

# MIGRATION, CAPITALISM AND MEDIA

Edited by

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Critical Perspectives on Social Science



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	v
<b>ABOUT THE EDITORS</b>	vii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	ix
Chapter 1 <b>ALGORITHMIC CRIMINALIZATION OF THE MIGRANT</b>	1
Merve Hickok Center for AI & Digital Policy; University of Michigan	
Chapter 2 <b>POLITICAL PARTIES AS PARTIES OF POLARIZATION IN POLICY MAKING TOWARDS MIGRANTS IN TURKEY</b>	21
Nalan Ova The University of Suleyman Demirel, Turkey	
Chapter 3 <b>UNDERSTANDING LABOR INSECURITY IN THE GULF: BETWEEN MIGRANT CLASS REALITY AND NATIONALIZATION OF WORKFORCE</b>	49
Mustafa Yetim Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Turkey Nurbanu Kesgin Turkish Red Crescent Kizilaykart Platform, Turkey	
Chapter 4 <b>A HALF-OPEN DOOR: A CASE STUDY OF CANADA'S SPECIAL IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS FOR AFGHAN NATIONALS</b>	69
Neela Hassan University of Waterloo	
Chapter 5 <b>CONTEMPORARY VIETNAMESE MIGRATION: THE 39 VIETNAMESE “ESSEX LORRY DEATHS”</b>	89
Luna Chung Independent Scholar	

Chapter 6		
<b>NATION BUILDING AND MIGRATION: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF EAST TÍMOR AND KASHMÍR</b>		109
Tamanna M. Shah		
Ohio University		
Chapter 7		
<b>COMPOUNDED DISADVANTAGE: UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT MOTHERS NAVIGATING MOTHERHOOD AND PRECARIOUS LABOR IN THE SUBURBS</b>		133
Sandra Castro		
Adelphi University		
Chapter 8		
<b>SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS SYRIANS AND UKRAINIANS IN TURKEY: RACISM BASED ON DIFFERENCE THROUGH LGBTI+ PERSPECTIVES</b>		151
Özen Kurtuluş		
Mersin University		
Chapter 9		
<b>AFGHANI-PAKISTAN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES AND NEW MEDIA</b>		183
Shahid Minhas		
Green International University Lahore, Pakistan		
Chapter 10		
<b>PRECARIA BATTLES IN CONSTRUCTIONS: KURDS &amp; AFGHANS</b>		205
Kazım Tolga Gürel		
Independent Scholar		
<b>LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS</b>		231

# LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: GDP U.S. Dollars Per Capita, Current Prices, 2023.	51
Table 4.1: Canada's Special Canada's special programs for Afghans.	72
Table 7.1: Participants' Legal Status by Time Period.	139
Table 7.2: Participant Employment and Legal Status.	142
Table 8.1: General Profile of Participants.	155



## ABOUT THE EDITORS

Kazım Tolga Gürel was born in a middle-class family in Istanbul in 1978. He continued his education in public schools, where the dark effects of the 1980 military coup were felt. Long before he started primary school, he had learned to read and write independently. Although he was not very successful in school, he always passed his class with a passing grade. However, the actual teaching process started at home with the books her mother read to her from the age of 3. His first book attempt was a 16-page book he produced with a Geography Atlas and encyclopedias, which he acquired at the age of 7. From the age of 12, he began to add new books to his library of books left by his father, whom he lost at an early age and began to read intensively. During his high school years, he had access to books by authors such as Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Server Tanilli. He traveled extensively in the bookshops in Kadıköy, Istanbul, during high school. After dropping out of many universities, he graduated from Marmara University, Department of Radio-Television and Cinema, with an article titled *Modern State and Media*. He left his first master's degree at the last stage and received his second master's degree with a thesis titled *Icon-Power Relations in the Historical Process*. He completed his second doctorate with his thesis titled *LGBTQ+ Representation in Turkish Mainstream Newspapers* and received the title of doctor.

He has published several books in Turkey, some of which are in their second editions, and is the author of *The History of the Domestication of Speech*, published by Vernon Press in 2024. He has published around thirty articles in national and international journals and edited books. He continues to work on culture, gender, communication, politics and ideology.

