

Between Privilege and Paradox: Migration, Motherhood, and Stalled Careers

Socius: Sociological Research for
a Dynamic World
Volume 12: 1–19
© The Author(s) 2026
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/23780231261457977
srd.sagepub.com



Eszter Balogh¹ , Zsuzsanna Szvetelszky²,
Jázmin Szonja Ábrahám³, and Judit T. Nagy²

Abstract

This study examines the migration and labour market experiences of highly educated Hungarian mothers living in Vienna through qualitative research. We seek to understand how family migration and motherhood shape these women's integration and labour market participation. Our findings indicate that mothers remain permanently outside the labour market, a situation stemming not primarily from structural barriers but from intertwined factors: the existential security provided by the husband's income, traditional norms of motherhood, and the fear of social decline. Mothers' integration does not appear as a linear process but rather follows a parallel pattern: Women connect with Austrian institutions primarily in an indirect manner by setting up a proxy integration while building strong ties within Hungarian communities, creating a self-segregating co-ethnic integration. The empirical contribution of this study demonstrated in the sample studied is to show that the labour market inactivity of highly educated migrant women is the result of complex social and psychological mechanisms. To capture this phenomenon, we introduce the concepts of "backstage integration" and "social surfing."

Keywords

de-qualification, family migration, de-emancipation, tied migration, highly skilled migrants

Introduction

Labour market integration plays a central role in the social inclusion and equality of migrants. Contrary to the flow of highly skilled labour (Fortney 1970; Gaillard and Gaillard 1997), many migrants experience underpayment, marginalization, or loss of their qualifications (Muhirva 2012). For EU citizens who face no legal barriers (Riaño 2003; Seminario Luna 2018), integration depends primarily on the social, cultural, and labour market conditions of the host countries.

The paradox of privilege and marginalization is evident in the case of Eastern European women within the EU, who, despite their high qualifications, often face exclusion from the labour market, loss of qualifications, and underemployment (Anderson, Clark, and Parutis 2007; Dumont and Monso 2007; Gühlich 2017). Although they have the same rights as citizens of the host country, cultural and language barriers make it difficult for them to access work (Lehtovaara and Jyrkinen 2021; Pusch 2010). For many, motherhood coincides with migration, further exacerbating these challenges. The tied migration framework (Cooke 2001, 2008; Mincer 1978) explains another common gender-related

pattern: Men's careers encourage them to move, while women take on a "following" role and prioritize caregiving over career continuity. They face longer employment gaps, slower career progression, and weaker labour market attachment, their "occupational downshift" becoming a major obstacle of social integration (Venugopal and Huq 2022; Zinatsa and Saurombe 2022). While concepts such as occupational downshifting or deskilling are related definitions, most of this research uses the term "de-qualification" (the situation where individuals are employed in jobs that do not match their formal education, skills, or professional qualifications) as it is more relevant to this highly educated

¹Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Budapest, Hungary

²Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, Budapest, Hungary

³Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

Corresponding Author:

Eszter Balogh, Department of Sociology, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, H-1091 Budapest, Kálvin Square 9, Budapest, Hungary.

Email: balogh.eszter@kre.hu



population studied, and since qualifications are still relevant in both cultural and labour market settings in the Hungarian context (Balogh, Mikó, and Csanády 2022; European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training 2025; Lengyel 2014; Sert 2016), Freitas-Monteiro's (2024) research on tied migrants in Germany suggests that not only are tied migrants more likely to be separated and less likely to be integrated but also that the benefits of investing in the host country's culture do not outweigh the psychological costs of distancing from the culture of their origin country. These disadvantages are compounded by those arising from motherhood (Budig and England 2001; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007), which are further reinforced in the case of migrants by ethnic stereotypes and traditional gender norms (Udayanga 2024).

This study examines voluntary mobility within the EU, with a particular focus on highly educated Hungarian "trailing mothers" in Vienna—a growing but underresearched group—whose members move for domestic or family reasons. This article attempts to supplement the migration literature with some result. It introduces two concepts—"backstage integration" and "social surfing"—to try explain how motherhood, migration, and loss of qualifications interact in women's withdrawal from the labour market, the reconstruction of their identities, and their de-emancipation.

