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Whose Feelings Count? Performance Politics, Emotion and Government Immigration Control¹

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Introduction

In the summer of 2013, a van with the slogan reading 'In the UK Illegally? Go home or face arrest' was driven through six ethnically diverse London boroughs. The van was part of a pilot scheme, named 'Operation Vaken', carried out by the UK Home Office, the government department responsible for immigration. The stated aim of Operation Vaken was to encourage people whose immigration papers were not in order to come forward and take part in the government's long-standing 'voluntary returns' scheme; to 'go home' to the countries from which they had migrated, with the threat that if they did not they would be sought out, arrested and deported anyway. This accompanied targeted and high-profile immigration raids on public transport hubs and workplaces, which were publicised on the Home Office's Twitter account with pictures of people being arrested by immigration officers and pushed into the back of enforcement vans, with the hashtag #immigrationoffender. Later that summer, further posters were displayed inside immigration reporting centres in Glasgow and Hounslow, where asylum seekers were faced with images of aeroplanes with the slogan 'This plane can take you home. We can book the tickets'.

This campaign is emblematic of how successive UK governments have chosen strategies that move away from policy discussions about the basis of immigration policy, towards demonstrating a 'tough' stance, which is intended to reassure fearful voters that a threat is being contained. However, the tactics used in the 2013 campaign were particularly controversial, even drawing criticism from the UK Independence Party's Nigel Farage and the anti-immigration think tank Migration Watch (BBC, 2013; personal communication). This was in part because of the politically and emotionally charged slogan of 'Go Home or face arrest'. As Pukkah Punjabi wrote in her comment piece in *The Guardian*, the 'Go Home' slogan evoked National Front graffiti and playground taunts of the 1970s, directed at non-white people whatever their immigration status (Pukkah Punjabi 2013). The campaign thus raised questions both about who belongs to the body politic, but also whose feelings count: reassuring those who are concerned about immigration, and provoking fear amongst those who are perceived as outsiders.

This chapter is based on findings from an 18-month research project that investigated the effects of UK government publicity about immigration. The project included working in partnership with activist and charity groups to conduct focus groups with migrants, asylum seekers and British citizens in six areas within the UK (Barking and Dagenham in east London, and Ealing and Hounslow in west London; Birmingham and Coventry in the West Midlands of England; Bradford in the north of England; Cardiff in Wales; and Glasgow in Scotland), a national poll, online research, and interviews with policy makers and key local activists in the six areas. Some of these case studies were chosen because they had been specifically targeted by Operation Vaken, which was the case in Barking and Dagenham and Ealing and Hounslow, as well as Glasgow. Others (Birmingham, Coventry and Bradford) were chosen because of their character as super-diverse cities, in which debates on immigration and integration were important locally. Studying Cardiff, as well as Glasgow, also allowed us to consider the role of attitudes towards migrants in the context of devolved government

¹ This chapter is based on research conducted by a collaborative team which included, along with the authors, the following co-investigators: Gargi Bhattacharyya, William Davies, Sukhwant Dhaliwal, Yasmin Gunaratnam, and Roiyah Saltus. We would like to acknowledge the use of fieldwork conducted by these colleagues used in this chapter, as well as the collaborative input of the whole team into the development of the analysis produced here. We would also like to acknowledge the important contributions to the project throughout its various stages of all of the community partner organisations we worked with (a full list can be found at <http://mappingimmigrationcontroversy.com/about/partners>). This research was funded by ESRC grant number ES/L008971/1.

administrations (Scotland and Wales), including the role played by immigration policy in the 2014 Scottish independence campaign. Rather than focusing on Operation Vaken's role in UK immigration control in general, this chapter explores a set of questions about the circulation of emotion in and beyond this campaign. How did the campaign seek to manage the feelings of 'the general public' about immigration control? What were the (unintended?) consequences of this emotion work? How did the campaign fuel (emotional) activist responses? Our analysis therefore examines the assumption that public emotions should or could be managed through such government interventions, by also attending to the flipside of this emotion work – the creation of fear, anger and resentment.