Nalan Ova was born in 1979. She is an associate professor at the Faculty of Communication, Journalism Department at Suleyman Demirel University. After completing her undergraduate degree in 2002 from Ankara University Faculty of Communication, she went on to complete her master's degree in 2005 at the same faculty, where she focused on alphabet reform and its effects on the Turkish press. Later, in 2012, she completed her PhD at the Faculty of Communication at Ankara University, conducting research on the discourse of devout Muslim women as a counter-hegemonic discourse. Her research interests and publications primarily revolve around minority groups and media, media and gender, discourse theory, media history, and media archeology.





# INTRODUCTION

Migration is a phenomenon as old as human history. It is enriching regarding the development of cultures and the sprouting of new cultures. Migration is the reason for forming multicultural cities such as Urfa, Jerusalem and Aleppo, whose roots go deep into history. Migration hybridizes people and produces crossbreeding. It enriches the gene pool and creates more robust species necessary for human evolution. The twentieth century's demonic dream of a "pure race", the race-based "superhuman", or the pernicious myths of "one nation, one state, one flag" homogenizes. Whereas migration diversifies and beautifies cultures.

Humans have always been on the move. Spreading throughout the world, people have moved throughout history due to famine, climate change, trade and wars. At first, these displacements led to the discovery of new areas and civilization spread. However, people on the move mixed with previously settled people in various regions or warred against each other after a while. Although the relations between the newcomers and the natives found a balance in time, people experienced difficulties until they found this balance.

The fact that the same difficulties are still experienced today shows that time has not changed some points about human beings. Although the human form is a form that changes from paradigm to paradigm, the fear and anger produced by the body are biological forces that can overcome this form. Man and the human form are constructed and invented, but fear and aggression are the animal side of man. Fear of the unknown and the familiar is a biological reflex that can be seen in vertebrates. In this sense, racism is rooted precisely in our fear originating from deep and distant points of this cortex. Racism, which is a complex strengthened by the pleasure of power while taking root in the fear-based areas of the need for belonging, and its minor component, nationalism, a new caricature typology that always harbors the potential to turn into racism, is an old world form of subjectification that is revived and resurrected in migration policies. This form is an essential ideology in regulating blocks of meaning through the media, etc., which ensures that migration policies are determined in a manner favorable to capital, makes the blocks of meaning imposed on society functional, and through the enthusiasm of paramilitary forces used when necessary.

This study describes the details of such arrangements in line with the power and profit aspirations of the ruling classes. The details and effects of capital-oriented approaches and the construction goals based on the colonization of

life in the interests of the ruling classes constitute the background of the events and facts of the articles. Whether it points to this point or not, each article starts from the realities of life while interpreting specific theories and data in the light of historical information. The most fundamental fact of life is the colonization of all practices and elements. The nation-state or the party-state, all forms of state, is a center of power that determines migration policies in the interests of the ruling classes.

The first article of the study was written by Merve Hickok, who has various experiences not only in academia but also in life and work. The author, Merve Hickok, is a lecturer at the University of Michigan, the founder of Alethicist.org, and President and Policy Director at the Center for AI and Digital Policy. She is a globally renowned expert on AI policy, ethics and governance. Her contributions and perspective have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Guardian*, *CNN*, *Forbes*, *Bloomberg*, *Wired*, *Scientific American*, *The Atlantic*, *Politico*, *Protocol*, *Vox*, *The Economist* and *S&P*. Her research, training and consulting work focuses on the impact of AI systems on individuals and society, with a particular focus on fundamental rights, democratic values, and social justice. Hickok's article *Algorithmic criminalization of the migrant* discusses new AI technologies that build on the national security narrative. It describes the effects of the increasing privatization of these technologies on migrants and the technological experimentation by the countries on people in vulnerable situations. This chapter discusses and explains how artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems can surveil and punish migrants, starting at borders and continuing in their new communities.

The second article of the study, titled *Political parties as parties of polarisation in policy making towards migrants in Turkey*, is about Turkey, which is the country receiving the highest number of migrants from Syria—this article, written by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nalan Ova shows how neoliberal economic policies polarise the political sphere in Turkey's crisis environment. The division of the political sphere along the axis of minority/majority, democratic/undemocratic, right/left, natives/migrants, and us/them is in the interests of the political parties. This study aims to read the current debates on migrants in Turkey through the approaches of political parties at the center of policymaking. The study's boundaries examine the policies towards migrants in the programs of political parties at different political spectrum points in Turkey after 2010, when the migrant issue became visible. It also shows the prominent strategies in the discourses of political actors during election periods. Within the scope of the study, party programs and the discourses of actors in the public sphere were analyzed.

