Not So Neighborly: Analyzing Anti-Migrant Feelings in Queens Village

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Introduction

Sirens wailed in Queens Village on night in 2022, as police contained a protest where residents of all ages gathered to express their disdain for the new migrant facility being opened in their neighborhood. For hours, crowds of black and brown faces held up posters and screamed "go back to where you came from!", "get out of here!", among other explicit phrases. Although the banners mentioned concerns about resources, one couldn't help but feel the irony: this neighborhood was an enclave of immigrants. However, they stood against a vulnerable population seeking the same sanctuary their own families once found. Inside the facility, migrants, most of whom looked similar to the protestors outside, likely heard the commotion outside and were reminded that even in a sanctuary city, welcome could feel conditional

For decades, if not centuries, Americans have prided themselves on being a "nation of immigrants." Such pro-immigrant attitudes strongly juxtapose a rising sentiment among Americans who disapprove of the colossal influx of undocumented migrants through the US-Mexico border over the last 3 years. According to statistics from The Hill, over 10 million undocumented migrants have crossed the southern border into the country since President Biden took office on January 20, 2021, a population larger than most states in the country (Matthews, 1). Many blame the Biden Administration's border policies for this, as many point out that the number of unauthorized immigrants in the nation stayed relatively stable from 2017 to 2021, only increasing from 10.2 million to 10.5 million over the period, as stated by Pew Research (Passel, 1). Critics cite President Biden's executive orders, which have reversed funding allocated by Trump to build a wall along the border (Matthews, 1). Opinions on the reasons for this influx range from economic opportunities in the United States to strife and conflict in migrants' home countries. The vast majority of migrants are from Central and South America, but there are also many from Africa and Asia (Passel 1). Contentions heated up about the border policy as the state government of Texas even took the Biden administration to the Supreme Court after federal agents cut razor wire that the state of Texas had set up along the Rio Grande River (Howe 1). This issue continues to concern Americans, who, on average, considered this crisis the largest problem America faces in a poll done by Gallup (Jones, 2). A poll by Pew Research concurs, finding that 78 percent of Americans consider the stream of undocumented migrants to be either a "crisis" or a "major problem" (Passel, 1).

General disapproval increases even more in regards to how we handle this influx. That same Pew survey found that 80 percent of Americans disapprove of how the government is handling the crisis (Passel 2). Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of migrants have been transported to sanctuary cities. Major cities along the border have been overwhelmed by the massive influx of migrants. To alleviate this, southern states started bussing undocumented migrants to northern sanctuary states. Many see it as a way for red states to exert their frustration out on blue cities that vote for liberal immigration policies. White House officials have condemned this as a political maneuver meant to use migrants as political pawns against liberal cities (Alvarez 3). As stated by the Office of the Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, Texas itself has sent busloads of migrants to sanctuary cities such as New York City, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles (Abott 2). The majority of undocumented immigrants do not possess work licenses issued by the government, and obtaining one may take years, if it happens at all (Gamboa, 3). However, their costs are immediate. They require clothing, food, shelter, transportation, medical attention, and education in public schools, among other costs. New York City is expecting to spend 12 billion dollars through 2025 on costs associated with providing for the migrants (WelcometoNYC, 2). A considerable proportion of this expenditure is allocated towards the over 200 emergency shelters set up over the last three years (Crowley, 2). These shelters, mostly in the neighborhoods of New York City, have been met with intense protests. Large protests have been organized around the city as local residents protest the placement of migrants in their neighborhoods. Many residents cited concerns about economic strain on taxpayers, and safety issues, while others advocated that such migrants should be welcomed into our communities with open arms (Fahy, 3). Notably, a migrant shelter in Oueens Village that houses roughly a thousand men is a hotbed for protests. Dozens of protests and counter-protests have been staged at this site as the NYPD continues to maintain a secure perimeter outside the facility (Crowley, 2).

Literature Review

Existing research has tended to study how white resident populations' hateful rhetoric against undocumented migrants is a function of deeper contempt towards racial minorities. For instance, studies have shown that far-right nationalist rhetoric has created cultures of white supremacy that foster hatred for

undocumented non-white migrants (Marciniak 2014; Amaya 2024). Marciniak's (2014) study found that online far-right discussions created sentiments of white nationalism that were linked to anti-undocumented immigrant perceptions. In the same vein, Amaya's (2024) research, which studied the manifesto of a mass shooting in 2019 where a white assailant gunned down innocent Mexican-American immigrants, found that a long-standing sentiment about America being a "white country" was what brainwashed the shooter into committing such a heinous crime. Other research, such as that of Bloch (2019), expounds on this culture of white nationalism and finds that there exists a narrative where whites cast themselves as victims. This study finds that, under this narrative, many white people believe non-white immigrants unjustly take resources that whites deserve. This has held in other contexts as well. In Ekman's (2019) study, white-nationalist propaganda circulated on the internet directly correlated with hate speech against undocumented migrants.

