



The Ordinary and Extraordinary: Producing Migrant Inclusion and Exclusion in US Sanctuary Movements

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ABSTRACT *This article analyzes the Sanctuary Movement for Central Americans and the New Sanctuary Movement, two United States faith-based social movements, to think through the ways in which these pro-immigrant efforts paradoxically render migrants figuratively mute and often excluded from conceptualizations of the nation and its inhabitants even as they advocate for legal inclusion. We examine this tension of inclusion and exclusion through the frequent representation of migrants' histories and Christianity as extraordinary in the Sanctuary Movement for Central Americans, and migrants' lives as ordinary in the New Sanctuary Movement. We identify two key processes by which this framing of migrants as extraordinary or ordinary limits the enactment of full social, political, and economic inclusion: (a) public support is principally granted to certain stories, religions, identities, and experiences; and (b) migrants are consistently positioned, and often celebrated, by sanctuary activists as "others." The discourses of migrants as extraordinary or ordinary effectively generate broad involvement of faith communities in sanctuary work. Yet, as we argue, this framing comes with the cost of limiting activist support only to particular groups of migrants, flattening the performances of migrant identities, and positioning migrants as perpetually exterior to the US. Reliance on discourses of the extraordinary and ordinary, therefore, can truncate opportunities for making legible a range of migration experiences and extending belonging to all migrants, outcomes that arise in contrast to the purported inclusionary goals of the faith-based sanctuary social movements.*

KEYWORDS sanctuary; migration; religion; social movements; United States

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ISSN: 1911-4788



Introduction

In March 2012, members of the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona gathered to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the church's public declaration as a sanctuary for Central American refugees. To honor this involvement in the broader social movement known as the *Sanctuary Movement for Central Americans* (what we – like Purcell (2007) and others – refer to as the *Sanctuary Movement* [SM]), congregation members watched footage of the movement's actions, listened to stories from sanctuary activists, and learned about current immigration policy in the United States (Paniagua, 2012). This was a day of honoring faith-based, pro-immigrant activism.

In June 2014, a Mexican family, comprised of Daniel and Karla Neyoy-Ruiz and their teenaged US-born son Carlos,¹ sought sanctuary in this very same church due to Daniel's deportation orders. Decades had passed since the church offered a safe space for Central American asylum seekers, but the symbol of the sanctuary provision remained potent. The family stayed at the church for a month while they awaited an appeal to Daniel's deportation ruling. He ultimately received a one-year stay of removal and a work permit (Dickson, 2014). In June 2015, the family moved into sanctuary again in Tucson because Daniel's one-year grace period had expired. After about ten days in sanctuary, Daniel received another one-year stay of removal (Taracena, 2015). Such acts of advocating for and providing sanctuary to mixed-status families facing deportation underscore a primary purpose of the *New Sanctuary Movement* (NSM).

Although the SM and the NSM have differences given each movement's distinct socio-historical contexts, they share a foundation in Christian beliefs and practices. For instance, drawing upon liberation theology, both sanctuary movements emphasize bearing witness to atrocities and responding to a higher moral authority (Abramsky, 2008; Marfleet, 2011; Nawyn, 2007). The ethos of "welcoming the stranger" (Abramsky, 2008, p. 28) and "responding to your neighbor, [the] Christ in each one of us" (Willis-Conger quoted in Fife, Corbett, Merkt, & Willis-Conger, 1987, p. 21) are core tenets of the movements and reflect that faith-based social movements frequently anchor their decisions and actions in religious ideals. In the SM and NSM, the expressions of "loving thy neighbor" and welcoming the stranger help faith communities recognize that "living as a person of faith requires action" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007, p. 11) and that immigration issues pertain to them even if they are White, middle class and US-born. The religious commonality and focus among movement members provides a connective tissue for activist work, which can then intensify the commitment to religious

¹ We use actual names for people and places of worship involved in the sanctuary movements because we are analyzing the public narratives of sanctuary, and we want to acknowledge the work of activists and migrants as we examine the prominent narratives about migrants and sanctuary.

beliefs and the enactment of what is called by activists social justice. Although social justice can vary in definition, it generally pertains to a deep concern with persecution and injustice (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007; Marfleet, 2011; Pirie, 1990).

The fusion of social justice ideals and religious beliefs in the sanctuary movements is important for the activism and for our interpretations of the movements. Specifically, we take seriously the point that “religion is a human practice” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007, p. 7), and think through how pro-immigrant sanctuary efforts undertaken in the name of social justice can paradoxically render migrants figuratively mute and often excluded from conceptualizations of the nation and its inhabitants even as these efforts advocate for legal inclusion. We examine this tension of inclusion and exclusion through the frequent representation of migrants’ histories and Christianity as *extraordinary* in the SM, and migrants’ lives as *ordinary* in the NSM. We identify two key processes by which this framing of migrants as extraordinary or ordinary limits the enactment of full social, political, and economic inclusion: (a) public support is principally granted to certain stories, religions, identities, and experiences; and (b) migrants are consistently positioned, and often celebrated, by activists as “others.” The discourses of migrants as extraordinary *or* ordinary effectively generate broad involvement of faith communities in sanctuary work. Yet, as we argue, this framing comes with the cost of limiting activist support only to particular groups of migrants, flattening the performances of migrant identities, and positioning migrants as perpetually exterior to the US. Reliance on discourses of the extraordinary and ordinary, therefore, can truncate opportunities for making legible a range of migration experiences and extending belonging to all migrants, outcomes that arise in contrast to the purported inclusionary goals of the faith-based sanctuary social movements. Examining the exclusions that emerge alongside efforts for inclusion demonstrates how social justice in theory can depart from social justice in practice.