In the Middle East, the Gulf monarchies are the leading countries in terms of migrant labor, in some cases exceeding half of the total population. This is

made possible by a new system of slavery called “Kafala”. It is a system that deprives migrant workers of even standard human rights principles, such as the right to change jobs and leave the country if necessary. The Kafala System has been the focus of both local and international criticism. This sponsorship system, called Kafala, which means that a local person sponsors a foreign/migrant worker, is seen as a different type of “modern slavery” since the migrant worker has no legal rights/status in that country. Associate Professor Mustafa Yetim and Nurbanu Kesgin wrote the third article on this topic. Yetim’s theoretical mastery of the field and Kesgin’s work on the region, especially in the “Middle Eastern Journal” for five years, have produced an article in which they can reflect on their experiences on this issue.

The fourth article of the book, *A half-open door: a case study of Canada’s special immigration programmes for Afghan nationals*, is about a critical immigration process related to Canada. Following the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, the country has experienced significant disasters. In response to the political crisis in Afghanistan, the Canadian government has pledged to accept 40,000 refugees and vulnerable individuals under special immigration programs for Afghans. Canada’s immigration policies for Afghan refugees are vague and disconnected from the reality on the ground, which not only makes the migration process irregular and unpredictable for Afghan refugees but also leaves them in a liminal legal limbo that leaves them vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. Neela Hassan is a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of Waterloo who has been researching the issue in Canada and working with civil society organizations. In this study, Hassan shows how the uncertainty and impracticality of the legal processes of migration routes create problems. She discusses the claims that immigrants are discriminated against based on their racial and ethnic origins in the Canadian context. He argues that the discriminatory immigration policies of states in Canada serve the interests of the ruling classes and corporations.

Another book article belongs to Luna Chung with the study titled *Contemporary Vietnamese migration: the 39 Vietnamese ‘Essex lorry deaths’*. Describing the problem of migration through the 39 Vietnamese migrants found dead in a refrigerated container in 2019, Chung touches on global inequality and the real causes of migration through this event. Discussing the media’s discourse on migrants, the article argues that the rhetoric of “poor migrant” and “poor nation” hides a much more extensive network of global economies of inequality.

In her article *Nation building and migration: a comparative perspective of East Timor and Kashmir*, Dr. Tamanna Shah describes the mechanisms and causes of forced migration during decolonization in Asia. Examining the designs through the case of East Timor and Kashmir, this chapter shows that different decolonization designs, such as annexation and partition, lead to

the anti-democratic formation of the nation-state from above. As Shah argues, decolonization is a process that manages to conceal the trauma and atrocities people face in the postcolonial world through state control of the mass media.

The eighth article in the book is a *Compounded disadvantage: undocumented immigrant mothers navigating motherhood and precarious labour in the suburbs* by Dr. Sandra Castro. In this article, Dr Castro describes a topic that has been little covered and touched. Research on the experiences of immigrant mothers living in the suburbs in the United States who are undocumented and working as low-wage workers in service sector industries such as domestic labor is limited. This research contributes to filling this gap and sheds light on this experience of compound disadvantage. The analysis is based on a qualitative study of twenty-five Central American transnational mothers living on Long Island, a suburb of New York City.

Turkey is one of the most immigrant countries in the world. The number of migrants, including Afghans, Syrians, Ukrainians, Iraqis and many other peoples, is uncertain due to the state's policies on this issue. Uncertainty and lawlessness facilitate the exploitation of labor by the ruling classes. Migrants are dispersed irregularly throughout the country. Dr. Özen Kurtuluş, in her contribution to the book, discusses the attitudes of LGBTI+s from Turkey towards Syrian and Ukrainian migrants. Thus, it is aimed to focus on the attitudes of LGBTI+s, who are often marginalized, towards another marginalized group, migrants. Within the framework of this purpose, it is discussed how LGBTI+ persons from Turkey view foreigners and how immigrants are constructed in LGBTI+ persons. It is questioned whether the perspective on foreigners differs at the point of being Syrian or Ukrainian. This article, in which Dr Kurtuluş reaches exciting findings, shows the perspective of a group excluded by society on the other excluded group.

