families, who were unable to support them from afar practically. However, even from a distance and often unaware of what was happening, families and friends represented an important collective embodied source of strength that helped women re-exist/resist and heal from violence. In various parts of their Body-Territory maps, they identified their *faith* and *love* in and for themselves and their friends, relatives, children, community, God, churches and places they felt at home and connected to. These were sources of power and strength they embodied mainly in their minds and hearts but also in their sex, stomach, chest and all over their bodies. Their minds and hearts were often conceived as two deeply interconnected parts of their bodies, where they felt most affected by violence and found collective sources offering them strength to resist, survive and rebuild their lives.

Gisela drew her family on her chest (see figure 7.2 in previous sections) and explained that even though they were back in Chile and she had not been able to see them for some time, they have always given her a lot of strength to move on. As she noted, *'they are always with me, even though I can't go see them yet, it's been a year without a hug, but they give me strength, the love they have for me […]'*. Similar to Eduarda, Gisela also identified self-love, love and appreciation for life and nature as crucial strategies that helped her remain hopeful during separation and fighting depression. Below her chest, she drew the sun and beach of Mallorca, one of the

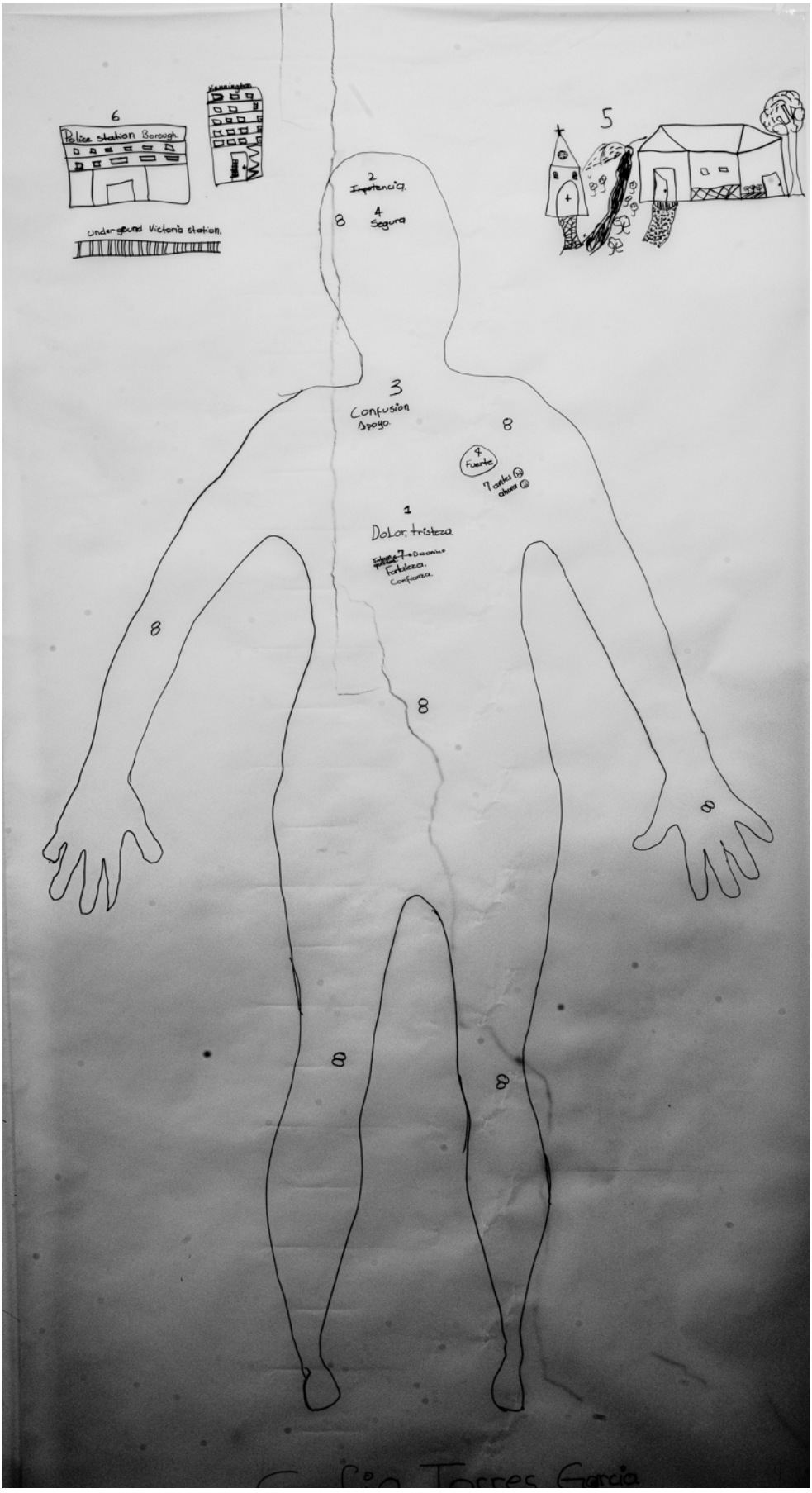


Figure 7.4 Rocio's Body-Territory map

Spanish Balearic Islands where her cousin lives, and where she wished to move one day. As she described: 'the beach helped me a lot, the sun, being part of nature, be in the nature. It was really beautiful, and it was really good for me. Being able to feel connected. The salty water cleans you'. Feeling part of nature and connecting to it emerged as an embodied spatial source of resistance and healing energy for Gisela's and other women's bodies. This manifested throughout their maps, deeply resonating with the *Cuerpo-Territorio* ontological conception of bodies and earth as part of a continuum in which the relationship to nature is central to the healing of bodies (Cabnal 2010; 2017).

On the top right of her Body-Territory, Rocio drew a house in the countryside in Colombia, where she grew up with her family; alongside it, she placed a stone pathway, trees, a river, and mountains that surrounded it as well as the catholic church she attended (see figure 7.4 - number 5 on the top right). Although the church Rocio drew was located in a small village in Colombia, its representation also connected to the church and the religious community she found in England. She described holding on to those memories from back home, to her faith and religious community as sources of strength through which she could nurture some sense of belonging in England.

> That is the church. I was born and raised in a family of practising Catholics. This was a great source of support when I arrived in this country. I was able to find God again, this was a big support. It was hard for me to find a place here due to the language, but I found a church and started working with them.