The study introduces the concept of backstage integration to conceptualize the form of integration described by this unique group of highly educated women in their interviews. Backstage integration is a form of segmented integration in which migrants remain outside of the labour market while two forms of integration occur in parallel: One is a proxy integration into the host society through its institutions, and the other is an identity-based integration into their own ethnic group, which results in self-segregation. Proxy integration is achieved through the integration of family members in the host country. Identity-based co-ethnic integration, on the other hand, is strongly rooted in emotion. In this study, the term "backstage"¹ reflects the way migrants remain largely invisible to the host society due to their labour market inactivity while simultaneously performing substantial integrative work for the family. Thus, "backstage" captures an invisibility coupled with central functional importance in facilitating family integration.

Social surfing functions as the strategic behaviour through which backstage integration is enacted. Social surfing refers to the practise of strategically navigating dual identities

(national and integrational) depending on social context and emotional comfort, such as within Hungarian communities in Vienna versus Austrian institutions.

Vienna's proximity to Hungary reinforces this by maintaining transnational ties and a sense of temporariness, legitimizing labour market inactivity and partial, convenience-based integration. By linking the disadvantages of motherhood and the loss of qualifications with marginalized integration, social surfing, and de-emancipation, the study tries to present how privilege and dependency coexist in women's migration within the EU. Data show that integration does not appear as a linear process of adaptation but as an ambivalent, emotion-driven process shaped by gender norms, demonstrating how, beyond structural barriers, social and psychological mechanisms perpetuate gender inequality in migration experiences.

Our research question was the following: What social and socio-psychological factors play a role in the integration of Hungarian mothers who migrate to Vienna, have a higher education degree, and live in good financial circumstances?

The Impact of Family Migration on Women's Labour Market Integration

The literature on disadvantages arising from motherhood and caregiving, intersectionality, and family migration comprehensively describes the disadvantages and penalties faced by migrant women and mothers, particularly in terms of labour market integration, income, and career development (see e.g., Budig and England 2001; Kleven et al. 2019; Platt 2009). Women in the host country face barriers to labour market participation and integration due to motherhood and caregiving responsibilities. The theories of motherhood, the care penalty, and intersectionality primarily address the situation of migrants with ethnic backgrounds outside Europe, but their findings are in many respects also valid for people who are mobile within the EU.

The motherhood penalty (Correll et al. 2007) refers to the structural and evaluative disadvantages experienced by mothers in the labour market—lower pay, fewer promotions, stricter evaluation, and employment discrimination compared to women without children. This disadvantage is exacerbated by migration and varies according to ethnicity (Khoudja and Fleischmann 2015, 2017; Udayanga 2024). The employment rate of migrant mothers remains low—only 52 percent of those ages 25 to 54 was employed in OECD countries in 2022–2023 (Udayanga 2024). They have fewer job opportunities and are disadvantaged by employment interruptions and part-time work (Budig and England 2001). This is present even in Anglo-Saxon countries, where there is

¹We use "backstage" in a descriptive sense and specifically in a migration context and not within Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework.

a 3 percent employment gap between mothers with an ethnic background and women without children. Research (Folbre 2018; Udayanga 2024) shows that the care penalty (unpaid childcare and household activities) affects all women, but migrants are more severely affected due to traditional gender norms and their immigrant status.

These findings suggest that motherhood represents a structural turning point in women's migration trajectories, often signifying a loss of professional qualifications or voluntary withdrawal from the labour market. In the European context, this dynamic is further reinforced by the patterns of decision-making within the household described in the literature on tied migration, where women's employment becomes secondary to the advancement of men's careers.

Studies show that European migrant women fare better than non-EU women, as seen in France, where they are the least disadvantaged ethnic group due to shared cultural values and gender norms (Achouche 2022). However, this relative privilege does not guarantee labour market equality. Even within the EU, motherhood is associated with structural and cultural barriers, leading to a deterioration in employment status and career interruptions. Migrant women living in the EU face overqualification and limited labour market access compared to their situation or status in their home countries (Schieckoff and Sprengholz 2021). Eastern European women living in Western countries are more likely to lose their qualifications (Anderson et al. 2007; Dumont and Monso 2007), which is the case in Germany (Guhlich 2017), England (Ciupijus 2011), Switzerland (Riaño 2003), Finland (Lehtovaara and Jyrkinen 2021), and Iceland (Christiansen and Kristjánsdóttir 2020). Family structures and patterns strongly influence women's employment status in host countries (Kovács and Melegh 2007). Many consider the financial security of their children to be more important than career goals, and family responsibilities leave them with no time for retraining or language learning (Boyle et al. 2003; Melegh, Kovács, and Gödri 2010; Pusch 2010).