The article *Afghani-Pakistani transnational families and new media*, which describes the relationship of migrant families with new media, shows how the use of new media technologies impacts relationships. In this study, Dr Shahid Minhas focuses on new communication and connection between migrants and their family members and explains the importance of new media relations. He describes how Afghan-Pakistani transnational families use social media platforms and mobile phones to maintain relationships and overcome separation challenges. It examines the impact of new media on migrant lives. The study conducts interviews with members of Afghani-Pakistani transnational families, as well as a review of relevant literature.

The last article of the book is on Kurds, a group that is marginalized in Turkey's political and social spheres. Especially Kurdish construction workers face many problems due to their ethnicity and the precariousness of their

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workplaces. Dr Kazım Tolga Gürel directly observed the field by working in construction for seven months. He witnessed how cortisol-laden bodies marginalize each other under harsh and heavy construction conditions. He wrote an article about the exclusion of construction workers, who are precariat groups in a highly masculine environment and precarious working conditions. *Precaria battles in constructions: Kurds & Afghans* give a perspective on the attitudes of Kurdish construction workers towards migrants.



# Chapter 1

## **ALGORITHMIC CRIMINALIZATION OF THE MIGRANT**

Merve Hickok\*

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### **Abstract**

Millions of people globally are displaced from their homes due to the post-colonial systemic collapse of government administrations, ongoing armed conflicts, poverty, climate-related disasters, food and health insecurity, exploitation of minerals, and modern slavery. In the meantime, many countries around the world are investing in border technology powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithmic systems to deter migrant movement. Migrants demand safety and security from the State. In return, the State uses algorithmic tools to protect itself from displaced people. Technologies used in border context are built on the narrative of national security. If a person cannot afford to enter a country as wealthy individuals do, then they are considered a risk to the nation regardless of the conditions that drove their displacement. The criminalization of migrants, rather than prioritizing the rights and wellbeing of the people, deepens the historical divides. States depend heavily on private companies to deploy these technologies. Border-industrial complex partnership between public agencies and private companies, and the increased privatization of the domain creates the conditions for experimentation. Both governments and corporations can test AI systems and expand the surveillance capabilities and data collection practices because both sides benefit from the arrangement. These technologies eventually find their application in mainstream society. Surveillance and risk profiling practices inherently force these communities to self-filter their activities and expressions to avoid interaction with the State. The chapter explains how AI and algorithmic systems can be used to surveil and punish migrants, starting at the borders and continuing beyond in their new communities due to their perceived risks, such as low income.

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**Keywords:** algorithmic risk, human rights, capitalism, migration surveillance, criminalization

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## Introduction

Millions of people globally are displaced from their homes due to the post-colonial systemic collapse of government administrations, ongoing armed conflicts, poverty, climate-related disasters, food and health insecurity, exploitation of minerals, and modern slavery. The root causes forcing displacement for survival are interconnected with the histories of domination by developed nations. The logic and mechanics of global capitalism continue to fuel these issues. The impacted people seek survival and better life chances in new destinations. In the meantime, many countries around the world are investing in border technology powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithmic systems to deter migrant movement. Governments also use these systems to profile people at the borders and beyond borders when they become part of the community. Migrants demand safety and security from the State. In return, the State uses algorithmic tools to protect itself from displaced people. Algorithmic tools can undermine human rights and the rule of law. The chapter explains how AI and algorithmic systems can be used to surveil and punish migrants starting at the borders and continuing beyond in their new communities, due to their perceived risks such as low income. Border-industrial complex partnership between public agencies and private companies, and the increased privatization of the domain create the conditions for experimentation with these technologies. Migrants are dehumanized and tested, while the private sector benefits from their conditions.