Whose Feelings? The different values placed on emotions and lives by Operation Vaken

As the editors of this volume note in their introduction, political discourse at the turn of the century, particularly in the UK, had a particular drive to focus on technical fixes, quantifiable targets and 'evidence based policy' with an emphasis on results that can be measured statistically, claiming a space away from irrational, emotional politics (Levitas, 1998; Fairclough, 2000). Our interest in this chapter is in a government project that overtly set out to work on emotions, claiming to use advertising techniques to fix a tangible problem, as Operation Vaken's stated aim was to 'to test whether different communications could encourage any increases in voluntary departures' (Harper and Holbeach 2013), by circulating messages about voluntary returns in public space – as well as in the less public spaces of migrant reporting centres, places of worship and other venues to which destitute migrants go for support. According to the Home Office's evaluation report, Operation Vaken was intended

'to test the hypothesis that people without leave to remain in the UK would depart voluntarily if they were made aware that:

- there was a near and present danger of their being arrested;
- the voluntary departure route was explained as an option; and
- safe routes of approaching the Home Office for assistance were provided, without the fear of arrest.' (Home Office, 2013:2).

So, explicitly, the advertising was intended to provoke fear (of the danger of being arrested); but it was also apparently designed to reassure that there were 'safe routes' through which people without leave to remain in the UK could avoid this fear of arrest. Though the emphasis in this explanation is on reassurance, the need for reassurance depends on provoking fear. Of course, among people with insecure legal status to live in the UK, a poster and leafleting campaign may not be required to engender fear of being arrested and deported. But the imagery was clearly designed to enhance this fear; the van image in particular included an anonymous border force guard holding handcuffs, and a claim there had been '106 arrests last week in your area'. The Home Office's explicit statement also ignores the fear that the injunction to 'Go Home' may create for the same people; either because they have fled 'home', or because their life and home is now in the UK. The two choices presented – 'Go Home or Face Arrest' – may equally provoke fear which the promise of a 'safe route' to 'voluntary departure' does not assuage.

Our discussion in this chapter focuses particularly on the very public parts of the government campaign, particularly the 'Go Home' billboard, to consider how the promotion of these messages in public space produce emotional effects which are differentiated, largely depending on the viewer's biography and social position. It is worth noting that the van was only in circulation for a few days,

and in a small number of boroughs in London. However, its presence became public not just in the physical encounter with the van, which relatively few people experienced, but in its circulation through extensive media coverage, all of which reproduced the van's image and message for a wider public. We argue, drawing particularly on the work of Bridget Anderson and of Sara Ahmed, that these different emotional responses are a technology of governance which both creates and extends political and social divisions. In particular, the attention paid to different emotional reactions of different populations reinforces the boundaries between 'us' and 'them', or between those who are considered part of the general public or 'community of value' (Anderson, 2013).

But if Operation Vaken was clearly aimed at provoking fear and consequent actions, it was only openly claimed to have these intentions towards people without leave to remain in the UK. As we will discuss in the rest of the chapter, the emotional effects of the campaign were felt much more widely than among the audience the Home Office claimed to be targeting. The conduct of Operation Vaken appeared to value the emotions of some people – and the material and political consequences of those emotions – over others.

Anderson (2013) provides a detailed analysis of the ways in which the slippery concepts of race, ethnicity and nationalism are intertwined historically, both reinforcing and negating one another. She uses the term 'community of value' to describe the ways in which some people – 'respectable, hard-working families', for example, in the vocabulary of politicians – are seen as constituting the worthwhile part of a national imaginary, as opposed to 'shirkers' or 'scroungers'. This status of value also becomes applied to migrants in differentiated ways, with immigration policy and newspaper headlines equally distinguishing between 'good migrants' – the Australian nurse in the UK, for example – and 'bad migrants' – such as the 'health tourist' using NHS resources to care for their critical illnesses. Those included in the 'community of value' – the 'us' in 'us and them' – are not just *of* value to the nation, as productive and respectable individuals. They are also the figures whose lives are treated, in policy and in public discourse, as of the most value, as worthy of consideration and care.