The intersection of the literature on tied migration and loss of qualifications highlights that the professional downgrading of women is often not a random outcome but a structural consequence of household migration strategies. When families move because of the career of one partner—usually the man—the woman's employment continuity is interrupted, leading to inactivity or a mismatch between her job and her qualifications. Women in the follower role face long-term career disruption, loss of qualifications, unemployment, or withdrawal from the labour market (Ballarino and Panichella 2018; Boyle, Feng, and Gayle 2009; Cooney, De Angelis, and Segal 2011; Eich-Krohm 2007; Slobodin 2017). Tied migration also slows down women's wage

growth (Cooke et al. 2009; Zinatsa and Saurombe 2022), which is further reinforced by expectations related to traditional gender roles (Bielby and Bielby 1992; Cooke 2008). Overall, the disadvantages of motherhood, the loss of qualifications, and the interrelated effects of restricted migration reveal a common structural logic: The professional disadvantages of women in relation to migration are not isolated phenomena but stem from gender inequalities in the labour market and family-based mobility patterns.

Austrian-Hungarian Family Policy and Migration Patterns

Amidst growing trends in mobility, it is essential to understand the migration of women between Eastern and Western Europe (Drobot 2022). This study examines the gender dimensions of Hungarian-Austrian migration, which has been shaped by a shared imperial past and similar cultural values regarding family and the role of women.

Hungarian migration to Austria is rooted in historical ties and geographical proximity. The first major wave followed the 1956 revolution (Niessen 2005), and informal cross-border relations continued during the socialist era. After Hungary's accession to the EU, the Austrian-Hungarian border became part of the EU's free movement zone. Vienna, a long-standing multicultural metropolis, promotes inclusion through its Integration und Diversität Wien strategy, which aims to integrate residents with a migrant background. The Hungarian community is now one of the largest in Central European group and maintains vibrant cultural, educational, and religious networks.

Despite inclusive policies, migrants face obstacles such as limited recognition of qualifications, language challenges, and residential segregation (Permoser and Rosenberger 2012). On January 1, 2024, there were 51,119 Hungarian women living in Austria (Eurostat 2022), accounting for 52 percent of the population of Hungarian origin (Németh et al. 2023). More than 60 percent of them experience a loss of professional qualifications, mainly due to language barriers that limit their career advancement (Balogh et al. 2022).

Both Hungary and Austria follow conservative family models that maintain the division of labour between the sexes. In Austria, women often work part-time and delay full-time employment after giving birth (Buber-Ennser 2015), reflecting persistent "separate gender roles" (Gönenç et al. 2020). Hungary similarly promotes conservative, maternal ideals: The "norm of maternal availability" and generous childcare benefits encourage mothers to stay at home, reinforcing the cultural link between femininity, caregiving, and social respect (Dupcsik 2015). The norm of

maternal availability—the expectation that mothers stay at home for the first three years of their child’s life—is institutionalized both culturally and economically.

Research Methods

The research took place throughout 2023 within the framework of a larger research project.²

In our qualitative research, the study population comprises trailing women (those who follow their husbands through tied migration) living in Vienna with a high level of education who became mothers during the migration period and whose husbands provide for the family’s livelihood. Highly educated migrant mothers in our research are women who have a university degree and became mothers immediately before, during, or within two years of migration. Women in our sample are considered highly educated, reflecting the Hungarian context in which all university degrees (BA, MA, PhD) are regarded as advanced education. The decent livelihood of the women in our sample in Austria is ensured by their husbands.

We collected data from 25 women using an in-depth face-to-face interview method. The interviews took place at the interviewees’ homes or cafes. The interviews allowed for iterative comparison across cases and was sufficient for the identification and refinement of the core conceptual categories developed in this study. The interviewees were not known to the researchers in advance. The average length of the interviews was 90 minutes. The interviews were transcribed, anonymized, and analysed using the Atlas.ti software. The analysis was carried out drawing on grounded theory–informed coding procedures (open and axial coding and constant comparison) within an inductive, theory-building qualitative framework (Glaser and Strauss 2017). The research analysed the role of family ties with the home country, social ties, group membership, educational attainment, participation and experience in labour market and administrative processes, language skills, migration history, and migration process. By using coding and memo, we were able to identify the hidden, difficult-to-identify mechanisms in the complex and complicated life situations of women and made it possible to grasp the backstage motivators presented from the bottom up and to develop our concepts describing the situation of women, such as backstage integration and social surfing. Although participants differed in when they became mothers relative to migration (before, during, or shortly after), this was not used to divide them into separate analytic groups. Instead, it served as a shared criterion for