Algorithmic tools can undermine human rights and human dignity in a variety of ways. However, the humanitarian crisis of displaced people, their rights and dignity are overshadowed by the political rhetoric of national security. The underlying reasons for displacement are usually beyond the individuals' control, where migrants end up in a vulnerable situation (Madianou, 2019). They are further dehumanized and criminalized by the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithmic tools. In many cases, governments prefer to deter and divert migrant movement before people reach borders. Wealthy individuals can afford different methods to leave their homeland, relocate to a new country, utilize their assets, and start a new life. In doing so, they can also avoid many dehumanizing algorithmic systems that intrude into private lives, family connections and cultural histories. However, for those further down the social and economic ladder, the options are much more limited. Sometimes, there is no alternative. Whereas the first group is expected to bring the wealth



they own into the new country, other migrants are framed as if they will add negative value to the country. Migrants with low or no income might be dependent on government support until they establish themselves in new communities. They might also prefer to start their new lives in areas where they can count on a social support system, collective action, and shared language. However, such transitional periods are weaponized against them for political narratives and economic purposes. Conflict and displacement are increasingly interconnected and mutually reinforcing, driving more and more people to search for safety and security (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2020a).

The very nations whose political and historical acts cause(d) the displacements in the first place can be found to deflect responsibility through the use of technology. Displaced people are subjected to technologies used to track and predict migratory movements. If people on the move make it to a point where they can claim refugee or asylum status, they are put under heavy surveillance and are subjected to a variety of algorithmic systems used to profile them and make judgments about their immigration requests and their future. Within these systems, migrants are framed as “risk factors”. Every person, despite the nuances of their story, is criminalized for the sheer fact of being on the move. Profiling and surveillance do not stop at the borders either. Even when some of these individuals are successful in their immigration applications, they stay under surveillance and are assumed to be a continued risk to the nation. They are not considered innocent until proven guilty. The extensive data collected about them and their risk profiles follow them into their new communities and impact their access to opportunities and resources (Greenfield, 2020).

Private companies are increasingly becoming part of the relationship between these individuals and government agencies. The last few years have witnessed unprecedented investment by European Union (EU) member states and the United States (US) towards expanding the border infrastructure and data collection and use, as well as efforts to make the migration databases interoperable across nations and agencies. States increasingly use private corporations to build the necessary infrastructure, procure software and hardware to deliver their goals, or benefit from the knowledge, skills or data of these entities (Hickok, 2022). However, this is a two-way relationship, where the corporations are not mere respondents but are actively involved in shaping the policies and tools, and where the annual growth of the border security market is predicted to reach a total of \$65–68 billion by 2025 (Akkerman, 2023a). The fact that a ‘market’ of billions of dollars exists, venture capital companies invest in this market, and make predictions about its growth is evidence of how corporations “become de facto part of the policies of securitization of borders and criminalization of migrants” under a broader process of outsourcing inherent government functions (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2020b). A United

Nations (UN) working group reports that companies operating in this space “are actively involved in setting the research, policy and regulatory agendas of States and regional organizations and institutions” where they have a say in determining publicly-funded research priorities, and also ensure “their favoured technical requirements are integrated within policies, calls for proposals, tenders, bids and project specifications” (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2020b). A research report shows that between 2014 and 2022, the EU has provided more than \$250 million to 49 projects seeking to develop border technologies (Statewatch, 2023). In other words, corporations set the rules and expectations, receive funding to undertake research, benefit from subsequent government contracts, and test their tools and systems on migrant populations. The narratives of national security and economic risk become useful tools in this process.

### **Algorithmic risk profiling and predictions**

Algorithmic systems are built to process large amounts of data at scale and speed. These systems are preferred when a set of rules needs to be applied in a uniform manner across large datasets. They are deemed to provide efficiency and cost savings. However, when there is a need for nuanced decisions or evaluation of factors in a use case, where the factors require human judgments, then these systems can fail. Algorithmic systems do not make moral or legal decisions. They are dependent on what is coded, prioritized, or designed into the system. Therefore, they are terrible in use cases that require nuance or evaluation of social conditions. Algorithmic systems can be as simple as an “If – Then rule”. Alternatively, they can be more complex machine-learning systems that are trained on large datasets to make classifications or predict outcomes based on patterns and probabilities. Developers can design and specify how an AI model should behave and what criteria to use in making decisions. The systems can also learn new ways to process data depending on their own analysis of data (machine learning systems). If the system, for example, is trained on more examples of male employees selected for engineering jobs in a company, then the system may assign higher probabilities for male job applicants’ success. A machine learning model can analyze past immigration cases and learn from patterns that people from certain countries, with certain job skills or low income, have been rejected at higher rates. The system does not make a judgment about whether that pattern is lawful, fair, or justifiable. The system simply learns to replicate existing patterns.