To unpack the narrative of the *extraordinary* migrant and its influence and impact, we first analyze the SM and illustrate how the repeated focus on the extraordinary hardship and Christianity of migrants abbreviated opportunities for migrants to articulate their identities on their own terms. In the second half of the paper, we demonstrate how the discursive framing of the *ordinariness* of migrants’ lives in the NSM excludes many migrants from consideration of sanctuary, and makes the supported migrants visible in limited capacities. Such a reading of the sanctuary movements illustrates the power of narrative framing and the delicate balance between crafting archetypes for activist purposes and negatively simplifying complex life experiences.

Extraordinary Hardship and Devoted Christians: The Sanctuary Movement for Central Americans

The *Sanctuary Movement* (SM) of the 1980s and 1990s emerged in response to the migration of people from Central America – primarily El Salvador and Guatemala – into the US as a result of political violence and oppression. The motivation for this movement, as described by sanctuary activists themselves, stemmed from a personal violation of a sense of morality and justice, and a desire to help people who had been persecuted (Chinchilla, Hamilton, & Loucky, 2009; Fife et al., 1987; Golden & McConnell, 1986; Marfleet, 2011; Pirie, 1990). The ways in which these impulses translated into a discursive framing of migrants is what we analyze here. In particular, we focus on how the repeated emphasis on the extraordinary hardship and extraordinary Christianity of migrants helped garner support for the SM. At the same time, we suggest that this framing excluded migrants from narratives of the US as a nation and limited the representational space available for articulating migrants' experiences and identities. Before we develop our analysis of the SM, we briefly contextualize the movement.

The United States' Cold War policy of containing communism caused the US government under President Ronald Reagan to fund and otherwise support authoritarian regimes in Central America that were opposing communist revolutionaries (Booth, Wade, & Walker, 2010). As a result, many Central American citizens fled their home countries and sought political asylum in the US. Despite the Refugee Act of 1980, which should have eliminated geographical and ideological biases in asylum acceptance, the US government classified many Central American applicants as economic migrants rather than possible refugees fleeing from a "well-founded fear" (UNHCR, 2010, p. 14) of persecution. On this basis, the US government rejected the asylum claims of many Central Americans (Crittenden, 1988, p. 23).

Outrage about the US government's role in the Central American wars, the constant flow of migrants attempting passage into the US, and the deportation practices that followed helped set the stage for the public formation of the SM (Bau, 1985; Crittenden, 1988; Davidson, 1988; Fife et al., 1987; Van Ham, 2009). Specifically, on March 24, 1982, the second anniversary of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero's assassination by a rightist death squad, Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, five San Francisco East Bay congregations, and several other churches openly and publicly declared themselves sanctuaries for Central American asylum seekers (Coutin, 1993; Lorentzen, 1991; Ridgley, 2010). These declarations drew attention to the SM as a growing forum of political activism. Sanctuary activists assisted migrants across the US-Mexican border, housed migrants in places of worship and safe houses, provided material, religious, and legal support, and publicly spoke out about the plight of fleeing Central Americans and the injustices of US immigration policies. From the beginning, the

movement had strongholds across the US-Mexico border region and California. Over time, the SM extended to include tens of thousands of people and comprised a sanctuary network spanning 34 states. Lorentzen (1991, p.14) describes it as the “largest civil disobedience movement in North America since the 1960s.”

The practice of providing sanctuary to Central Americans in religious spaces, depicted as harboring illegal aliens in Section 274 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), happened enough times that the federal government began to take serious note of the SM. As a result, in 1985 the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS, now the US Citizenship and Immigration Services) implemented Operation Sojourner. During this covert operation, federal government employees entered sanctuary communities in Arizona to gather information about the evasion of federal law (McCartney, 1985). Among the most notable outcomes of these infiltrations were the Sanctuary Trials in which members of the movement were accused, and a few convicted, for “alien smuggling” charges (Carro, 1989).

Subsequent federal and legal battles led to some gains for migrants. Most significantly, in 1990 the US Congress introduced Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and in 1991 the settlement of the class action lawsuit *American Baptist Churches v. Thornburgh* created ABC status, so named after the plaintiffs. TPS granted Salvadorans who had entered the US before September 19, 1990, 18 months of legal residency, and ABC granted an impartial interview and adjudication for Salvadorans and Guatemalans present in the US. Combined, the two statuses entitled all Salvadoran and Guatemalans already present in the US to a fair adjudication of asylum petitions (Coutin, 2011, p. 581; Nawyn, 2007, p. 143). Although these designations did not secure full political asylum, TPS and ABC recipients did achieve temporary legal status in the US.

These legal cases illustrate how the SM gained national traction and recognition. The movement focused conversations at the federal scale on immigration policy reform and revealed the power of social movements in helping migrants secure some safety and possible legal status. Although we recognize the significance of temporary protective measures and do not want to minimize the crucial role that sanctuary provided, we now draw attention to dominant descriptions of migrants within the SM. Perla and Coutin (2012, pp. 80, 88) discuss how the ascription of refugee identity to Salvadoran migrants by sanctuary activists provided a sense of legal legitimacy and a forum through which to connect with US audiences. Simultaneously, they acknowledge that the refugee label constrained migrants’ lived experiences and their recognition as important activists in the movement, as they were expected to perform the role of refugee in ways that fit dominant US expectations. Similarly, we argue that the concerted focus on telling stories about the extraordinary hardships endured by migrants and their extraordinary Christianity reduced the possibilities for other stories to emerge and for migrants to feel included in the SM. A key part of movement

mobilization rested on stories (Chinchilla et al., 2009), so the potency of the extraordinary migrant narrative is important to consider.