inclusion, capturing a common experience of early motherhood alongside migration. The sampling criterion in the research was therefore the temporal overlap of motherhood and migration. Analysis focused on social and socio-psychological processes across the whole sample. No new aspects of the main themes emerged as more interviews were analysed, indicating that conceptual saturation of the central mechanisms had been reached. The sampling was done using the snowball method with three starting points (a mailing list of the Hungarian school in Vienna, a Facebook page for Hungarians living in Vienna, and a mailing list for Hungarian mothers in Vienna).

Accordingly, we acknowledge that this recruitment route may overrepresent women who are already more strongly connected to co-ethnic circles, and thus, the role of Hungarian-language networks may be more prominent in the experiences. We have reflected this potential bias in our interpretation: We discuss the results not as a representative description of “Hungarian mothers in Vienna” but as an exploration of social and socio-psychological mechanisms that are particularly observable in this sample. In addition, we consciously sought variation within the sample (e.g., timing of motherhood in relation to migration, family situation, involvement in school/kindergarten institutions).

Table 1 includes the most important characteristics of the interviewees that were relevant for our research data. We did not systematically collect data on husbands’ occupations because the study focused on women’s migration–motherhood experiences. In a small, densely connected sample, such details could increase identifiability, so we mention partners’ professional background only when narratively relevant. The men were highly educated and working at the time of the interview in Vienna.

All the women lived in heterosexual relationship and were white. Four women gained migration experience as young single workers, and three husbands had previously worked abroad. The interviewees had worked in Hungary before migration. Sixteen interviewees spoke German during migration, and 9 moved with little language knowledge. The “inactive” category indicates a lack of regular employment; regardless of this, some participants engaged in occasional/casual, small-scale income-generating activities, which are listed separately. The sample also includes working participants, but in these cases, employment is mostly associated with de-qualification, meaning that women typically appear in jobs with lower prestige than their qualifications and previous professional status. The situation of working women is often linked to family constraints, where the partner is unable to provide adequate financial security or where the participant’s divorced status makes it necessary to take up employment in order to make a living. One

²Ethics license registration number Reg. No.: RH-TUD/1786-1/2024.

Table 1. Demographics and Characteristics.

Characteristic	Category	N
Age	30–35 years	14
	36–40 years	11
Education	BA	8
	MA	17
Timing of motherhood relative to migration	Before migration	10
	During and after migration	3
	After migration	5
	Before and after migration	7
Number of children	One	10
	Two	14
	Three	1
Marital status	Married	15
	Partnered	9
	Divorced	1
Occupation prior to migration	Professional/managerial	6
	Health professions	3
	Legal professions	1
	Business/economics/marketing	8
	Self-employed/entrepreneur	4
	On maternity leave	3
	Inactive (no regular payment)	14
Labour market status in Austria	Inactive doing occasionally marginal work	6
	Employed below qualification level	5
German language skill	Speak German	16
	Little language knowledge	9
Years since migration	2–4 years	2
	5–7 years	9
	8–10 years	3
	More than 10 years	11

mother, who is a doctor, was able to find a position commensurate with her qualifications.

Results

In Vienna, women's lives are closely intertwined with migration events, and the group's social behaviour is homogeneous in many respects. The integration of the social group in Vienna is a complex but compact system of interacting elements in which Hungarian cultural embeddedness, Hungarian family patterns, sociopsychological processes, labour market opportunities, the geographical location of Vienna, the sense of transience all play a role.

Based on our data, it can be concluded that women become part of backstage integration during their migration, which may arise from the interplay of three factors we call "motivators": a single-earner family model (existential motivator), conservative Hungarian ideals of motherhood

(cultural motivator), and the avoidance of the shame associated with de-qualification (socio-psychological motivator). Backstage integration differs from other categories of household migration strategies, such as tied migration, as it is a broader category. Tied migration may be one pathway into backstage integration, but backstage integration encompasses the full configuration of labour market inactivity, proxy participation, and co-ethnic identification that persists beyond the initial migration event.