Most algorithmic technologies are used to predict risk in a variety of contexts. Is a person worthy of credit (or at risk of defaulting)? Is a person worthy of employment (or at risk of failure in the role)? Is a person in need of a government financial benefit (or is a fraud risk)? Individuals can be treated as a possible health, safety, security, or financial risk due to their education, work,

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# LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

**Merve Hickok** is the founder of AIethicist.org. She is a globally renowned, award-winning expert on AI policy, ethics and governance. Her work focuses on the impact of AI systems on individuals and society - particularly the impact on fundamental rights, democratic values, and social justice. Merve is also the President and Policy Director at the Center for AI & Digital Policy (CAIDP), deeply engaged in global AI policy and regulatory work, providing recommendations to governments and international organizations (such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe, OECD, United Nations, Global Partnership on AI). Merve has previously provided testimony to the US Congress, the State of California, New York City and Detroit City councils. She provides expert input to the Council of Europe Committee on AI for the upcoming AI convention, as well as the EU AI Act. Merve authored the book “From Trustworthy AI Principles to Public Procurement Practices.”

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Strategic Research, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Kesgin held multiple positions simultaneously at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM), where she worked for nearly five years. Her roles included Gulf Studies Research Assistant, Middle East Analysis Journal Editor Assistant, and Event Coordinator. Her research interests focus on the Gulf region, human rights, and migration.

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**Luna Chung**, is a first-generation PhD born in a refugee camp. She earned her doctorate in Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Arizona and is currently an independent scholar. Luna is preparing a manuscript titled, "(Un)making Refugee," that thinks through how the legal figure of the refugee is predicated on a negation of Blackness.

**Tamanna M. Shah** is an Assistant Professor of Instruction in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Ohio University, USA. She is also the Global Learning Fellow with the Provost's Office. She is the Book Reviews Editor for *Sociological Research Online*. She earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Utah and holds a Master's degree in Sociology from Kansas State University and a Bachelor's degree in Economics. She has conducted field research in Kashmir, India, and East Timor. Her interests include comparative political sociology, gender and race, social change, and inequality. She is the author of *Children and Youth as 'Sites of Resistance' in Armed Conflict Volumes I and II*, which are part of the ASA section on Children and Youth. She has authored publications in leading sociology and political science journals. She has collaborated with the Asian Development Bank on various policy papers.

**Sandra Castro** currently serves as the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs at Adelphi University's College of Professional and Continuing Studies (CPCS) and teaches part-time in the Sociology Department. Additionally, she co-chairs the university-wide Hispanic Serving Institution Task Force at Adelphi. Her previous roles included Academic Director of the Social Science program at Adelphi. Sandra holds a PhD in Social Welfare from the City University of New York-Graduate Center. Her academic background also includes a Master of Science degree in Rural Development, a Master of Arts degree in Sustainable Development, and a BA in Sociology and Black and Puerto Rican Studies. As an executive board member of LIISA (Long Island Immigrant Students Advocates),

Sandra is a vocal advocate for Latinx and undocumented immigrant students' access to post-secondary education opportunities on Long Island. She is also committed to improving immigrant Latina mothers' access to services for themselves and their families.

**Özen Kurtuluş** is a research assistant in the sociology department of Mersin University in Turkey. She is giving lessons about gender equality and sociology. After graduating from Marmara University Faculty of Law, she worked briefly as a lawyer. Later, she started as an assistant at Mersin University's Women's Studies department and completed her doctorate in the same department.

Dr **Shahid Minhas** is a Lecturer of Digital Communication at RMIT Vietnam. He is a Higher Education Commission of Pakistan Approved Ph.D. Supervisor. He teaches and mentors undergraduate and graduate students and conducts research. His primary research interests are social media, media and language and Political Communication. Before joining academia, he practiced journalism in several print and electronic media organizations in Pakistan. He has, to his credit, well over a gross of scholarly publications in academic journals and books. He has also co-edited books and authored one.