In addition, research has tended to focus on how resident populations tend to perceive migrant populations as threats to the safety of their communities. Studies (Catalano 2013; Wang 2012) have showcased that Americans have tended to scapegoat undocumented migrants for crime, creating a narrative that perceives undocumented migrants as a threat. Catalano (2013) finds a link between linguistic patterns in media that paint Hispanic migrants as criminals and negative impacts on Hispanic communities such as hate speech and discrimination. Wang (2012) studies states in the Southwest and finds that such narratives usually aren't based in reality at all; immigrants and especially undocumented migrants are responsible for large amounts of crime, as anti-immigrant narratives would state. This has held true in the context of anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe. As revealed by Couttennier (2024), media media-bias against migrants in the European media that falsely portrayed them as criminals led to anti-migrant protests and legislation. Similarly, research (Samson, 2015) has shown that Asian- Americans often view undocumented immigrants as those who break rules, regardless of their race.

Thus, existing literature has focused on anti-immigrant sentiment that is rooted either in racism or in fear of migrants committing crimes. Something that hasn't been studied extensively is how Black and Hispanic communities, such as Queens Village, view the migrant crisis. In fact, almost 70 percent of Queens Village residents identify as Black or Hispanic (NYU Furman

Center, 2). Similarly, the anti-migrant sentiment of largely liberal populations like that of Queens Village hasn't been studied; most research on the topic has

focused on the impacts of far-right rhetoric. Because Queens Village is largely liberal, with over 69 percent of Queens voters voting for Joe Biden in 2020 (Griffin, 3), my research surrounding the anti-migrant protests there will serve to answer the gaps I've identified. I'll be asking: How do residents of Queens Village perceive the migrant housing facilities in the neighborhood? I'll be able to contribute to the conversation by understanding how this migrant crisis impacts inner city neighborhoods such as Oueens Village, as well as why many liberal populations are expressing anti-migrant sentiments. This gap in literature highlights a crucial intersection of politics and community dynamics. While existing studies focus on the connection between xenophobia and racial hatred, they have ignored anti-immigrant sentiment that may be fueled by economic or resource-based concerns, especially in under-resourced and underprivileged communities like those in Queens, New York. This raises pressing concerns that challenge our urban policy decisions. Many may argue that we must protect and uphold the human rights of migrants but is it just to hand this responsibility to other disenfranchised communities who may not consent to it? Or is justice better served by crafting policies that equitably distribute responsibilities and address the systemic inequalities that fuel these divisions? This study aims to understand the perspective of those in Queens Village and explore these nuances within the concepts of migration and sanctuary.

Research Methods

This research relied on sixty in-depth, semi-structured interviews that lasted roughly thirty minutes each. The sixty interviewees all resided and spent the majority of their lives in Queens Village, Queens. 10 of the interviewees were in each of the following age groups: teenagers, twenties, thirties, fourties, fifties, and sixties. Each of these interviewees was someone I knew through my social networks. It was crucial that I interview residents of Queens Village who have spent most of their lives in the neighborhood, so they would have a perspective on how the neighborhood has changed over time. Although I didn't filter for this, most of the sixty people I interviewed were either immigrants themselves or had parents who were immigrants. This worked in my favor because this is representative of Queens Village, a neighborhood where the vast majority of people are either immigrants or first-generation Americans. Furthermore, the fact that most of them had an immigrant or first-generation background allowed me to gain insight on why Queens Village, an immigrant community, protested so heavily against the migrant facilities after they were constructed.

In each interview, I started with very broad questions, such as asking interviewees for their views on the Biden Administration or the overall "migrant crisis." This way, I could gauge the overall political opinions of a person and understand the context within which they view the migrant facilities in Queens Village. From these broad questions, I would turn to more focused questions about the protests in Queens Village and the emotions of the respective interviewees about such events. I made sure to ask general questions to interviewees about their experiences in the neighborhood and how it's changed over time. These questions helped me contextualize the perspective of someone in Queens Village and how they may perceive their neighborhood changing after migrant facilities were created.