Reading directly from the stated aim of Operation Vaken – to encourage people with irregular migration status to leave the UK – the campaign is a clear demarcation of a community of value, and who lies outside of this: people 'in the UK illegally'. However, we argue that the circulation of these messages also draws a less straightforward line of exclusion and inclusion as to who – and whose feelings – are to be considered 'of value'. Sara Ahmed describes the emotional effects of some signs, words and objects as 'sticky'; that is, significance, references, resonances and feelings can stick to a phrase (such as 'go home') despite a change in context or intended or implied meaning (Ahmed, 2004:91-2). The recognition of a phrase such as 'go home' as a racist taunt, one which unsettles the idea of home and reignites a hierarchy of belonging (Back, Sinha and Bryan, 2012) calls into question, for some people – who have been the target, or bear the cultural memory of that taunt – their own right to belong in the place they call home. Such stickiness, such resonances, and such emotional reactions were not acknowledged by Home Office ministers or others who supported the campaign, as they refused to recognise the symbolic violence of this intervention (Goodhart, 2013; Harper, 2013). The rejection of the emotional reactions (and the politics of these emotions) demonstrates, in our view, an exclusion of racialized minorities from the community of value; that is, these reactions are deemed unworthy of consideration.

As we will outline below, reactions to the 'Go Home' van were not all the same. Indeed, many public commentators and research participants suggested that it was intended expressly to appeal to people worried about immigration – to demonstrate that the government was being tough. Even, in some sense, to demonstrate to those who felt excluded from the national community of value by economic exclusion that there exists another group that is still further outside of consideration – a

yet more abject 'national abject' (Tyler, 2013). This intervention formed part of explicit government drives to make Britain a 'hostile environment' for immigrants (Aitkenhead, 2013), in a context in which ongoing debates about the 'failure of multiculturalism' are taking on new forms that both separate and conflate the racialized hierarchies of belonging in Britain (Back, Sinha and Bryan, 2012).

Managing Fear, Performing 'Toughness'

Several commentators at the time of Operation Vaken suggested that an important motivation seemed to be to reassure people concerned about immigration control that 'something was being done' by the government (e.g. Behr, 2013; Merrick, 2013; Sdrigotti, 2013). Our research with policymakers confirms this suggestion, with civil servants and policy advisers telling us that while the 'Go Home' billboard was the most extreme artefact to date, the Home Office under Labour as well as Coalition governments had been pursuing the strategy of *being seen to be* 'tough on immigration' much longer. While in the early years of Tony Blair's government there was a reliance on providing accurate data to allay fears of immigration (see for example Glover et al, 2000), a shift seemed to occur around 2006 and 2007 during John Reid's time as Labour Home Secretary. This seems to be the point at which the received wisdom now common around Whitehall took hold – that 'the public' cannot be persuaded by statistics on immigration as they simply disbelieve them (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). As a result, the emphasis came to be on demonstrating 'toughness' on immigration whether or not 'immigration' was an empirical 'problem'. As one senior think tank advisor told us:

'they're [the public] not going to believe any immigration statistics. So while the Treasury might be believed on its growth figures, it will never be believed on its economic impacts of immigration. There's more mistrust about immigration... With immigration you have every reason to disbelieve data, because the government has told you its crap at collecting it.'

(Policymaker interview, London, June 2014)

So data is not only disbelieved, but this disbelief is compounded by successive government's communication policies. And attempts to assuage concerns about immigration (which have been stoked both cynically by politicians in electoral campaigns and by governments undermining trust in their own records (Castles, 2010; Gamlen, 2013)) can be seen in stunts such as Home Secretary John Reid accompanying border officials on dawn raids while wearing a flak jacket in 2007 (echoed in visits by Prime Minister David Cameron to view raids on 'beds in sheds' and home raids in 2014); John Reid's rebranding of border control at ports to include reassuring signage and uniforms; current signage in NHS hospitals stating 'NHS hospital treatment is not free for everyone'; and so on.