Founders of the SM quickly realized the power of stories to stimulate support and used that power as a tool for movement building. Consequently, migrants, often described as “prophetic witnesses” (Pirie, 1990, p. 382), delivered testimonials to faith communities about perilous border crossings and violence and injustice in their home countries, in order to raise awareness about their situations and expand the reach of the SM (Chinchilla et al., 2009; Cunningham, 1995; Golden and McConnell, 1986). Migrants “provided direct and tangible evidence of conditions most parishioners were otherwise aware of only indirectly and constituted a direct link between the humanitarian and the educational goals of the movement” (Chinchilla et al., 2009, p. 107). Pirie (1990, p. 381) explains that sanctuary activists experienced a “traumatic awakening” to the brutalities of the wars and the US government’s involvement in such violence primarily through hearing migrants’ stories. John Fife, one of the founders of the SM, recalls that prior to meeting Central American migrants, he could not have placed El Salvador on the map. Yet, once he “had to hear about death squads, and churches being machine-gunned, and about priests being murdered” (Fife et al., 1987, p. 22), he learned about the region and was called to action in sustained and extensive ways. Places and people became visible to him and others through stories of trauma and violence. The repeated and personalized recitation of trauma and persecution by migrants was an important tool for the awareness raising and mobilizing efforts of the SM. Yet, such public narratives required migrants primarily to identify themselves *vis-à-vis* their own trauma and locate themselves as thusly distinctive from their audiences. Such practices reveal how efforts made to generate inclusion and make migrants knowable, so as to prompt empathy and support from a broader faith community, also ironically reinscribed migrants as traumatized others.

The use of personal accounts of trauma to inspire social activism in other people raises concerns about what gets circulated and publicly consumed in the name of a wider mission. Stacey Merkt, another early member of the SM, states that hearing the stories from migrants enabled people of faith to show their courage, overcome their fears, and live out their faiths (Fife et al., 1987, p. 27). Such an assertion indicates that migrants’ stories of extraordinary hardship were often mobilized to give US citizens a chance to deepen their faiths. This practice of capitalizing on a typecast of trauma makes us question the extent to which the goal of advocating for migrant inclusion was undermined by the desire to extend activists’ faiths through encounters with migrants. We surmise that such outcomes do not bear out social justice aspirations.

Migrants could be subject to deportation if they made themselves physically visible (Juffer, 2009), so sanctuary activists often shared migrants’ stories on their behalf (Caminero-Santagelo, 2012). This marks another venue within which migrants became primarily symbolic and useful for what

they represented through their experiences. Literally muting the voices of migrants themselves, albeit important for safety concerns, points out how othering can happen through material practices. Although the discursive framing of the migrants as extraordinary due to their hardships held sway in meetings within faith-communities, the physical hiding and silencing of migrants also situated asylum seekers as extraordinary. If their personal biographies had not been as they were, migrants might have been able to stand and tell their own stories, in the varied and multi-faceted forms that a citizen enjoys. Caminero-Santagelo (2012, p. 102) suggests that this kind of appropriation and dramatization of migrants' personal narratives became, on the one hand, a strategic "way of speaking, as the subaltern, that could for once be heard by the American public." On the other hand, this abstraction of stories from embodied experiences positioned migrants as silent others. The practice of speaking on behalf of others also reduced the literal voice that migrants had within the movement. Migrants noted "objectification" and "hierarchies between those who defined and those who were defined" (Coutin, 1993, p. 126) in such encounters.

The repetition of stories about the extraordinary adversities that migrants suffered further entrenched normative assumptions within the SM about whose stories were profound enough to stimulate support and recognition for the movement. Migrants who did not fit the script were often excluded from the movement. For instance, in October 1982, Tucson sanctuary workers sent a pair of Mayan adolescents from Guatemala to sanctuary activists in Chicago to receive sanctuary. However, the next week the Tucson sanctuary group received a letter from Chicago explaining that the pair "had no understanding of the political conflict in Central America and were therefore not useful" (Crittenden, 1988, p. 91). The teenagers did not convey the narrative of migration that underpinned much of the sanctuary work. Their personal stories, though riddled with trauma, did not follow the anticipated script of extraordinary horrors and violence. Furthermore, they were Mayans who did not speak Spanish, so the translation needed to communicate with English-speakers was more complex than activists accustomed to Spanish-English translations could easily orchestrate. Purportedly, the adolescents were put back on a bus to Tucson, but never arrived. Sanctuary workers in Tucson assumed that they had been deported, as they never heard of these teens again (Crittenden, 1988).

The Tucson activists deemed the narratives and experiences of these adolescents extraordinary and worthy of sanctuary. In contrast, the Chicago-based activists heard the testimonials of these teens differently, and did not see the adolescents as useful representations of the need for sanctuary. Therefore, the teens, as not extraordinary enough to be given the chance for sanctuary, were sent back. As this example shows, the narrative of the extraordinary migrant shrank the space available for describing migration, one's life experiences, and the need for safety. Consequently, exclusions emerged alongside efforts for inclusion.