Analysis

Distaste for the Biden Administration

The first common theme I came across in my interviews with residents from Queens village about the migrant facilities was a general *distaste for the Biden Administration*. My interviewees tended to give me long and detailed reviews of how they felt the Biden Administration had failed or disappointed them to some degree. These complaints tended to focus on President Biden's foreign policy but also cited other major political issues such as the border crisis or poor economic conditions. These lengthy responses tended to emphasize opinions that the Biden administration was mediocre or weak. For instance, one of my interviewees told me...

> He tries to toe the line too much. He is wishy-washy on many issues, which makes his presidency look very mediocre...I think he could have done a lot better. Let's take the Middle East, for example. I get it that Democratic Party has ties to Israel but now they are realizing that this has led to a stagnation of Biden's administration. There is a lot of bombing of civilians. I don't like how much he has lent to Netanyahu. It's clear he doesn't give a fuck about Gazans and now suddenly he cares. That makes it like I am painting it has black and white, but that's how I see it. His wishy-washiness is something that turns off many

liberal votes. It doesn't look good when he's making public statements about Gazans as soon as elections are being held.

Another interviewee concurred with the others about President Biden's foreign policy but also added that they feel that the Biden Administration simply doesn't care about domestic affairs, citing what they deem as empty promises the Biden Administration made to them during the campaign in 2020...

It's clear as day. I think his foreign policies are stupid. He sends all this money to Ukraine, he sends all this money to Israel, he literally... America is paying some other country to bomb kids and Gaza if you really think about that and they can't even take care of their own homes. The kids in Chicago, for example, are getting killed, but no one really cares. We care about foreign policies, not our own country, not the infrastructure, not anything is going on. Our country's falling apart. For example, what's going on with the Ukraine situation? And when it's time to vote, he'll talk about Chicago all the time. When it's time to vote, he's just going to bring up all the stuff he did, which was a boatload of nothing, especially for inner-city folks, right?

Another interviewee actually didn't have strong opinions on foreign policy but instead blamed the Biden Administration for the lack of decisive decision making...

Yeah I see protests in the city everyday over the Israel and Palestine issue. I don't really know about that. I don't think Biden knows about that either at this point. One day he's pandering to one group, another day he's pandering to another. Regardless, I do think that there's a cunning effort by his administration to turn everyone against each other. We are so divided. Everyone's divided more now more than ever, especially over the Middle East and migrant issues. I don't even like calling it a migrant issue as much as it's a humanitarian issue. They are people, not statistics.

As these quotes demonstrate, a widespread dislike for President Biden and his policies exists within Queens Village, which is a traditionally liberal immigrant community. Words like "wishy-washy", "ambivalent," and even "stupid" show that the frustration people in the community feel about this administration is complex and multifaceted. In addition, the fact most of the interviewees spoke extensively about the war in the Middle East shows that

Queens Village residents' primary concern regarding this administration may not be the migrant crisis, but rather the foreign affairs of our nation. This distaste for the foreign policy of the Biden administration seems rooted in the sentiment that the Biden administration simply doesn't care about the concerns of its constituents. This sentiment clearly crossed over to the interviewee's comments about the migrant crisis because that also seemed rooted in the sentiment that the government simply doesn't care about the citizens' concerns. In fact, one interviewee was forthright in saying that they felt that President Biden panders to audiences for votes, while another interviewee mentioned how "it doesn't look good when he's making public statements about Gazans as soon as elections are being held." Even those who see the migrant crisis as a humanitarian crisis still view the Biden Administration disfavorably, calling him "cunning". It's clear there is a sentiment among residents of Queens Village that they have been deceived by this administration. There are also humanitarian concerns about the migrant crisis. The shipping of migrants between cities as well as the marginalization of migrants through government policy makes people see the migrants' existence as a problem - which many residents of Queens Village blame the Biden Administration for. Such negative views about the administration may shape the way they perceive the migrant crisis and the facilities in the neighborhood.

Concern about Resource Allocation

The second theme I discovered in the interviews with the Queens Village residents is a strong *concern about resource allocation* regarding the migrant facility. Specifically, some of the interviewees showed a great deal of apprehension that the resources being used for the migrant facilities could have been utilized to improve the lives of people already in the United States. Each of the interviewees was concerned about issues like homelessness and budget cuts and cited concerns that there simply might not be enough for everyone. There's clearly skepticism about whether these resources should be allocated to Americans already here and whether or not the current situation is fair. For instance, one of my interviewees said...