>
> (Rocio, Colombian, white and indigenous descent, 49 years)

In tracing strategies imprinted on the Body-Territory maps of Eduarda, Gisela, Rocio and other women participating in my research, it becomes visible how individual and collective spatialised embodied sources of strength and resistance connect multi-scalar scales in a relational continuum of resistance. Such a mapping process can be conceived as an act of decolonising and re-writing their bodies. To some extent, they de-territorialise the colonial violence and control inflicted on their bodies by reclaiming their collective strength and re-territorialising their bodies with other meanings, memories, and affective geographies. Embodied self-love and self-care practices centrally featured as individual practices explicitly connected to and nurtured by collective embodied ones. Embodied spatial memories help migrant women resist violence by

reminding them that they are loved, that they belong, and that their life is worthy of living and fighting for.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I put forward the notion of *spatialised embodied resistance(s)* to analyse Latin American migrant women's resistance from a decolonial feminist geographical perspective. I argue that Latin American women's resistance must be contextualised within the spatial-temporal multi-scalar workings of border violence and the spatialised coloniality of abuse vis-à-vis their specific geographical embodiments. Latin American women's resistance to violence occurs as part of embodied territorial struggles, in between processes of territorialisation, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of their bodies and spaces they occupy (Haesbaert 2007; 2020; Zaragocin 2018c; 2018b). Through violence and migration, women's bodies are territorialised and controlled materially, viscerally, emotionally and symbolically. However, individual and community-based resistance practices hold a decolonial potential to help reclaim and re-territorialise their bodies. Individual and collective resistances intertwine, occurring from, with and through the body, sometimes quite viscerally.

Resistance is not a discreet act but rather a non-linear dynamic embodied process mediated by space, encompassing covert and overt acts of agency in the face of similarly plural forms of violence. I emphasise the plural character of resistance (Piedalue 2017), involving embodied and community-based practices responding to specific forms of intimate and state violence(s) underpinned by *coloniality* (Quijano 2000a; Lugones 2008). In the Global North context of Latin American women's migration to England, coloniality is spatially embedded and weaponised against their gendered racialised bodies. My analysis, therefore, advances decolonial feminist geopolitics to shed light on the multi-scalar spatialised embodied politics/entanglements of migrant women's resistance(s) to violence. It interrogates how spaces marked by violent coloniality actively constrain the capacity for action of certain bodies – e.g. colonial migrant, gendered, racialised bodies.