Like the Go Home van, it is claimed that these efforts aim to show irregular migrants that they will be found (by engendering fear); but they are equally instrumental in communicating with people who fear or hate (illegal) immigration. They demonstrate that the government considers (illegal) immigration a problem; and that it is taking measures to deal with it. 'Illegal' is in brackets in these sentences because in people's understandings of migration in the UK, and in government communications and public debate, the definition of 'migrant' and of legality of migration is blurry (Anderson and Blinder 2014). It is most publicly acceptable to be against 'illegal' immigration, as this is seen as a breach of the law (though in some cases legal and illegal status blur as administrative processes and decisions change them). But 'migration' as a whole is something the Coalition government (2010-2015) promised to cap, and so their statements on the subject often shift between whether they are talking about 'illegal' immigration, or immigration in general (see e.g. Harper, 2013). Others have argued that British immigration policies are 'designed to fail', in the sense that governments recognise a need for migrant labour, and an inevitability of immigration, and therefore put in place impracticable immigration controls which can be shown off to anti-

immigration advocates while blaming their failure on wily migrants or outside forces of globalisation (Castles, 2010; Gamlen, 2013).

This opens up broader questions of who ‘the public’ is that the government thinks it is addressing. As Bridget Anderson (2013) demonstrates, the concern of current governments seems to be with the emotions of those who are considered part of the body politic – people who are seen to be concerned about immigration, and in need of reassurance. The classed, raced and gendered nature of these attempts at emotional influence, and of their consequences, are important. In this chapter we focus mainly on the racialized politics of emotion evident in the campaign and responses to it, though elsewhere we continue to explore the interactions of this with class and gender dynamics (see <http://mappingimmigrationcontroversy.com> for further details).

The following section will explore how Operation Vaken provoked a range of responses within a range of people: migrants with irregular status, those with regular status, ethnic minority British citizens, as well as those who were concerned about immigration. The most common responses, according to our research, were fear, anger and disgust. Some of these fit with the aims of the campaign (making irregular migrants feel unwelcome) and others were less predictable, reflecting the campaign’s resonance amongst other groups.

Emotional Reactions and Deflections

With Operation Vaken, the Home Office intervened in a cycle of ‘emotionality’ (Ahmed 2004) that had both predictable and unpredictable outcomes. This raises questions about whose experiences and emotions count and who is imagined as part of the body politic. As already suggested, the language of ‘go home’ resonated with those who had experienced racism and the taunt of ‘go home’ in the past. The capacity of these campaigns to cause pain through using such language was raised in a debate in the Scottish Parliament with Labour MSP Hanzala Malik speaking in an emotional register as he described feeling ‘shamed, disappointed and shocked’ by the campaign. Notably, he said that he did not need evidence that this campaign hurts people’s feelings as he had ‘lived this evidence’. He recalled: ‘I remember when I was young, people used to say “why don’t you go home?” but home was Glasgow. They would ask “No, where are you actually from?”’ (Scottish Parliament 2013). This claiming of personal hurt and drawing on past experiences of racism was a powerful moment in Parliament. However, such feelings are denied by Home Office apologists such as journalist and think tank commentator David Goodhart (2013) who argued ‘there is nothing inhuman or racist about encouraging them to come out with their hands up,’ seemingly unable to recognise these resonances with forms of racism.

For those who were targeted by the Home Office campaign, who had irregular migration status, or who had experienced detention or immigration raids in the past, the campaign instilled fear by prompting recollections of traumatic events. Even for those whose migration status had been regularised, the spectacle of government campaigns still had the power to elicit fear and upset. For example, a focus group participant from Ealing and Hounslow described witnessing an immigration raid at a train station:

‘I saw so many UKBA (UK Border Agency) people they were there. I saw them with large dogs, blocking the entire area. I had a visa and have it now also. But I got really scared because I could see the place blocked... I got so panicked and scared that I went and sat in the wrong train... When I got on the train I started crying. I was thinking how long will I live with this fear... I started to think to myself, if I can’t move around at all, that people are

blocking the way like this, and I'm so scared then perhaps suicide is better.' (Focus group participant, *Ealing and Hounslow*, August 2014)