Yeah, honestly, it's ridiculous. I mean, it seems that whatever we have right now is already so much that the city can't even continue to provide for everyone. Here we have veterans that are homeless, we have migrant facilities that probably aren't even in the best condition, and expanding anything further seems to be an impossible task. I can't even believe that they would even consider doing something like this. At the end of the day, we have a responsibility to everyone who's a citizen, and I guess we've already taken a responsibility for everyone who's already in one of these migrant facilities.

One of my interviewees was actually incredibly shocked when I told him it was projected that 12 billion dollars were being spent by New York City through fiscal year 2025 to support the migrants. They immediately expressed confusion about how this is feasible...

> Okay, I had no clue that we were giving \$12 billion worth of services through taxpayer dollars to these migrants. That's actually really surprising to me, and honestly, I don't really know how I feel about that... We've had plenty of people who are struggling in New York who could have used the \$12 billion. So why did all these funds just materialize now? Why don't we have the ability to constantly help the homeless population or people who may be laid off or unemployed? Hearing that statistic makes me want to ask more questions. So I would need to take some more time to really research the topic and get to know all the figures that are involved when it comes to how we are funding the migrant population.

As these quotes demonstrate, many Queens Village residents are concerned that the migrant facilities may be taking resources that would otherwise go to people in the community. Words like "ridiculous" and "ironic" appear in the transcript often, showcasing the frustration of Queens Village residents. This pairs with words like "struggling" and "unemployed," often used by interviewees to describe how Americans are dealing with poor economic conditions. The combination of anger towards resources being allocated to migrants and irritation with current economic conditions seems to make the interviewees bitter about the current situation. Such resentment may impact the anti-immigrant sentiment in Queens Village.

However, other residents have differing views on the protests and view this anger is misplaced. They express that they believe that migrants are scapegoated for the resource distribution issues that have always existed in the city. For instance, one interviewee said, I understand why people do view these migrants as "aliens.". I get it. They look different and don't speak any of the languages that we do. Sometimes they can cause issues, like crowding on buses. However, is it really their fault that inflation is screwing the middle class? Is it their fault that housing has always been inaccessible? Were things fine before these migrants showed up or have things always been not okay? The truth is that these issues existed long before this year.

Another interviewee concurred, stating that the problems caused by capitalism are so large that placing any blame on undocumented migrants doesn't make sense...

> I saw the protests. I saw how angry everyone was. However, that anger was grossly inappropriate. In a world where rich people clearly don't pay their fair share of taxes, some poor refugees aren't the reason the budget isn't balanced. It also probably doesn't matter if a country that is in trillions of dollars of debt really chooses to help other people who really need it. A country that's so dead set on capitalism is always going to run into budgetary issues as the rich get richer and the poor continuously get poorer. Protests outside of a migrant facility change none of that.

Thus, although many residents are frustrated with the city spending money on migrants, other residents use words like "ridiculous" and "misplaced" to describe this anger. There are plenty of residents who find that larger systemic failures in our capitalistic society can't be attributed to a few thousand migrants who arrived in the past year. This holistic view of the issue sharply contrasts the limited views of those who feel intense fury towards migrants.

An additional interviewee expressed a sense of inequality, saying that wealthier people in America used underprivileged communities to perform their virtue signalling. They point out how many inner cities like those in New York City and Chicago are used to create migrant facilities, but never suburban neighborhoods of these same cities...

> I have nothing against these migrants. My own ancestors were migrants who fled political persecution. So trust me, I understand why we choose to help them. Our politicians love to brag about how we're a nation that helps poor and hungry people from across the globe.

However, they only use our communities to do so. It's as if they're mocking us. Our working-class community has plenty of homeless people who are ignored by these same politicians. It's ridiculous. Why is it just us who have to take these migrants? I don't see any migrant facilities in New York suburbs. There's none in any of these wealthy places. Anytime they don't want to deal with a problem, they send them to the ghetto.