Another key avenue through which migrant exclusion unfolded alongside aspirations for migrant inclusion was the sanctuary activists' descriptions of migrants' Christianity. As we explain below, migrants' devotion to Christianity was seen as more pure and authentic than that of US-born activists. We understand this emphasis on migrants' Christianity as another channel through which the narrative of the extraordinary migrant surfaced. The sense of awe articulated by sanctuary activists about migrants' Christianity carried particular weight because of the centrality of religion to the SM. As with the descriptions of migrants' hardships, the celebration of migrants' Christianity helped generate support for the SM and perpetuate notions that migrants were different (i.e., other) than the Christian US activists engaged in the sanctuary movement. Therefore, even though accolades about the purity of migrants' Christianity were meant to support and include migrants, they also worked to position migrants as outside the parameters of US Christian practices. In this way, the esteemed extraordinary Christianity of the migrants drew activists to them and their cause and excluded migrants from the US-based faith communities. The migrants' extraordinariness in terms of religion prompted both support and exclusion.

John Fife explains that after he went to Central America for the first time in 1982, he became "converted": "I discovered a new way of reading Scripture, of seeing the community of faith under enormous pressure and persecution respond with courage and faith" (Fife et al., 1987, p. 26). He further notes that "covenant communities" throughout the US experienced "spiritual reformation," akin to the 16th century Reformation, through encounters with migrants gaining assistance in the SM (Fife et al., 1987, p. 26). Fife is not alone in his depictions of the religious practices of Central Americans as prompting conversions and spiritual reformation, descriptions that we understand as proxies for the extraordinary. Many sanctuary activists experienced a "conversion" (Coutin, 1993) or "baptism" (Purcell, 2007) through the figurative and literal border crossings necessitated by their participation in the SM. Activists claimed that migrants were closer to God than the White, middle-class activists, and therefore were sources of knowledge and inspiration (Coutin, 1993, p. 71). Sanctuary activists further named faith, truth, life, spirit, courage, and strength as attributes the Central Americans could teach them, while saying they (i.e., the activists) only offered tangible items, like material aid, technology, and nutrition to the migrants (Coutin, 1993, p. 155). As witness to this perspective, Bob, an involved activist, explained, "I'm not there to minister to [the Central Americans]. They minister to me" (as quoted in Purcell, 2007, p. 127).

From our vantage point, this representation of migrants' Christianity both homogenized migrants and positioned them as others. It also situated migrants as vehicles for encountering and then mimicking profound Christian devotion. Migrants served as the terrain through which sanctuary activists could rekindle and expand their religious practices and give purpose to their days. Possibilities for political solidarity, and the recognition of a

plurality of experiences, were minimized when such perceptions and practices prevailed, because of the uneven relationship created between activists and migrants. The need for migrants to fulfill the role of providing conversion experiences meant that there were incentives for migrants to perform Christianity in ways that enabled activists to extend their own faith practices. We contend that a commitment to such a framing of migrants as extraordinary Christians promoted othering and reduced chances for coalition building and agency, key components of social justice.

The *Sanctuary Movement for Central Americans* arose from the concerns about systemic violence and injustices expressed by US-born, primarily White, people of faith. Drawing upon religious ideals to guide and compel this movement, sanctuary activists assisted migrants in crossing the US/Mexico border, getting out of detention, and gaining access to the US legal system. Stories of extraordinary horror and violence inspired support for and grew the movement. At the same time, the repeated narratives of trauma reduced migrants to their experiences of atrocities, and diminished the possibility for articulating other identities, for forging commonality with citizen activists, and for claiming self-authorship and voice. Public support was principally granted to people who shared a particular narrative of trauma, one that became more normative and entrenched over time.

Additionally, the celebration of migrants' Christianity and the associated experiences of conversion paradoxically further positioned migrants as others. Migrants were perceived as religiously different than sanctuary activists, even though most identified as Christian, and therefore served as sites for deepening activists' Christianity. Moreover, although migrants were celebrated for their religious beliefs and devotion, this status situated them as exterior to US-based faith communities.

A key stated goal of the SM was greater migrant inclusion within the US; yet, by analyzing the narrative of the extraordinary migrant put forward in the SM, it becomes evident that exclusions materialized alongside efforts for inclusion. These examples from the SM collectively raise questions about what non-reductive frameworks social movements could use to gain support, build solidarity, and achieve political and social change. These questions persist in the case of the NSM and the narrative of the *ordinary* migrant.

Another Ordinary American: Mixed-Status Families and the New Sanctuary Movement

The *New Sanctuary Movement* (NSM) strives "to defend, protect, and advocate for immigrant families' rights – lifting up their humanity and spotlighting the immoral and, some would argue, illegal immigration policies that would rip families apart" (Purcell, 2007, p. 4). Through this focus, the NSM principally advocates for granting legal status to unauthorized migrants, particularly parents of US citizen children, by highlighting the

hardship and trauma induced by “unauthorized existence, familial separations, and living in fear of deportation” (Caminero-Santagelo, 2012, p. 93). In drawing attention to specific families as symbols of the horrors of deportation-caused family separation, the NSM aims to humanize immigration debates, call for comprehensive immigration reform, and enable religious conversion through changing US-born faith communities’ “hearts and minds” (Yukich, 2013a, p. 43) about immigration. Much like members of the SM, NSM activists express faith-based motivations and often justify their participation in the movement with religious language (Abramsky, 2008; Kotin, Dyrness, & Irazábal, 2011). Descriptions of and justifications for the NSM state the need to “welcome the stranger” as described in Leviticus 19, “love thy neighbor as thyself” as outlined in Luke 10, and “learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (New Sanctuary Movement, 2015, p. 3) as stated in Isaiah 1.²