This participant was not 'in the country illegally' yet the immigration raid prompts feelings of terror, and conjures a sense of being an outsider in a situation that is ongoing and unliveable ('how long will I live with this fear?'). This fear then shapes her movement as the public realm becomes too frightening to occupy. As Ahmed argues:

'Fear works to align bodily and social space: it works to enable some bodies to inhabit and move in public space through restricting the mobility of other bodies to spaces that are enclosed or contained... It is the regulation of bodies in space through the uneven distribution of fear which allows space to be territories.' (Ahmed, 2004:70)

Thus the emotional reactions of those who feel threatened by these government interventions shape their access to public space, alongside feelings of unbelonging.

These feelings are further complicated by the local context of these public spaces. For example, for participants who were asylum seekers and refugees in cities with long histories of activism around asylum issues (such as Glasgow and Coventry) these moments of fear in public space still occurred but were expressed alongside feelings of belonging to the city and feeling supported by these networks. In the Glasgow case, it is not only the civic but national context that impacts on how such anti-immigration initiatives are interpreted. The refugee and asylum seeker participants interpret these campaigns as interventions from a remote and un-Scottish Home Office. In this case experiences of fear in local spaces, are attributed to forces from outside. Thus the geographic context, in particular, local histories of migration and activism, impact on how these interventions in space are experienced and interpreted.

Furthermore, the campaign did not seem to overwhelmingly reassure the general public. In our nationwide survey² we found that among those aware of the Go Home vans, a higher proportion was concerned that some people are being treated with unnecessary suspicion in everyday situations (34%), than was reassured that the government is taking action against irregular/illegal immigration (28%). In our qualitative research, we found that those who were concerned about the campaign as unfair and racist described feelings of disgust (see below). And even those who expressed strong anti-immigration feelings did not trust the van campaign's effectiveness:

'They're trying to give the impression that they're doing something about it: "We are doing our job, we are catching these illegals, we are putting them in the van and we're taking them to the jail" and half an hour later they're going to let them go again, they're not saying that bit, are they?' (Focus group participant, *Barking and Dagenham*, August 2014)

Indeed, in our national survey we found that 15% of adults who were aware of the 'Go Home' van said it made them concerned that irregular/illegal immigration might be *more* widespread than they had realized – that is, the fact that the government was using this intervention actually created fear of uncontrolled immigration, rather than reassuring people it was under control.

² A survey amongst a nationally representative sample of 2,424 adults aged 15+ in Great Britain conducted for the Mapping Immigration Controversy Project by Ipsos MORI. Interviews were conducted between the 15th August and 9th September 2014. All data is weighted to the known national profile of adults aged 15+ in Great Britain. Respondents were asked which Home Office communications and actions regarding immigration they were aware of and 26% (603 respondents) claimed to be aware of advertising vans around London in 2013 stating 'in the UK illegally? Go home or face arrest.'

There are other unintended consequences of such emotional interventions. One reaction among those cast as 'national abjects' (Tyler 2013) through such campaigns was an attempt to align themselves with 'respectable' citizens. This was done through processes of deflection and boundary-drawing. For example, in a focus group conducted with refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow, some participants made distinctions between themselves and other groups including alcoholics, drug addicts, Eastern Europeans and Roma in order to argue that *they* were deserving and respectable ('We are normal people, we are not alcoholics or drug addicts'). This was also the case in a focus group conducted in Ealing and Hounslow where focus group participants drew boundaries between themselves as 'respectable' migrants and newer migrants ('There are people that get visas that make their lives here and there are those that come here and get caught up in drink and drugs and they should not be here.') While in the Glasgow case these distinctions were resisted by other members of the group ('actually, I can't say I am better than them') these serve as examples of how the emotion that is put into motion by the government campaign (against the background of media discourses) can be resisted through deflection, which can in turn add to the stigmatisation of another group.