Spatialised embodied resistance(s) identifies practices that challenge colonial imaginaries and culturalist discourses representing Latin American migrant women as passive, religious, patriarchal, and pathologically family-centred - whose communities are accepting of violence. Informed by Mahmood's (2011) definition of agency and the Latin American decolonial notion of *r-existência* (Porto Gonçalves 2006; Pereira 2017), I suggested how *re-existence* and resistance complement each other and sometimes overlap. These can be defined as the

capacity to act from within specific spatial-embodied positionalities to simply maintain or transform one's existence.

Moving from visceral to spatial-temporal tactics, Latin American women make use of spatialised embodied (im)mobility strategies (Conlon 2011; Bermudez and Oso 2019) to resist both the immobilising and displacing effects of state and (state-sponsored) intimate border violence. Waiting in situ – under conditions of violence - therefore may sometimes be an active rather than passive process, an intentional act migrant women resort to as part of a long-term strategy to enable their bodies to remain in the country. Resistance is manifested as *re-existence* in the unexpected and persistent act of staying as they navigate multiple forms of violence from a precarious geographical embodied position. Through migration and temporary immobility, Latin American migrant women re-territorialise the territories they occupy and reclaim their bodies' rights to be mobile.

In centring the analysis of *spatialised embodied resistance(s)* in a Global North migration context, I contribute to disrupting culturalist colonial gendered stereotypes of migrant women as passive victims. Attention to how their specific embodiments become constraints in this colonial space enables small, silent, and unspectacular acts of *re-existence* to be recognised. These are contextualised within a non-linear, although sometimes incremental, process of resistance. Despite neoliberal feminism's assumption that leaving and reporting are the most appropriate and effective responses to violence (Rajah and Osborn 2020; Hume and Wilding 2020; Mannell, Jackson, and Umutoni 2016), those are often not viable options for Latin American women whose unique embodied and spatial circumstances confront multiple forms violence at once.

Turning to the collective and community-based character of Latin American women's spatialised embodied resistance process, I unveiled how their formal and informal networks can be understood as multi-scalar territories of resistance. These link and stretch from the diaspora community resisting the hostile environment of migration to other spatial-temporal scales, such as their home countries, cities, towns and the surrounding nature, landscape and people they remain emotionally connected to and feel supported by. In re-writing and embodying collective territorial sources of resistance, Latin American women can re-territorialise the spaces they occupy, starting from their Body-Territory as the first territory scale where multiple other territorialities of resistance cross and meet.

CHAPTER VIII – CONCLUSION

Introduction

This research has investigated the experiences of violence and resistance among Latin American migrant women in England through a decolonial feminist geographical/geopolitical approach. Focusing on an underexplored group through a conceptual framework that has not been previously applied to this topic, I have expanded research on intimate partner violence against racialised and migrant women in Global North contexts. This thesis has analysed how ongoing coloniality (Quijano 2000b; Lugones 2008) informs Latin American migrant women's multi-scalar experiences of state and intimate violence and resistance, with particular attention to bordering and (re)territorialisation processes at the material and discursive levels.

Here, I discuss this thesis's main methodological, empirical and theoretical contributions. I also reflect on some of its limitations and how these link to contextual shifts and point towards future research directions. Methodologically and theoretically, the study combines and adapts decolonial feminist geographical conceptions to the specific context of violence, resistance and migration to the Global North. Such a move is significant considering that this field's reproduction of methodological nationalism and colonial culturalist views of migrants and gender-based violence tends to be underpinned by the coloniality of knowledge (Quijano 2000b; Mignolo 2002).

Methodological Contributions

There was an intentional effort to ensure coherence between this study's theoretical framework and epistemological and methodological design. Starting from the premise that knowledge cannot be decolonised without the decolonisation of practices (Riveira Cusicanqui 2012; Zaragocin 2019), I implemented a methodology critically engaging with pluriversal epistemologies and methods from the South, in particular from Latin America. My methodology recognised and aimed to practically address the geopolitics of knowledge (Walsh 2007; Mignolo 2002; Gordon 2011) and the political economy of knowledge production (Riveira Cusicanqui 2012). The Latin American decolonial feminist critique of hegemonic feminism and the body-politics of knowledge (Espinosa-Miñoso 2014; 2016; Curiel 2014; 2015) were at the heart of this effort.