This interviewee explains their support for refugees and sympathizes with those who have left their countries out of fear of persecution or disaster. However, they point out that the brunt of this responsibility has fallen to communities that are the least qualified to bear them. Justice is not merely about meeting immediate needs but also about balancing competing claims in a way that upholds the dignity and rights of all. When a community that has long struggled with poverty and underfunded public services sees billions allocated to new migrant facilities, it fosters resentment—not necessarily towards the migrants themselves, but towards a system that appears indifferent to their own suffering. This dynamic pits vulnerable groups against each other and completely obscures the glaring issue of systemic inequity.

Media Distortion on the Issue

The third theme I discovered in my interviews with residents of Queens Village was a *media distortion on the migrant issue*. Interviewees who were against the migrant facilities explained they feel that the media covers for migrants and doesn't report fairly on the crimes they commit. On the other hand, interviewees who supported the creation of migrant facilities felt the media unfairly scrutinized migrants and the facilities. For instance, an interviewee told me...

I feel like it's the people of the community versus these outsiders. I've worked near migrants and they are constantly getting in trouble. My job is right next to the facility. They get into fights all of the time. They are doing drugs everywhere. It's ridiculous. And no one knows this because the media shows them to be victims. They aren't victims at all. And the media is complicit. Similarly, another interviewee expressed their frustration as they felt that media corporations covered for migrants because corporations in general profit from a flow of undocumented migrants...

> It's so obvious what is going on. There's like a few different media corporations that own all of the media sites, radio stations, T.V. channels, and websites. These media corporations have a vested interest in helping those who give them money. They get money from advertisers, mostly other large corporations. In addition, these media corporations are often owned by billionaires who own other large corporations. It's so clear to me that undocumented migrants help large corporations replace Americans eventually, as the migrant's descendants are born citizens. This way, foreign labor continuously destroys our wages and the people at the top keep winning.

However, other interviewees stated the opposite, saying that the media unnecessarily emphasized crimes committed by migrants, stating that corporate media has had an agenda to turn citizens on to migrants, to try to distract people from other issues in society. In fact one interviewee said...

> What the media has done is disgusting. I see it all the time on T.V. and even on social media. If an undocumented person commits a crime, the headline will say "migrant committed crime". What is the need to mention that the perpetrator was a migrant? Why does it matter? Why would the media want to emphasize that? It's so clear that the corporate media covers for their billionaire sponsors and donors. Everyone knows they are all in bed together. The people at the top get away with not paying taxes, committing white collar crimes, and defrauding us all. They use the media to divide and conquer. When we are too busy being mad at poor migrants, we can never understand who controls our country and exploits us all - the rich.

Another interviewee agreed, saying that the media unnecessarily selected crimes and stories about the border in general that would make the issue larger than it is. They stated...

It's incredibly peculiar. We've always been a nation of immigrants. We've welcomed everyone. Suddenly deciding that this new wave of migrants is a "crisis" is strange to me. Why do we call it a migrant crisis? What's the crisis? What is really wrong with letting more people in and helping them. Why does the television call it a crisis?

Although the perception of the media and its role in this controversy is quite mixed, quotes from both sides of the debate are incredibly telling. On the surface level, it seems that your perception of the media's coverage is shaped by personal biases and political views. On a deeper level, words like "outsiders" and "replace" show the extreme polarization here. It's ironic that immigrants and first generation immigrants themselves would perceive a new wave of migrants as "replacements" or "outsiders". It's incredible the interviewees didn't see the irony here. On the other hand, those who condemned the media as scapegoaters used words like "peculiar" and "intentional" to point out how the media selects certain stories to craft anti-migrant narratives. The most interesting thing here is that interviewees on both sides suggested that the corporate news media has ulterior motives and doesn't serve the regular person. Although they came to opposite conclusions about these motives, there's clearly widespread distrust in news media, which may actually create a perception of media conspiracy, regardless of whether it exists or not.

Perceptions of Migrants as Lazy

The fourth theme I discovered in my interviews with residents of Queens Village was a *general perception of undocumented migrants as lazy*. Many interviewees tended to emphasize that they felt migrants exploited the community without providing anything in return. Many of them shared stories of how they felt angry when migrants took seats on the bus while others had to stand. Many interviewees insisted that the migrants choose not to work, while others were sympathetic for the migrants and acknowledged the barriers that undocumented people may face while trying to get employment. For instance, an interviewee told me...