Despite the significant shared religious foundations, an important discursive difference exists between the SM and NSM. Specifically, while the SM focused on the *extraordinary* hardship and Christianity of Central American asylum seekers, the NSM rationalizes its advocacy and builds support for the movement through an emphasis on the stated *ordinariness* of unauthorized migrants in mixed-status families. Migrants living in sanctuary are routinely framed as just like every other American. They are depicted in public stories and media coverage as the average (and reified) US resident: heterosexual, married, with children, and employed (Salvatierra, 2007, p. 3; Yukich, 2013a). The power granted to the narrative that migrants are analogous to ordinary citizens means that migrants are encouraged to emphasize their roles as workers, husbands or wives, and parents. Consequently, there is limited space available for plural and alternative narratives of the self to emerge and for migrants who may not fit into these categories to be seen.

Setting up the evaluative metric of who is ordinary and thus worth supporting, and who is not (Yukich, 2013b), illustrates how othering practices unfold through such framing. Although such labeling effectively distinguishes migrants represented as ordinary from those who raise concern, the categorical ordering also demonstrates how migrants are persistently located as exterior to the US and within a constrained representation. Even though Caminero-Santagelo (2012, p. 93) notes that the NSM is an “effort to challenge the exclusion of the undocumented from the nation-state,” the use of the ordinary migrant frame does not wholly advance this political ambition. Indeed, as we show in this section, the narrative of unauthorized migrants living in sanctuary as ordinary simultaneously contributes to exclusionary practices and creates calls for inclusionary measures. Before we

² Leviticus and Isaiah are books in the Old Testament Bible; Luke is a book (one of the Gospels) in the New Testament Bible.

examine the ordinary migrant frame, we offer some context for this contemporary sanctuary movement.

The wider political anti-immigration climate and the rise of the religious right had significant impacts on the formation of the NSM (Yukich, 2013a). Within this broad ambit, different origin stories of the movement exist. Yukich (2013a), for example, explains that a December 2005 letter to President George W. Bush from Cardinal Roger Mahoney, archbishop of Los Angeles, awakened the “moral imagination” (Salvatierra, 2007, p. 2) of people in the US and initiated conversations about the development of a renewed sanctuary movement. In contrast, in an interview with alternative news site *Truthout*, a national grassroots coordinator for immigrant rights at Church World Service traces the NSM’s origins to the Swift Raids of 2006,³ and the subsequent activist responses (Bader, 2014). Highlighting a different place and year, Irazábal and Dyrness (2010) identify the NSM’s origin as a January 2007 meeting of various faith organizations in Washington DC to listen to testimonies of mixed-status families grappling with the threat of deportation. Bell (2010) suggests that the movement actually began in Chicago in 2006 when Elvira Arellano, an unauthorized Mexican migrant with a US citizen son, sought sanctuary in the Adalberto United Methodist Church after receiving deportation orders. Arellano, often described as “the [eventual] poster child for the movement” (Abramsky, 2008, p. 26), lived in sanctuary with her son for a year. When she was deported in August 2007 after attending an immigrant right’s event in Los Angeles, outrage about her experiences sparked further growth of the movement (Abramsky, 2008). She returned to the US to seek asylum in 2014 and sought sanctuary in the Adalberto Church once again (Engler, 2014). Her persistence in protesting immigration laws that separate mixed-status families has caused people to liken her to Rosa Parks (Thayer, Rodriguez, & Perez Jr., 2014). Irrespective of the precise beginning of this faith-based social movement, the focus on mixed-status families facing separation due to deportation orders, and the mandate to expand public and personal understandings of religion through political activism, underpin the NSM. Faith communities partner with migrants as a way to personalize immigration and help congregants realize that immigration questions are religious and moral ones (Yukich, 2013a). As of 2016, the NSM consisted of over 300 faith communities in twelve cities throughout the US (Sanctuary2014, 2016).

The specific manner in which mixed-status families interface with NSM activists around sanctuary has changed somewhat over the last ten years. For instance, in the early years of the NSM, activists focused on hosting in sanctuary “representative families who would become the face of the immigrant reality” (Salvatierra, 2007, p. 2). These families usefully

³ The Swift Raids refers to the coordinated Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids on six meat-processing plants owned by Swift & Company in six states. About 1,300 unauthorized migrants working at the plants were arrested during these raids (Bader, 2014).

embodied the struggles for mixed-status families that compelled the NSM, and therefore served as figureheads. As Dyrness and Irazábal (2007) explain, “by showcasing the circumstances of a few individuals who voluntarily come forward to claim sanctuary, it [the NSM] hopes to call attention to the plight of the millions of immigrants who live in fear of arrest and separation from their families.” Members of these initial representative families occasionally lived in sanctuary at a place of worship because Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) seldom enters schools or places of worship to complete arrests (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2011, p. 2). More commonly, NSM activists welcomed unauthorized migrant parents facing deportation into a community of sanctuary, where congregants would accompany migrants to detention hearings, advocate for stays of removal, take care of children, and offer emotional and spiritual support during trying times (Yukich, 2013a).