I situated this research within the decolonial feminist epistemological project and attended to the above through various strategies. Methodologically, I actively combined and implemented

different methods of data collection whilst critically engaging with my embodied positionality as a researcher. I aimed to mitigate power relations in the research process by encouraging the active participation of research subjects, recognising their epistemic authority and ensuring that this research not only did them 'no harm' but was indeed meaningful to them. As a Brazilian racialised migrant woman who lived in this country for over ten years and, at the start of this project, had already been working for the Latin American Women's Aid for two years, I was in a privileged 'insider' location to carry out this research. As a migrant scholar, an 'outsider within' (Collins 1986), I occupied an ambivalent position, potentially disruptive yet invested with power. A critical and embodied sense of relational accountability was, therefore, crucial in guiding the design and implementation of my methodology, throughout which I actively practised *refusal* (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2014).

I was trusted and supported by LAWA institutionally and informally. My co-workers believed in this project's importance and that I could carry it out ethically. Much of my methodological design was developed in conversation with them, whose trust and expertise I was accountable for through formal and informal consultations. Being personally and professionally involved with LAWA, *refusal* was a useful method to navigate any tensions that may have emerged from the research process and findings internally, reserving the right to keep them outside of this thesis. I also made it clear from the outset that this organisation and its institutional practices were not the focus of my study.

I interviewed nine of my LAWA colleagues whose professional role involved supporting Latin American women practically and emotionally (either as a caseworker or a counsellor); and a caseworker whom I met while volunteering at LAWRS in 2015. A pre-existing relationship with them contributed to the interview flow, becoming more of a conversation they could also direct. With the help of LAWA's front-line workers, I recruited twenty Latin American women survivors of violence with whom I conducted life-story interviews. Some of these interviews with front-line workers and survivors were carried out online or via the phone to ensure social distance after the COVID-19 pandemic began. Indeed, much of my methodology was re-structured to account for the pandemic and the heightened risk and mental health impact on my research participants. My decision to pause fieldwork as the pandemic developed and reduce the target number of interviews was informed by a duty of care to everyone involved in the research process – myself included. This was decided before formal impediments were implemented, in conversation with my colleagues and actively listening to my participants' embodied insights.

The pandemic context disrupted the implementation of qualitative research methods. However, it also opened up new methodological possibilities. Indeed, the original methodological contribution of this study emerged in intimate connection to that. Responding to the challenges of the pandemic and my commitment to decolonising geographical and feminist methodologies to research violence, resistance and migration, I developed and implemented *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* as part of a collaborative art-research project with the visual artist Nina Franco (Lopes Heimer and Franco 2020).[73] This is a travelling, remote, embodied decolonial feminist methodology to conduct geographical research *with* migrant women. It builds on and adapts *Cuerpo-Territorio* ('Body-Territory') (Cabnal 2010) as an embodied indigenous ontology and as a method (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017a; Cruz Hernández 2016; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020; Haesbaert 2020). It combines a decolonial feminist geographical embodiment praxis with the feminist geopolitics multi-scalar approach to migration (Hyndman 2012) and the critical migration studies' perspective on borders (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Casas-Cortes et al. 2015).

The primary significance of *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* could be summarised around four areas. First, it engages and expands the feminist geopolitics multi-scalar lenses and attention to the body by building on decolonial feminist geographers' operationalisation of a method grounded in indigenous women's cosmologies. Placing bodies in a relational continuum with territories and borders at multiple other scales practically enables an embodied co-production of knowledge (Zaragocin and Caretta 2020) whilst moving away from methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) and territorial conceptions stuck at the scale of the state (Elden 2010). Second, within this methodology, the *Cuerpo-Territorio* method was adapted to operate remotely through the creative use of technological and logistical tools/services, such as video, postal services and online video-conference meetings (Lopes Heimer and Franco 2020). Because this methodology attended to the social distancing needs of the pandemic, it could also be helpful to other research contexts in which the mobility of participants and the ability to meet in person are curtailed. Third, the remote aspect of this methodology enables participants to be in more control of their time and space as they individually and privately craft their maps at home. This allows participants to submerge themselves into their embodied memories and affects more profoundly and also helps

[73] Part of a wider initiative called Imaging Social Justice developed by the KCL Visual and Embodied Methodologies network and the Arts Cabinet (more details on their website).

redistribute power. Fourth, the adaptation accounted for the violent landscape of post-Brexit England to grasp how an ever more hostile and dispersed border regime operates at multiple scales, particularly at the intimate and embodied ones. In this sense, this methodology may be suitable for similar Global North contexts of migration in which the coloniality of borders is ever more present but reshaping through various processes of (re)territorialisation.