It's disgusting. I see a group of grown men with no families just sitting around. Children stopped playing at the park across from the facility because these migrants sit there and smoke and do drugs all day. There's been multiple times these migrants got into fights, sometimes they have weapons. Idle minds do the devils work. They have nothing to do and eventually they will only cause more problems. The other day, a migrant started harassing one of my neighbors and tried to follow her home. You've put more than a thousand military age single men in a civilian neighborhood. It's pretty clear why I feel unsafe for myself, my sister, my mother, and the other women in the community. What did we do to deserve this?

Similarly, another interviewee makes a distinction between migrants who immigrate with families and those who immigrate alone, saying that they feel that migrants may not have the best intentions for the community and for our nation...

> Two hundred years ago if thousands of military-aged men came across the border and wanted stuff for free, they would be considered invaders. Now we consider them "refugees". I'm not saying their bad people or that I wouldn't do the same if I was from the same place. But they came here with no family. I have kids. I know that having a wife and kids means that you have a sense of duty to not commit crimes, to provide, to work, and to set an example. Most of these migrants are between 20 and 30 years old with no family here. They have no incentive to do the right thing. If they commit crimes, the Soros-funded DA's protect them. They get free food and water everyday. They are a burden for us all. I wouldn't mind if they were women and children but having to take care of men like this is strange. They don't want to work, don't have to, and probably will never work.

In contrast, an interviewee recognized that migrants face unique challenges, including both social and economic marginalization. They contended that the protests were negligent to the truth that migrants didn't work because they couldn't...

Yeah, the protests were pretty much two blocks from my house. I could hear it. It was so loud. There's this idea that somehow the men in that facility are lazy and burdens. However, those people can't work. You need a work permit for just about anything in this country. There's plenty of good people who can't get jobs because they don't have a stupid permit. There's also plenty of people who could work and choose not to. Look at the street corners. There's plenty of people who just enjoy government benefits and they could work if they wanted. You have the wrong enemy. The migrants also don't speak English.

That's not their fault. These protests are clearly incredibly bigoted.

As these quotes make clear, there is clearly a strong misconception of the migrants being "lazy". This is clearly a heated topic, especially because many interviewees clearly point out that migrants "don't work" and "don't have to work". These interviewees can also point out other things they feel migrants do wrong, such as use drugs or sit around in a park. However, very few interviewees identified that the reason these migrants didn't work is because they *can't work*. They may choose to abuse drugs because they are isolated socially and economically. While the vast majority of interviewees were able to criticize the symptoms of marginalization, very few interviewees could identify the root cause.

Lack of Consent from the Community

The fifth theme I discovered in my interviews with residents of Queens Village was a *lack of consent from the community*. My interviewees tended to emphasize that a large reason people in Queens Village are unhappy with the migrant facilities being constructed in their neighborhood is because they never consented to it being built there. They describe that they had no say in where the facility was built, who was housed, or the impacts of the facilities. Interviewees expressed that they felt the government forced the community of Queens Village into accepting migrants, with no preparation or consent from the residents. They felt cheated that democratically elected politicians approved plans that never went to vote or were even discussed with the citizens of the Queens Village community. For instance, an interviewee told me...

Well yeah, of course it's forced. At the end of the day, we live in a democracy, but we never voted on what's going on. We never voted on having these micro facilities made or these housing facilities or any of the budgets around the migrants or anything that's going on right now. We never voted on where we would build it or whether or not or how many people we'd house or you know whether or not they would go to our schools or not. We never had any of these decisions; we've just been forced to study the impacts, whether it's cut budgets or less services for our citizens or for our veterans or for our homeless people. It's something that never went to vote, neither is it something that politicians even talk about; it's just something that we're all supposed to ignore like it's one big secret. Of course, it's forced on us because we never had a choice in it and we still have to deal with the repercussions every single day. It's not surprising that people are going to feel like we didn't have much of a choice in this at all. If anything, I'm surprised that people are somehow cool with it now and that there are no protests anymore. But it doesn't seem very much like a democracy at all.

Similarly, another interviewee expressed their frustration that government officials, who don't have to deal with the consequences of their legislation, make decisions for the community...

I mean, there was a lot of protest, but I wasn't really happy, to be honest, and no one really likes the fact that people up in Albany, okay, the legislator Kathy Hochul, made an executive decision to put the migrants here without anyone's consent. Nobody agreed to this, you know, that stuff. That's where the frustration comes from each community. Nobody agreed to put these guys here, but they put them here regardless of whatever the people's belief is. So, that really comes into question: Is the government really serving its people and the people who pay the taxes for this country and for the city? Yeah, that's nothing, that's where a lot of outrage comes from down here 'cause supposed to be a democracy, right? It's supposed to be a representative democracy. But it's, who's representing us? Kathy Hochul, who puts the shit here. Not Eric Adams either, right? Some of these people that are making decisions for us don't seem to be the ones that care about consent at all.