The 2014 resurgence of the NSM still values the practice of providing sanctuary, but the sanctuary seekers are seemingly more self-selecting, rather than hand-picked as was the case earlier. For the most part, these individuals seek sanctuary in places of worship in an effort to resist deportation orders. Although the representative families profiled in the early days of the NSM had national origins from all over the world (Yukich, 2013a), the people living in sanctuary since 2014 have predominantly identified as Latino/a. As a 2015 organizing pamphlet circulated to congregations and faith communities considering or engaging in sanctuary explains, “sanctuary can be utilized as a way to protect Central American children and families from being deported back to violence and persecution” (New Sanctuary Movement, 2015, p. 4). This regional focus stems from noted concern about the rise in unaccompanied minors from Central America coming into the US and the growth in raids in many Latino/a communities (New Sanctuary Movement, 2015). The places of worship now affiliated with the NSM predominantly identify as Christian (Yukich, 2013a). Despite some of these variations between the early years and current expressions of the NSM, the frame of the ordinary migrant remains.

The ordinariness of migrants matters both in the public representations of mixed-status families and in the process of securing sanctuary. As a NSM organizing pamphlet from 2007 indicates, not all families are appropriate for sanctuary. The pamphlet recommends recruiting families with the following characteristics:

...a good work record and a history of contributing to their community. It is also helpful when families can speak from the heart about their love for their children, their neighborhood, their community and this country, as well as their religious faith. (New Sanctuary Movement, 2007, p. 2)

The underlying assumption in this description is that families who possess such qualities are easier to help because they are ultimately more legible to members of the faith communities that would support sanctuary. As one of

the early goals of the NSM was to build compassionate relations between US-born, predominantly White, members of faith communities and unauthorized migrants, relatability between the groups was key. Not just any unauthorized migrant would do. Anyone entering into sanctuary should be ordinary enough (i.e., married, heterosexual, parent, and employed as indicated in the description above) to be familiar as a proto-neighbor or community member for the US-born activists (Houston, 2016; see also Yukich, 2013a). Put differently, “it is critically important for the average American to hear the stories of immigrants that break negative stereotypes” (New Sanctuary Movement, 2007, p. 2). Ensuring that families in sanctuary could perform such work through their ordinariness was therefore crucial for the movement.

To further build bridges between migrants and citizen activists, the pamphlet cites the importance of selecting families for sanctuary who have clean legal records (or at worst, distant and minor infractions), and families who have a high likelihood of gaining a stay of removal (New Sanctuary Movement, 2007, pp. 2-3). The NSM legal briefing advises that families with a possible avenue for circumventing deportation may “need sanctuary for a shorter time period than families without potential relief from deportation, and the end result of granting sanctuary may be less traumatic than offering sanctuary to a family that inevitably faces deportation” (Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law, 2007, p. 3). In other words, the recommendation is to offer sanctuary to individuals for whom a stay of removal is fairly likely. Similarly, an updated 2015 organizing pamphlet recommends individuals who face deportation, but have a strong chance of securing prosecutorial discretion, as preferable sanctuary dwellers. Indeed, migrants who “have a reasonable potential of receiving a stay of removal, order of supervision or some other form of administrative relief” (New Sanctuary Movement, 2015, p. 6) are especially welcomed into sanctuary.

Only a handful of families met these stringent criteria and lived in sanctuary during the initial years of the NSM (Dyrness and Irazábal, 2007). One key participant and representative member of early sanctuary was Liliana “Santuario” who, with her infant son, moved into sanctuary at an United Church of Christ in Simi Valley, CA in May 2007 to avoid deportation and separation from her US citizen children and husband (Abramsky, 2008, p. 26). Her residence in the church caused sustained and vocal counter-protest. In the midst of cries that she was “illegal” and a “criminal,” Liliana and her supporters sought to demonstrate her humanness to the opposition. Put differently, they sought to blur the distinction between citizen and noncitizen by highlighting her ordinary – and recognizable – identities as a mother, a wife, and a long-standing community member (jcfjcfjcf, 2011). Drawing on religious tenets, activists emphasized that Liliana and her family were all children of God (jcfjcfjcf, 2011; Yukich, 2013a). Indeed, this mixed-status family was similar to any other family except that they faced the devastating prospect of separation due to

deportation. After three years of living in sanctuary, Liliana was granted Deferred Action Status. For the following five years, her attorney and supporters worked to transform her status into something more permanent. They were successful, and in late 2015 Liliana received a green card (Larkman, 2016). Liliana's story is one that shows how sanctuary can lead to changes in individual legal status and can transform communities' understanding of and personal commitment to immigration reform.