The *Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios* methodology may also be helpful to research violence and/or migration in Global South contexts where it emerged. Indeed, it has already travelled back to Latin America and changed as part of its journey. Between 2021-2022, I worked as a researcher for the project 'Resisting violence, creating dignity' (led by Prof Cathy McIlwaine) to help implement this methodology with women from the favelas of Maré in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Together with a team of local researchers from Redes da Maré (and specifically, their Casa das Mulheres da Maré) and accounting for specificities of the context, we redeveloped the *Cuerpo-Territorio* method in a co-produced way based on my previous PhD experience. The methodological and empirical results from this process are published in the report 'Body Territory: Mapping women's resistance to violence in the favelas of Maré, Rio de Janeiro' (Lopes Heimer et al. 2022).

Travelling Cuerpo-Territorios practically and theoretically expands geography's engagements with counter-mapping as a critical and potentially decolonising praxis (Cosgrove 2008; Harley 1988; Oslender 2021; Parker 2006; Peluso 1995). This methodology provides a decolonial feminist geographical praxis for research on violence and migration. This is important considering that this field has historically reproduced coloniality in research by othering migrant communities in colonial gendered ways, privileging and naturalising national scale and often disregarding the role of the body and embodiment processes.

Empirical Contributions

This study provided new empirical understandings of Latin American migrant women's experiences of violence and resistance in England, particularly concerning the relationship between state violence, intimate violence and the embodied, spatialised effects of violence and resistance(s). This fills a gap in the literature since existing studies on violence against Latin American women are limited, particularly in England, and have tended to focus on specific nationality groups (e.g. Brazilians) and emphasise intra-community violence.

In chapter 5, I empirically demonstrated how immigration regulations are used through border violence to control Latin American women at various scales, including the embodied one. Some

of my empirical findings resonate with studies with migrant women in the UK and other contexts, including Latin Americans (Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Erez et al. 2009; Imkaan 2010; Anitha 2011; Reina, Maldonado, and Lohman 2013; Reina, Lohman, and Maldonado 2014; Evans and McIlwaine 2017; McIlwaine et al. 2019). These similarly demonstrate how perpetrators weaponise migrant women's insecure status through the threat of deportation, criminalisation and destitution. The originality of my empirical contribution lies in empirically unveiling and drawing out empirical evidence of how state and intimate border violence operate in a complementary and relational way across scales in a continuum, in particular through and at the scale of the body and the home. I explored and evidenced the embodiments of border violence against Latin American women through their Body-Territory maps and narratives. These illustrate how the intimate weaponisation of immigration regulations and the territorial context of migration become territorialised as bodily sensations, emotions, feelings and memories. There is limited research into the role of homelessness and the threat of homelessness within the dynamics of violence against migrant and racialised women (Banga and Gill 2008; Lopes Heimer 2019). An area I contributed to by demonstrating how border violence is perpetrated through and at the scale of the house. My empirical material also details how border violence can be directed at migrant women even when they hold secure immigration status since abusers can materially and discursively produce 'illegality' as a weapon.

Studies on violence against Latin American women have focused mainly on intra-community violence, often neglecting violence perpetrated by non-Latin American men. In Chapter 6, I empirically addressed that by examining the colonial dynamics of violence perpetrated by Anglo/European white men and extended through institutions. My empirical material unveils how long-standing hypersexualised racist colonial stereotypes of Latin American women (Núñez-Borja and Stallaert 2013; Padilla 2011; 2007; Guizardi 2013) persist in the English context. These are reflected in intimate abusive dynamics exploited by Anglo-European men, mainly white men. Those colonial stereotypes are, however, manifested differently along hierarchies of (in)humanity based on race, class, nationality, and (cis)gender status. Focusing on the scale of the home and the body, I identify how dynamics of abuse re-enacted a colonial relationship of conquest at the intimate scale, particularly – but not exclusively - within relationships among partners from countries with direct histories of colonisation. Finally, my empirical findings show how institutional violence against Latin American women (from agencies, such as social services, the police, and courts) also mirrors and extends intimate colonial abusive dynamics.

Although there is a growing empirical understanding of women's resistance to violence, there is a scarcity of studies on the specific ways migrant and racialised women resist violence in Global North contexts (Rajah and Osborn 2020; 2021). Chapter 7 addresses that, with empirical material connecting and drawing out how Latin American migrant women's strategies of resistance simultaneously respond to intimate and state violence. In particular, it innovatively brings empirical attention to the scale of the body, the community and global-local (im) mobilities' strategies, registering Latin American women's visceral, collective and spatial-temporal tactics.