One interviewee also added that they recognized the historical pattern of lack of consent communities of color have faced in the past. They point out how they feel the creation of the migrant facilities feels just like redlining and other historical injustices...

We protested for days. They don't listen to us. They don't ask us anything. We have no leaders from our community in decision making positions. This is just like my childhood in the sixties. We protested but to deaf ears. The people in power never cared about us, and they still don't care now. It's not about the migrants or the facility. It's about our right to basic determination. I see no difference between the creation of this facility and trapping us into these neighborhoods with redlining. Both ways, we have no real consent about the future of the neighborhood. There's no real justification for this.

The exclusion in the decision making process exhibited by this conundrum reflects a part of Queens Village's larger history of political neglect. The pattern of past injustices and then this lack of content displays a pattern of marginalization that exacerbates the discontent of residents. There seems to be a gap between the expectation of the political system that should represent the interests of everyone and the reality of the political system acting unilaterally. This gap questions the "fairness" and "equity" about policies that assist migrants, but against the will of citizens in disenfranchised host communities.

As these quotes make clear, a large part of the frustration that my interviewees felt was because they felt like they had no say in the creation of the migrant facilities, even though it impacts their communities every day. Words like "forced" and "outrage" express that interviewees felt that people in the community should have been consulted before the facilities were created there. This couples with an overall frustration with the government; one interviewee explains that they feel that "we're all supposed to ignore like it's one big secret", explaining that they feel that politicians just sweep this issue under the rug. In the same vein, another interviewee remarks "who's representing us? Kathy Hochul, who puts the shit here. Not Eric Adams either, right?". In addition to a lack of consent of the community, my interviewees clearly felt like the needs and concerns of their community weren't being represented at all.

Marginalization of Undocumented Immigrants by Legal Immigrants

The sixth theme I discovered in my interviews with residents of Queens Village was an active stigmatization of undocumented immigrants by immigrants. My interviewees, most of whom were immigrants or first generation, consistently displayed cognitive dissonance by repeatedly ostracizing the migrants as "outsiders", "invaders", and "burdens". This cognitive dissonance was bridged by explaining how they felt that legally documented immigrants were somehow completely different from undocumented migrants. For example, one interviewee told

me...

My parents came here from Guyana and they worked so hard. They never got a hand-out. They never got anything from the government. They worked their way up. They earned their place here. They did it the right way. They waited for a visa, a green card, and citizenship. They didn't just walk in. They consider this soil sacred, not just some place to exploit for opportunities. This is completely different from these migrants. These migrants have no intention of ever contributing here.

Similarly, another interviewee expressed their beliefs that recent waves of migration are completely different from previous waves of immigration.

America has been a nation of immigrants. Everyone is an immigrant or a descendant of one. My parents came here from Korea in the nineties. They kissed the ground when they got here. Similarly, other waves of immigrants came here with their families because they wanted to be American. They wanted to contribute to this country and saw it as a place to base themselves and their families. They changed their names and loved American culture and civil liberties. They didn't see America as a utopia, but as a new frontier and a dream.

These new migrants are single men coming here, with no intention of ever learning English or genuinely contributing to our society. They see America as a utopia to exploit. They weren't allowed in like we were. They forced their way in. Three days ago, some girl was raped by a migrant. It's disgusting but I understand why it happened. People across the world see America as a utopia. They go on MTV and think every girl here is promiscuous. So when single male migrants come here, they realize that although others may have some money, they don't have any. Furthermore, when girls here don't particularly care for them, it offends them because they see our women as easy. Soon enough, we are creating monsters who will steal what they see our country good for.

This theme, which likely shapes every other theme of this study, explores how immigrants and descendants of immigrants negatively view the latest wave of migrants and condemn them as fundamentally different from them. Words like "monsters" and "exploit" are shocking, especially coming from people who are first generation or immigrants themselves. Although there aren't overt racial overtones, there are supremacist undertones as people repeatedly rationalized their views with generalizations about the migrants. What's the most shocking was when the interviewee explains why they believe the new wave of migrants is increasingly susceptible to be criminals, especially sexual criminals. The combination of an unconscious bias against undocumented immigrants, media scrutiny, and every other theme has led to immigrant communities, which were once progressive strongholds, to have completely changed their tune. It's clear they've dehumanized migrants so much that they genuinely see them as a completely different group from other immigrants. While the tool for this separation in the past may have been racial or religious, the vector that immigrant communities use now is the legal documentation, or lack thereof.