Through tireless advocacy and support, Liliana gained formal inclusion within the US. She can now narrate her own story of self and more fully and publicly perform her range of identities. Yet, this was not always the case. Abramsky describes the early days of Liliana's journey in sanctuary:

Liliana, a beautiful young woman, is always surrounded by handlers. She claims to be keeping a diary, in English, designed to help her learn the language, but the diary, which her handlers urge her to read to me, has clearly been written by a publicist. "This is a country of opportunity," she reads aloud, her handler correcting her pronunciation. "But where is the love and compassion? When I think of the United States, I think of the Statue of Liberty. Give us your poor and free and huddled masses. I yearn to breathe free." Liliana's handler looks at her. "Very good. Excellent," she tells her. (Abramsky, 2008, p. 27)

This depiction of Liliana illustrates our central point about the exclusions that surfaced alongside efforts at inclusion. The representational space available for Liliana to tell her own story in her own language and to describe her reasons for seeking sanctuary was virtually non-existent when she lived in sanctuary. Instead, she became visible within the public sphere principally through a script, which drew upon cultural referents, such as the Statue of Liberty and the trope of the land of opportunity, that may have carried more weight with the citizen audience than Liliana herself. This management of public image ultimately constrained the discursive space available for narrating her story and explaining migration through an individualized and intersectional lens. Additionally, even though Liliana moved into sanctuary in hopes of securing long-term legal inclusion within the US, being in sanctuary required her to repeatedly identify – and become known as – an unauthorized migrant, which situated Liliana as exterior to the nation. This positionality and praxis incited vocal opposition to Liliana and her sanctuary, which further marked her as other. After many years, Liliana's goal of political inclusion reached fruition. Yet, the process of securing this inclusion also produced exclusions, both for Liliana herself and for the wider community of unauthorized migrants who remained invisible due to the NSM's concentration on representative mixed-status families with specific characteristics.

The positioning of migrants' lives as ordinary is still prevalent in the NSM. For example, Arturo Armando Hernández García, husband of Ana and father of two daughters (the youngest of whom is a US citizen), lived in sanctuary in the First Unitarian Church of Denver, Colorado, from October 2014

through July 2015 (McGhee, 2015). Public storytelling by journalists and sanctuary activists alike underscored that Hernández Garcia was an ordinary person who worked hard, cared for his family, and contributed to society. For example, Melanie Asmar wrote the following in a story about Hernández Garcia:

He got a driver's license the last year it was legal for undocumented immigrants to do so before the law changed again in 2014, and renewed it regularly. He paid his taxes and never used false documents or a stolen Social Security number. He learned English and eventually started his own flooring business, negotiating to win jobs installing tile and ceramic floors in big apartment complexes. (Asmar, 2015)

Articles about Hernández Garcia emphasize that a 2010 felony charge of menacing with a weapon at a workplace altercation resulted in a jury verdict of not guilty (Asmar, 2015). Bridging the distance between citizen and noncitizen through explaining and rationalizing any tarnish on a record is important for acquiring support. Narratives of ordinariness help with this project as a Groundswell petition on Hernández Garcia's behalf indicates: "Arturo is a loving husband, father of two children and small business owner who has lived in the US for 15 years" (Groundswell, 2014a). The stories about Hernández Garcia underscore his ordinariness as heterosexual, married, a father, and a business owner to draw attention to the unfairness of his deportation situation (Houston, 2016).

Similarly, the minor traffic violation that brought Rosa Robles Loreto, who lived in sanctuary for 15 months in Tucson, Arizona, at the Southside Presbyterian Church (Prendergast, 2015), into the sightline of authorities is downplayed in her public narrative. Advocacy on her behalf stresses, "Rosa has two beautiful boys, a loving husband, and has lived in Tucson since 1999. She is an active member of the community, volunteers at her church, her sons' school, and their baseball teams" (Groundswell, 2014b). According to these narratives, she is basically an ordinary citizen in every way except legal status. The dimensions of her life that become visible do so principally through the sanctioned and selective typology of the ordinary migrant.

The current mobilization around Jose Juan Federico Moreno, who moved into sanctuary in Chicago in April 2016, echoes this narrative pattern. Descriptions of Moreno highlight his roles as a "loving husband and father of five US-born children" (Groundswell, 2016). His charge of an aggravated DUI (driving under the influence of alcohol) is explained away within the context of his unauthorized status. Emphasizing Moreno's identities as a dad and husband works to elicit empathy for his case. As all of these examples make plain, the narratives of migrants living in sanctuary "are less about violence and terror than about the quotidian, ordinary life they have built ... we have been here for years; we have contributed to the society, our communities, and the national economy; and we have raised our children here" (Caminero-Santagelo, 2012, p. 96). Throughout the NSM, the focus on

sanctuary seekers as ordinary community and family members who embody moral lives in the US, but now confront potential devastation, or death, through deportation, has been persistent.

When living in sanctuary, migrants and their families are offered up for public consumption through scripted sound bites. The ordinary frame becomes a largely depersonalized rendition of individuals because migrants are primarily described as married, employed, heterosexual, and with children. Other family constellations and life histories do not achieve recognition in such public storytelling. Consequently, each person and case sounds the same. Even though the NSM works with a few families as representatives of a wider group, this handful becomes ubiquitous in their depictions of ordinariness. This leads us to question the primary purpose of providing sanctuary – is it mostly to grow the NSM and raise awareness about unfair immigration policies through assisting particular migrants with relatively uncomplicated (and presumably successful) cases? Or, perhaps it is to provide a venue for White, politically progressive, and religious citizens to become more informed about immigration issues? Where is the concern for the unauthorized migrants facing deportation who do not fit the sanctuary criteria?