Our data show that in the destination country, these women integrate into the Austrian community in a proxy way and voluntarily self-segregate into their co-ethnic group and that this position is simultaneously shaped by the three motivators that act as external forces. Backstage integration, due to its migration contexts, goes hand in hand with a lasting sense of transience and uncertainty. Integration is facilitated by strategically applied social surfing.

The results are illustrated graphically in Figure 1.

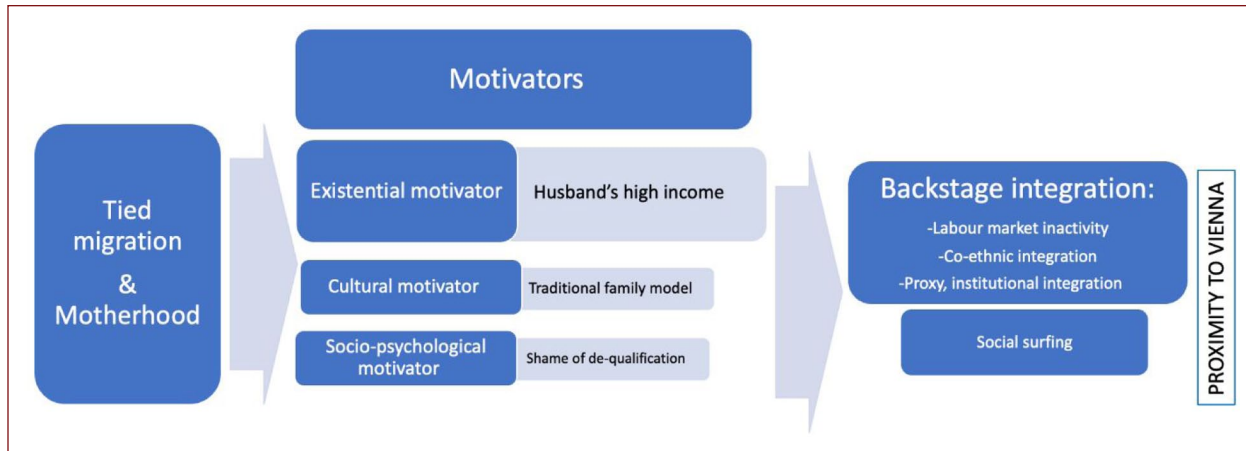


Figure 1. The emergence of backstage integration in Vienna.

Tied Migration as Mothers and Backstage Motivators

One of the characteristics of backstage integration is that women settled in Vienna not by their own choice but by following their husbands and became mothers during migration (Cooke 2001, 2008; Mincer 1978), that is, immediately before or after migration. Data showed that becoming a parent made the decision to migrate easier. Despite this, they experienced the move as a drift; their considerations were less present in the decision-making process (Slobodin 2017). The act of Self-Silencing (Jack and Dill 1992) is a possible psychological mechanism at play for these mothers, often stemming from cultural and gendered pressures.

So, I didn't really have to discuss with anyone whether we should move or not. That was because I had heard that it was very difficult to find a job without knowing German, especially in the field of communication, which I am good at. ... Of course, I blamed him and often told him that it was his fault I was in this situation, even though it was my own decision to come with him. ... Well, I wanted to be with him, and I thought I could overcome this obstacle. I'll learn the language, and I'll have a career too. ... And then nothing turned out the way I planned. (One child after migration, partnership, cleaning then account manager, six years in migration)

So, it was his dream for a long time; I went after him. (Two children, after migration, married, active, more than eight years in migration)

I moved here at the end of 2006, and it all came from the fact that my husband had already worked here for a few years and so

I had to come after him. ... And then I joined him while pregnant. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, partnership more than 10 years in migration)

Based on the interviews, the decision to migrate appears in the women's narratives mostly as a relationship and family decision. The husband's job opportunity triggers the move, while the women's own decision is often to "be with him" and trust that they will be able to overcome the language and labour market barriers later. At the same time, this choice is often framed as conditional and temporary, with statements such as "Let's try it" or "If I start working, we'll go back." Due to pregnancy and the situation of having small children, the decision is sometimes described as drifting, where stability is linked not to the place but to the family being together. Several narratives strongly reflect a duality in that participants acknowledge that the move was "their own decision" but later express disappointment when "nothing turned out as planned" and the language, work, and integration proved to be more difficult than expected. From a female perspective, the central organizing principle of the decision is often caregiving responsibilities (especially with a newborn or several children), which in some cases leads to explicit resistance in the form of statements such as "I didn't really want to come" and the experience that one's own point of view is difficult to assert. Overall, the decision is not a one-time act but a process that is reinterpreted retrospectively. Alongside the hope of family unity and the promise of self-fulfilment postponed to a later date, ambivalence gradually emerges as migration permanently rearranges women's scope of action and opportunities in everyday life.