While the government campaign draws the lines of national belonging of insider/outsider, citizen/non-citizen, our research reveals a more complex set of belongings which impact on how government campaigns are interpreted or viscerally experienced. This can involve harmful words resonating with racist taunts from the past ('Go Home'), the re-living of terrifying experiences ('I'm so scared, perhaps suicide is better') and the deflection of negative emotion onto another group in order to claim national and local belonging. By dividing the population into a 'respectable' general public who can be reassured through such campaigns and an alien other who need to be rooted out and expelled the government discounts a range of experiences, histories of immigration and experiences of racism which impact on how people interpret and experience such campaigns. The claim that only those who have something to hide have something to fear ignores these different emotional registers of belonging and experiences of fear.

Our research suggests that when such emotional campaigns are mobilised by the state, the circulation of these emotions outlive the campaigns themselves. For example, our online ethnography showed that the #racistvan hashtag on Twitter (used originally in the angry reactions to the van, as well as the many online spoofs), remains in use long after the summer of 2013, as the van continues to be evoked as a symbol of overt anti-immigrant sentiment and crude 'dog whistle politics'. In the next section, we will discuss the angry reactions the van provoked in our focus group participants.

Anger and anti-racist politics

Another, perhaps unintended, emotional response to the campaign was that of anger and disgust towards the campaign, which was evident in the reactions from our focus group participants when shown images of the van. These responses were not only reactive, but also involved a sense of dismay and incomprehension at the inflammatory messaging of 'Go home or face arrest', and perceptions that that it was wrong for governments to engage in such divisive politics. This was evident in the following response from a focus group participant in Birmingham:

'...This makes me sick and it makes me feel as if I want to face these people and know what is their mind behind... You cannot just tell people in this country to say you go home.' (Focus group participant, *Birmingham*, August 2014)

Other focus group participants saw the imagery in the van as explicitly racist (despite claims by the Home Office and other commentators that this was not the case, because it was only targeting irregular migrants) and as inflaming community tensions:

‘Personally, that van, I think it never served any purpose whatsoever other than flaunting racism and hatred.’ (Focus group participant, *Birmingham*, May 2014)

The van was also interpreted as exploiting racism and divisive politics for electoral gain:

‘What the government is actually doing is using racism, yeah, to fan... well they’re basically facilitating and fanning racism to get back into power.’ (Focus group participant, *Coventry*, July 2014)

Another focus group participant evoked the cultural memory of a time when both explicit race talk and ‘biological’ forms of racism which define nationality in terms of ethnicity and birthplace (regardless of one’s actual immigration status) were more socially acceptable:

‘It makes me feel like no matter what happens, what my outcome is, I will never fit in and become a British citizen, yeah, because of this, “Go home!” because it’s reminiscent of back in the days when they used to be blatantly racist towards people.’ (Focus group participant, *Birmingham*, May 2014)

Racism was also evoked (although less explicitly) through questions about why it was acceptable for British people to come to their countries and set up businesses (or, in relation to the history of colonialism, to have taken their resources) but then make the citizens of former colonies feel so unwelcome:

‘I’m from India, they ruled my country for 250 years, and they have taken everything. I wouldn’t say that all our population are coming here, people who are in need are coming here, then why don’t they give the hospitality for the people?’ (Focus group participant, *Birmingham*, August 2014)

What is significant about these angry responses is their identification of what is wrong and unjust (racism, xenophobia, dog-whistle politics) – but also that they go beyond being reactive and begin to outline principles of social justice, and judge the Home Office according to these principles. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Sara Ahmed draws on Audre Lorde’s theorisation of anger and its usefulness for feminism: ‘For Audre Lorde, anger involves the “naming” of various practices and experiences as racism, but it also involves imagining a different kind of world in its very “energy”’ (Ahmed 2004:175). She also argues that ‘being against is also being for something but something that has yet to be articulated or is not yet’ (2004:175). This is what makes anger a ‘subversive counter-emotion’ (Flam, 2007:20), and is seen by scholars of social movements as ‘the very currency of protest’ (Flam, 2007:26).