Theoretical Contributions

Conceptually, the thesis makes three main theoretical contributions substantiated by the notions of *state and (state-sponsored) intimate border violence*; the *spatialised coloniality of abuse*; and *spatialised embodied resistance(s)*. Through a decolonial feminist geopolitical understanding of coloniality (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b), necropolitics (Mbembe 2003) and the state of exception (Agamben 1998), in chapter 5, I trace and analyse the multi-scalar workings of border violence against migrant women. I conceive the coloniality materially embedded in the UK border regime as a source of state and (state-sponsored) intimate violence. I coined the concept of *state-sponsored intimate border violence* to refer to a form of violence that directly stems from the UK state border regime. Its logic of 'deputisation' (Griffiths and Yeo 2021) is further exploited by abusive men to control and violate migrant women in intimate and embodied ways. This expands work on everyday bordering (Yuval-Davis et al.2019; Cassidy 2019) to address the limited theoretical attention the intimate and embodied manifestations of border violence, predominantly explored regarding the state and state agents (Pellander and Horsti 2018; Topak 2019; Schindel 2019; Tofighian 2020; Chubin and Ramirez 2020; Esposito and Kellezi 2020). I argue that through state and intimate border violence, migrant women's bodies become territorialised as annexed body-territories of exception. Legal abandonment and necropolitics enable sovereign power by both the state and abusive partners to be exerted upon their body-territories. This analysis captured the violent process of re-territorialisation of national borders across multi-scalar spatialities, theoretically shifting attention to the scale of women's body-territories and how these become appropriated and territorialised through border violence.

In suggesting the notion of the *spatialised coloniality of abuse,* the thesis offers a geographical contribution to decolonial and decolonial feminist theorisations on coloniality. This concept is a lens to explain the dynamics, causes and consequences of violence against Latin American

migrant women. The spatialised coloniality of abuse operates intersectionally and spatially in a continuum across scales. It perpetuates and legitimates violence through dehumanising racist sexualised capitalist territorial discourses and practices from colonialism into the present. This notion bridges the coloniality of gender and of power (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2000b) with decolonial territorial conceptions (Halvorsen 2018), such as the Latin American indigenous concept of *Cuerpo-Territorio* (Cabnal 2010; Ulloa 2016; Cruz Hernández 2016; Haesbaert 2020). My analysis points to how varying colonial territorial imaginaries of Latin American countries are projected onto migrant women's bodies, connecting Body-Territory to national and global territories in a continuum (Kelly 1988) of spatialised coloniality of abuse across scales. Like the territories they come from, Latin American women are treated as unruly and uncivilised, needing discipline and subjugation. Violence works as a form of (re)territorialisation and annexation of Latin American migrant women's body-territories, over which individuals and state agents dehumanise them, and exert power and control as a sovereign act. Violence against Latin American migrant women in England works, at times, as a contemporary re-enacting of colonial invasion and colonial ruling at the intimate scale of the body. Mobilising *Cuerpo-Territorio* to a colonial context of migration, I argue that Latin American migrant women's bodies are treated as territories of conquest like their countries. Territories to be annexed, disciplined and extracted from.

Finally, investigating Latin American migrant women's resistance to border violence and the spatialised coloniality of abuse, I develop the *spatialised embodied resistance(s) concept*. This theoretical contribution responds to feminist geographers' calls for analyses of women's resistance to violence to pay closer attention to socio-spatial contexts, the body, and the role of corporeal processes (Brickell and Maddrell 2016; Pain 2014a; 2020; Fluri and Piedalue 2017; Zaragocin and Caretta 2020). *Spatialised embodied resistance(s)* builds and expands the limited theorising on resistance, answering a need for conceptual clarity in this field (Rajah and Osborn 2020; 2021). Centring on Latin American migrant women's resistance to violence in England, this analytical tool decolonises feminist geography/geopolitics of resistance to violence. Spatialised embodied resistance(s) conceives resistance as a spatialised and territorial process, occurring in direct relationship to the body and various forms of embodiments. This concept recognises how resistance is mediated and constrained by spatial contexts, territorial struggles and processes of territorialisation at multiple scales (Haesbaert 2007; 2020; Hume and Wilding 2020; Pereira 2017; Porto Gonçalves 2006; Vela-Almeida et al. 2020). It centres on the body and embodiment processes: how certain bodies are made more vulnerable and constrained in specific spaces and the ways resistance processes cross and occur at the body