The identified three backstage motivators have a dual function in the integration of women. On the one hand, they are integration barriers that make it almost impossible for women to enter and form relationships with Austrian social groups and the labour market (proxy integration). On the other hand, they act as motivators for self-segregation in Hungarian communities (co-ethnic integration).

Existential motivator. The existential motivator is a key factor facilitating the emergence of backstage integration as across the interviews, it emerged as the most important and most frequently mentioned. The existential motivator refers to the husband's high income, which guarantees the family's financial security. The labour market position of this population is often determined by their husbands' earnings (Ballarino and Panichella 2018) as even with childcare allowances, they are not financially autonomous. At the same time, in Hungarian culture, women's inactivity is poorly accepted. The active labour market status of women in Hungary is an expectation independent of the financial status of the family and husband. The social milieu's prevailing attitudes make this labour market inactivity challenging to accept as a woman with earning potential (Pongrácz and Molnár 2011). Contrary to the Austrian family policy and cultural pattern where the majority of mothers only go back to part-time positions after their child turns three (Ziegler and Bamieh 2025), most Hungarian women return to work full-time after three years (Blaskó 2008; OECD 2022). In a Hungarian context, withdrawal from paid work during the first three years of childcare is widely understood as a temporary and time-bounded phase. Consistent with this norm, most participants initially framed their labour market return as a time-bounded plan, often linked to the child reaching nursery or kindergarten age and/or to acquiring German language skills. In practise, however, these plans were repeatedly postponed. Thus, the inclusion of mothers with children ages one to three in our sample does not contradict Hungarian expectations of return after three years; rather, it makes visible how migration-related barriers, such as language acquisition, childcare access, and women's backstage positioning, can extend an originally temporary withdrawal from paid work into a prolonged and sometimes indefinite absence from the labour market.

It would not have been the same in Hungary because you return to work after your child turns three. (One child, before migration, inactive with casual work, married, six years in migration)

In our study, we realized that contrary to Hungarian norms, the social and economic position of husbands in

Vienna determines highly educated mothers' career prospects and labour market activity.

I do not know. It could be a bit of a convenience, but I have a good thing going for me. When I look at the fact that I am not working, now both my children are in kindergarten, only half-day, but they go to kindergarten, we live well on one income. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, married, four years in migration)

According to our data, the existential motivator is specific to families with a well-paid husband. As the data collection does not allow us to establish causal relationships, we can only conclude here that the husband's favourable occupational and economic status is likely to be one of the most significant co-factors in the process of backstage integration, on the condition that inactivity can indeed be a beneficial situation. Husband's secure labour market position raises the woman's comparison level for alternatives, rendering work-force reentry less attractive. This preference for maintaining the current situation can be understood through the lens of Status Quo Bias (Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988), which describes people's tendency to favour their existing environment and resist change. At the same time, Hungarian cultural expectations of maternal employment maintain a high original comparison level, producing a potential dissonance that is resolved by adopting a backstage role. This arrangement minimizes perceived personal loss, preserves relational equilibrium within the family, and allows women to remain active in crucial integrator functions—such as ensuring children's dual cultural education and representing family interests in Austrian institutions—without entering the formal labour market (Thibaut and Kelley 1959).

Cultural motivator. The cultural motivator is linked to the Hungarian traditional and conservative family model. Women's acceptance of traditional values automatically activates the valorisation of the family dimension as a legitimate and evident area of compensation since the shift toward traditional values is not culturally inadvisable. Backstage integration is not an "automatic" consequence of the existential situation, but it can become permanent when the existential security of the household creates the condition that the woman has the option of staying out of the labour market, while cultural/gender norms provide the framework of meaning and legitimacy that makes this option a "correct" and acceptable choice. In other words, the cultural norm of motherhood alone is not enough to maintain backstage integration—if the family's livelihood is not secure, women have to work—so the emergence of backstage integration requires the combined presence of cultural and existential dimensions, where the

existential factor is more of a prerequisite than a cause. In their migration circumstances, motherhood provides a reasonable justification for staying away from the labour market since they are importing the domestic Hungarian culture of motherhood into their lives in Vienna.