Even if they do not fully articulate it, these condemnations of racism and divisive politics also gesture towards a conception of migration based on principles of global social justice rather than ‘just keeping the wrong people out’ (Walters 2004: 247). William Walters outlines this conception of migration as one in which countries in the global North take responsibility for the ‘regimes of agriculture, trade and finance they have encouraged to their arms industries and security games [to] play in producing and reproducing the conditions of poverty, distress and conflict which set in motion the movements which [immigration controls] seek to manage’ (Ibid). These are not particularly new demands, but are radical in the context of the current, anti-immigration climate of public debate.

In voicing expectations and principles about how governments should behave, the focus group participants – who were a combination of irregular migrants and migrants with legal status – were acting as political subjects, and insisted that their feelings count too, rather than only those who are concerned about immigration. This is important, because as migrants they are meant to be objects of state control, but cannot look to the state for any social protection; they are ‘at once contained and dispossessed by the state’ (Butler and Spivak 2007:5). The situation is much worse for asylum seekers and irregular migrants than those with legal status; however, recent legislation such as the Immigration Act 2014 also reduces legal rights and entitlements to the welfare state for migrants with regular status (UK Government 2014). Such developments discourage migrants from feeling they belong to British society or seeing themselves as citizens. Instead, their relationship to the state increasingly becomes only one of enforcement, and—on the level of emotions—of fear. As discussed earlier, the inflammatory language of the Home Office campaigns evokes experiences of racism for ethnic minority British citizens; suggesting that their feelings are not seen to matter either, or that they matter less than those who are concerned about immigration. For migrants, articulating these sorts of expectations of governments is thus about challenging ‘understandings of who can speak, who can occupy political space’ (Walters, 2004:256). It is also about challenging whose feelings are taken seriously.

Conclusion

We have explored the power relations inherent in emotional campaigns such as the ‘Go Home’ van. Such campaigns are symptomatic of a climate where some sectors of the public do not trust the government’s claims that they are successfully managing immigration, or appeals to rationality such as immigration statistics. In order to restore this perceived lack of credibility, the government resorts to emotional means in order to reassure members of the public who are concerned about immigration and create a sense of unease amongst migrants with irregular status. The ‘Go Home’ van can be interpreted as an example of this, as an attempt to visibly demonstrate ‘toughness’ through using the imagery and rhetoric of enforcement, and through high-profile interventions in public space. As a visible demonstration of ‘toughness’ on immigration, the ‘Go Home’ van can be interpreted as response to a cynical political climate where the public does not trust statistics on immigration; and can be understood as symptomatic of the tensions between the rational and irrational in policymaking. However, the emotional impacts of this attempt by the UK government to manage feeling spread beyond the objectives outlined by the Home Office. We have argued that the campaign as an emotional policy intervention provoked many unpredicted responses, beyond the stated target of making irregular migrants feel unwelcome.

The ‘Go Home’ campaign can also be understood as both productive of, and symptomatic of a political climate in which certain people are considered to belong to the body politic or community of value more than others, and their feelings are seen to matter more than others. The theories of Sara Ahmed, Bridget Anderson and Imogen Tyler have been useful in understanding the emotional underpinnings of these sorts of divisive politics which frame some people as belonging to British society more than others, beyond the simple question of whether or not one has legal immigration status.

Responses of fear and hurt demonstrate the importance of interpreting such interventions historically. The language of ‘go home’ echoed experiences and racist taunts of the past, and older conceptions of British citizenship which conflate nationality and race, which are largely no longer socially acceptable but nonetheless still present today. Fear was experienced not only by those who were explicitly targeted by the campaign but resonated with other groups, some of who felt they

were being told they had no right to be in the country and no right to occupy public space. The campaign fixed a group as 'other' (those 'in the country illegally') and abject but we also found that this led those framed in this way to delineate between themselves and other 'others' (alcoholics, sex workers, new migrants) in order to claim respectability and the right to belong. Furthermore, emotional reactions were also bound up with activism and resistance. The angry responses were not only reactive, but also were about specifically questioning such divisive tactics and articulating anti-racist politics. This is one example of how 'the logic of such governance regimes, [can be subverted] through unexpected emotions.' (Introduction, this volume). This indicates how emotions, when used by government campaigns, can become a site of struggle.

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