– viscerally and symbolically (Smith, Swanson, and Gökarıksel 2016; Zaragocin 2018b; Caretta and Zaragocin 2020; Pain 2020). Finally, it emphasises the plural character of resistance (Piedalue 2017), for migrant women simultaneously negotiate similarly plural forms of violence. Latin American migrant women mobilise, often overlapping, complementary and incremental, practices of *re-existence* and resistance at various scales. At embodied, individual and collective scales, in a continuum. Through this concept, my analysis helps challenge views of migrant women who experience violence as passive victims, instead recognising how their resistance is spatially constrained and contingent on spatialised embodied colonial imaginaries. Hence, they are often manifested in small, quiet, embodied, collective and unconventional ways. Border violence and the spatialised coloniality of abuse territorialise Latin American women's bodies as annexed territories to be controlled and (re)colonised. In turn, embodied, individual and community-based resistance strategies create points of tension, emphasising the unfinished character of those forms of domination and subjugation. Migrant women's strategies help de/re-territorialising their body-territories, reclaiming them in a potentially decolonising process.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

As I critically reflect on this research's scope, it is important to acknowledge its main limitations. These primarily relate to the scarce engagement with the fast-changing context in which this study unfolded and the specific experiences of trans and queer Latin American women. These are areas which this thesis engaged with in a very tangential manner and remain essential to be explored in future research with Latin American women.

Throughout this study, I have recognised the focus of gender and migration on cisgender heterosexual migration and relations between cismen and ciswomen, with the experiences of trans and queer women being largely unacknowledged. Although there is a growing subfield of critical queer migration studies (Luibhéid 2008; Manalansan 2006; Howe, Zaraysky, and Lorentzen 2008; Cantú, Naples, and Vidal-Ortiz 2009), with calls for migration scholarship to address its heteronormativity (Luibhéid 2004), this has not yet sufficiently echoed in studies of violence against migrant women (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2017). As such, my research design initially aimed to fill this empirical and theoretical gap by ensuring a diverse sample not only in terms of race/ethnicity, nationalities, class and immigration status but also sexuality and gender. I wanted to guarantee representation and participation from groups overlooked within this literature, such as queer and trans Latin American women. As a queer woman myself, this was a political imperative I was personally committed. However, I did not anticipate how

challenging it would be to recruit queer and trans Latin American women for this type of research.

This can be partially explained by the fact that queer and trans women are already an underrepresented group of service users at LAWA and other Latin American organisations. The intersectionality of their experiences of violence means that they experience more stigma and structural vulnerabilities, possibly making it harder for them to access support. Even though two trans women were referred to me as potential participants, after speaking to them and explaining the study, they felt that they were still in such an emotionally and materially vulnerable situation that made them unable to participate. I had a telephone call with one of those women when the pandemic started, and she described feeling lonely and isolated. Requesting them to speak about traumatic experiences of violence under those conditions would have been triggering and harmful. I interviewed four Latin American women (out of 20) who identified themselves on the queer spectrum. However, their experiences of intimate violence were in relationships with cismen and their sexual identities did not emerge as something relevant to their specific dynamics of abuse. I was only referred to one lesbian Latin American woman abused by another woman, and she decided not to participate after an initial telephone conversation.

During my interviews with Latin American front-line workers (two of whom identified themselves as ciswomen in the queer spectrum, and one of whom identified themselves as a trans gender-queer person), I enquired about their professional observations supporting cases of queer/lesbian and trans women. Nonetheless, it became difficult to draw out meaningful findings and integrate this material into my theoretical reflections during my analysis. This is, therefore, a limitation of this study, which primarily reflects on the experiences of Latin American ciswomen and intimate abuse within cis-heterosexual relationships. Therefore, a significant gap in research remains to engage empirically and theoretically with the specific experiences of violence and resistance of trans and queer Latin American migrant women as well as non-binary and gender-queer Latin American people. Analysing these experiences in more detail may provide more nuance to the theoretical conceptions put forward in this thesis concerning border violence, the spatialised coloniality of abuse and spatialised embodied resistance(s).