Admittedly, the focus on the ordinariness of migrants has been effective in certain cases; Robles Loreto and Hernández Garcia learned they were low priorities for ICE, so felt safe enough to leave sanctuary, and Liliana got a green card. Still, we argue that the use of the ordinary motif also curtails the possibilities for expressing the self in multiple ways and enacting inclusion and belonging for the dynamic and multi-faceted millions of unauthorized migrants residing in the US. Even though the NSM works to include unauthorized migrants, the primary way of doing so (i.e., by emphasizing ordinariness) also excludes many people and life experiences. Much like the use of the extraordinary in the *Sanctuary Movement*, this approach ultimately minimizes the space available for articulating a plurality of identities (beyond heterosexual, married, employed, and parent) and sets up boundaries around who is worthy of advocacy and inclusion within imaginaries of the nation. This strikes us as detrimental, since migrants are pushed further to the margins of public recognition if they do not fit the anticipated script, and migrants' own sense of agency and autonomy is significantly diminished when they have to adhere to the predetermined narrative of the ordinary migrant.

Conclusion

In this paper, we critically examine the narrative frame of the extraordinary and ordinary migrant within the SM and NSM to unpack how these two faith-based social movements worked to advance, and in the process also constrained, the goal of expanded legal status for unauthorized migrants. By

paying particular attention to the underlying logics and assumptions of these narratives, we reveal how experiences of otherness for migrants are instantiated and how support for unauthorized migrants is principally granted to people who fit within the categories (and associated expectations) of the extraordinary or ordinary migrant. This analysis, therefore, demonstrates how the sanctuary movements produce inclusion and exclusion for migrants, and shows how pressures to have viability and longevity as a movement can undermine the goals of contesting discrimination and marginalization.

Highlighting how the narratives of the extraordinary and ordinary migrant emerge in the sanctuary movements helps explain why and how inclusionary social justice ambitions do not always unfold as intended. The formation of the sanctuary movements stemmed from overarching concerns with persecution and injustice. Yet, efforts made to remedy these situations often relied on narrow typecasts of migrants that were not necessarily beneficial to individuals or migrant communities more broadly. As a result, it is unsurprising to us that few immigrants or people of color participate in the NSM as activists (Yukich, 2013a). Yukich (2013a) reports that many immigrants and immigrant activist groups feel unwelcome because of the few people of color in the NSM, the particular Christian overtones, and the commitment to evolving the faith of US-born people through interactions with unauthorized migrants. The desire to deepen the faiths of US-born activists illustrates once again how priorities of the US-born often supersede the needs of migrants and direct the mechanisms for social change.

Using the ordinary and extraordinary to analyze the sanctuary social movements also raises questions about activism and social change tactics. An organizing pamphlet from the NSM stresses that, “we are not the leaders of this movement, those in Sanctuary are. ... We should always remember that Sanctuary is not something that we do for our undocumented brothers and sisters, it is something we do *with* them” (New Sanctuary Movement, 2015, p. 7, emphasis in the original). Although this sentiment hints at a solidarity approach, in practice sanctuary seekers are very beholden to the faith communities supporting them financially, emotionally, legally, and spiritually and do not have much latitude in the narratives of their life experiences, as our many examples attest. Bagelman (2016, p. xvi) depicts people living in sanctuary as occupying a “suspended state” as they are neither here nor there and instead are waiting for some sort of adjudication on their case. She, along with others, describes living in sanctuary as a “sometimes prison-like form of protection” (Bagelman, 2016, p. xvii), as people are physically constrained within the boundaries of the safe sanctuary space. In such a setting, where questions of power and access are dramatically skewed, it is easy to understand how the practice of charitable helping adopts a more prominent role than solidarity. Still, we question what sanctuary activism could look like if a solidarity ethos of working together and a commitment to self-reflexivity came to the fore. How might a default to easy depictions of the extraordinary or ordinary migrant fade away with

such an approach? What might social justice mean, and what form would it assume in such instances?

Although we cannot predict what a reconfigured sanctuary movement based upon equity and solidarity would look like in practice, we can identify patterns wherein sanctuary is reductive even when applied in secular settings, such as the case of sanctuary legislation, “local immigration policies, resolutions and/or ordinances that counter exclusionary state or federal legislation” (Houston & Lawrence-Weilmann, 2015, p. 101). Many of the provisions offered to migrants in sanctuary legislation are legitimized because of the economic contributions of migrants or the ways in which migrants physically embody multiculturalism within a city (Houston & Lawrence-Weilmann, 2015). The dependence on such “neoliberal logics” (Houston & Lawrence-Weilmann, 2015, p. 103) within sanctuary legislation demonstrates that both faith-based and secular engagements with sanctuary paradoxically rely on typecasts of migrants in their efforts to produce broader support for migrants themselves and for immigration reform. Thus, we believe that sanctuary as a currently practiced form of governance or social movement limits the extent of political, social, and economic inclusion of migrants. Dynamic social change will require refashioned approaches and narrative frames that cultivate solidarity and belonging in policy realms and social mobilizations. Such transformations could help reshape the terrain of immigration reform debates and the daily material realities for many migrants in the US. These transitions would be worthy, in our estimation, of the description “extraordinary,” and they would qualitatively remake ordinary daily life.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Olivia Lawrence-Weilmann, Kiana Lussier, and Quinn Wallace for many inspiring and fascinating conversations about sanctuaries. They also extend their thanks to Ned Houston and Richard Wright for commenting on earlier drafts of this article. The anonymous reviewers and editor David Butz supplied incredibly helpful and extensive feedback, which made this paper much stronger. The authors are grateful for the constructive comments and support. Finally, Dean of Faculty Research Assistantship grants from Mount Holyoke College enabled the collaboration that sparked this paper. The authors are very appreciative of this funding.

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