This brings with it an interesting conclusion: inherent hierarchy is part of the American culture and legacy. In the similar way that Irish and Italian immigrants were considered as "other" and eventually assimilated into the white American identity, it seems that immigrants who have legal documentation are starting to assimilate into the conservative American identity. In the same vein as how assimilation of white groups created a hatred for Blacks and other minorities, it seems that documented immigrants assimilating into the American identity creates an active marginalization of undocumented immigrants. This means that as any group in the United States assimilates into the mainstream, they can only truly do so by discriminating against a group which is then deemed as "lesser". In the past, the group that was disenfranchised may have been Italians, Asians, African Americans etc, but it seems this new disempowered community is the latest group of undocumented migrants.

Furthermore, there's a shared identity that immigrants are proud of that is rooted in the idea of uplifting themselves through hard work and dedication. Although this is admirable, no one has a real justification for why every immigrant deserves to struggle. There's an expectation that all immigrants should live these austere lives of service and discipline, one that may have been crafted through the centuries of persecution immigrants felt. Seeing migrants now housed by the government seems to conflict with this shared identity that immigrants and first generation Americans revel in it.

Conclusion

In this paper, I studied the perception that residents of Queens Village have about the migrant facilities constructed in their neighborhood. Given the hotbed of anti-migrant protests and the long-standing tradition of Queens Village as being an enclave for immigrant families, this study aimed to understand anti-immigrant sentiments in cities that are typically liberal.

Through sixty in-depth and semi-structured interviews, I was able to closely study the perceptions of residents of Queens Village surrounding the migrant facilities, as well as their underlying concerns. Most existing literature surrounding the topic studies anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States as a function of racism or xenophobia. My research supplements such research, as it finds anti-immigrant sentiments in Queens Village to be a function of concerns around resource allocation, and a lack of consent from the community. Although Queens Village is a neighborhood with massive black and brown populations and prides itself on being an enclave for immigrants, it seems as though there's a concerted effort to paint undocumented migrants as an underclass, while uplifting documented migrants as "doing the right thing" and "American."

With more time and resources, I would study how different neighborhoods with migrant facilities throughout New York City feel. It would be interesting to interview residents across the different boroughs and see if their concerns align. Furthermore, seeing the differences in point of view between men and women in communities, as well as different racial groups, would be helpful for future research. Future scholars should focus on how rhetoric on the internet within American immigrant communities has shifted since this last wave of migration. In addition, interesting research could be done on how this rhetoric impacted voting patterns of immigrant communities across the nation during the last election. Furthermore, both pro-migrant and anti-migrant interviewees explored how they had a strong distrust for the media, citing theories of media conspiracy. Although much broader than the scope of this project, this can be studied.

This study has many real-world implications. For one, it suggests that residents of "sanctuary cities" might not be welcoming of migrants for a number of reasons, including concerns about resources and economic concerns, media distortion on the issue, and marginalization of new migrants. I'd recommend that policymakers ask community leaders about decisions about resource allocation as well as facility construction so that the community has an idea of how their tax dollars are being spent. In addition, I'd recommend that local transit and other public services be bolstered in areas where migrant facilities are built so residents don't feel the burden of the migrant facilities. I foresaw that this issue would have large-scale implications for the Democratic voter base, which came to fruition during the election. As I predicted, record numbers of inner city voters voted independent or Republican. Furthermore, my predictions of a larger grass-roots political call to action to secure the border and at least control the number of people coming in have also become a reality.

My findings also question the nuances behind our ideas of justice, and especially global justice. Through the calls of activists for developed nations to host refugees from around the world, there is rising anti-migrant rhetoric, which is clearly much more complex than previous academia has addressed. Beyond the political victories and virtue signaling, questions arise about consent around distributive justice. Is it just to hand resources to refugees if the citizens of host countries don't consent? As vulnerable groups turn on each other, the deep sense of betrayal exhibited by those interviewed in Queens Village expresses a failure to include marginalized communities in decision-making processes. True justice demands not only equitable policies but also the inclusion of those most affected in the decision-making process.

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