Since the beginning of this study, there have also been significant and fast contextual changes with implications for violence against women globally and, more specifically, migrant women in England. In January 2020, the UK formally left the European Union, years after a Brexit

referendum marked by anti-immigration rhetoric and a lengthy political process of negotiation. Only a few months after, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in the UK, leading to national lockdowns and measures that significantly put women, migrant women in particular, at increased risk of violence and with fewer support avenues (Banga and Roy 2020). Even though a significant part of my fieldwork was conducted amidst these changing scenarios, this thesis does not meaningfully engage empirically and theoretically with the implications of post-Brexit policies and practices and the broader pandemic effects on Latin American migrant women and their experiences of violence and resistance.

The anti-immigrant sentiment and policies that eventually led to Brexit and an ever more hostile environment are reflected in this thesis; however, the specific ways post-Brexit legislation affects violence against Latin American women are not fully accounted for. This is partially due to a practical reason since my sample comprised of women who recounted experiences of violence that occurred prior to Brexit. Many of them currently hold settled status in this country linked to the European Union (as dual nationals or EU family members). This means that if their stories of abuse had happened within a post-Brexit landscape of recent migration, the UK's withdrawal from the EU would have likely led to further border violence. Future studies with migrant women, Latin American women, in particular, should investigate how the post-Brexit's reconfiguration of territorialisation and bordering processes bear on state and (state-sponsored) intimate border violence against them.

The fieldwork of this study was also affected by and had to respond to the challenges presented by the pandemic. During interviews and Body-Territory mapping discussions, some participants explicitly mentioned their context of isolation and anxieties relating to the COVID-19 health, social and political crises. However, these have been mostly left out of the empirical and theoretical findings systematised in this thesis. I did not feel I would have been able to incorporate them and contextualise them well enough. Participants discussed this new reality as we experienced it, without me explicitly inquiring about it or accounting for it in my initial research design. In addition, I had already carried out interviews with nearly all front-line workers and some survivors before the pandemic started, which meant these reflections were absent. Now that we are years further into the pandemic, future research must turn to its effects on Latin American migrant women's experiences of violence and resistance. This is likely to have reconfigured and increased both state and intimate forms of violence, with implications for understanding and analysing the multi-scalar workings of border violence and the spatialised coloniality of abuse and how women resist these in spatialised and embodied ways.

This study has been committed to the principles of decolonial feminist research, including ensuring that findings respond to the needs and interests of researched communities and are accessible to them. The research design of this study was developed with this in mind and through consultations with the affected community. However, I recognise that this PhD thesis is highly inaccessible, particularly to Latin American migrants outside academia and those who do not read English. To overcome this limitation and make this research more accessible and engaging, I worked collaboratively with Nina Franco as part of the KCL Visual and Embodied Methodologies Network project 'Imaging Social Justice'. This collaboration enabled us to build on research data, findings and reflections from this study, reconfiguring them through art-making to speak to wider audiences. All products from this collaboration are publicly accessible online at the Arts Cabinet website,[74] and all videos are accessible in Portuguese, Spanish and English. The original dissemination plan for this project was to organise an exhibition with those pieces; however, the pandemic context forced us to go online. This was beneficial because a digital archive of the project can now be widely accessed; however, this limited our ability to engage with Latin American audiences in a more targeted and embodied way.

To further the dissemination of this work, alongside two King's Geography PhD colleagues, we applied for funding to set up the exhibition 'Embodied Lines: Mapping urban, state and intimate processes through art-based methodologies'[75] at the King's Science Gallery London (July-October 2022). This exhibition brought together our three arts-based projects, exploring violence and resistance processes at various scales. It featured five Body-Territory maps my participants crafted; its lines were vectorised, coloured in red and printed in body-size acetate material. In addition, three short films produced as part of our collaboration were also displayed, which use interview scripts and Body-Territory maps from this research. As part of the exhibition's programme, Nina Franco and I ran a closed tour and workshop for a small group of Latin American women and non-binary people. We reflected on the exhibition by making a collective Body-Territory map. We also hosted a launch event at the Science Gallery to discuss insights from the three featured projects within the context of arts-based and decolonial research practices. These events and the exhibition were advertised across the Latin American community through targeted outreach via community groups, organisations and newsletters. I invited women participating in this research and had the pleasure of reencountering a few of

[74] See here: https://www.artscabinet.org/imagingsocialjustice/rosa-dos-ventos-lopes-heimer-and-nina-franco

[75] See details here: https://embodiedlines.wixsite.com/exhibition

them. Creating such spaces for dissemination and encounters felt crucial to maintain a commitment to decolonial praxis beyond academia and to honour the relationships built through this research. As I complete this PhD, I hope to be able to further disseminate this research and its artistic outputs in the future in other formats and platforms.

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