I definitely wanted to stay at home with my son for three years to give the second child that attention and support as well. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive with sometimes casual work, partnership, more than 10 years in migration)

An important characteristic of husband-centred migration is that the wife sacrifices for her family by leaving behind her job, grandparental support, and home network, learning motherhood in a new and unfamiliar environment in a foreign country. They cannot rely on the safety or support of their familiar surroundings.

I tried to pack, cook, play, walk, care for my six-week-old, and look for a doctor in English or Hungarian on my own; that is difficult. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, married, seven years in migration)

However, the experience of motherhood is different in the lives of women in their country of birth and the host country. For migrant mothers, emotions play a significant role throughout migration as their emotions determine the process of making sense of the new environment and shape their experiences of the new life (Herrero-Arias et al. 2021). These mothers compensate for their labour market losses through patriarchal family structures by overinvesting in their family's integration efforts (Steele 1988). Mothers who retreated from the labour market cannot use their skills in that context and redirect them into their micro-environment. Therefore, their desire for self-actualization is not exploited in the labour market but in the family context. They invest a lot of energy into helping the children receive high-quality education and relentlessly represent the children's interests in kindergarten and school (if not in German, then in English). Their life's goal is for their children to achieve outstanding results and performance. Their success is nothing less than the success and prosperity of their children and husbands in Vienna. This work in Vienna fills women's lives and is perceived as invisible labour—not limited to domestic tasks but also encompassing support for success-oriented integration, intensive communication with people from home, dual Hungarian-Austrian cultural education, and the many responsibilities that accompany it. Therefore, motherhood takes on a broader meaning for them in Vienna because it is fulfilled in an integrative role. Women draw on their specific skills, competencies, advocacy tools, and intellectual and decision-making

capacities to support both their families and their own self-fulfilment through integrative labour. At this point, we should note that invisible work here is not limited to performing care tasks (contrary to care punishment theories) but is a work that uses intellectual abilities to a great extent and is embodied in the integration work aimed at their families.

We denounced the nursery because we saw that the teachers or the nursery teacher were very frustrated. They just had to push a curriculum that had nothing to do with the child. (Two children, before migration, inactive, married, five years in migration)

[Talking about filling institutional gaps] in these situations, mothers have to really be on top of it... we can create an alternative reality, a Hungarian reality for them. (Two children, after migration, inactive, married, seven years in migration)

On the one hand, he is very grateful and appreciative and really values that I make it possible for the children and the family to make things work... Because we learned at home that I should not waste my time and energy on this [job seeking] and that it is much more important to spend time and energy on children. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, married, seven years in migration)

Psychological motivator. The phenomenon of de-qualification, as observed in studies (Balogh et al. 2022), also emerged in this research; however, the issue is situated within a social psychological context. Women feel an intense fear of being relegated to occupying a much lower position in Vienna than their occupational position in Hungary. These women could already be in a managerial position or at the top of their careers, and their losses are thus amplified and intensely felt. The phenomenon is also an example of how the motherhood penalty is amplified in the context of migration.

It's hard for me to go back into the job market because my self-confidence has been shattered.... Some people wonder why, with my degree in economics, I'm not doing some super job at "X" bank and why am I not doing something really good. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, married, more than 10 years in migration)

However, for these women, we are witnessing the socio-psychological embedding of punishment. The psychological motivator for backstage integration is the fear of shame associated with de-qualification and the visibility of status loss (Lewis 1995), which acts as an internal brake on labour market integration. Shame in social relationships can manifest itself in the so-called exposed self (Lewis 1995) in the form of noncompliance with social expectations. Thus, women fear that by being de-qualified, they will fail to conform to

the labour market and social norms appropriate to their former social status and will be judged by the people from home. Avoiding shame in these mothers' lives is an intense psychological force that can preserve their inactive labour market status in their migration. Therefore, even though many desire to reenter the workforce, this does not equal to the willingness of accepting any job. This avoidance of shame means that they only want to accept jobs that are compatible with their previous status to preserve their identity. However, as mentioned, due to the existential motivator of the husband's high income, the wait for the ideal position and the pursuit of language learning becomes a stable strategic choice for the women studied.

I have already thought: Why don't I go and clean? Why don't I go to an ALDI to stock a vegetable counter? Because I could do that. However, the shame is that my inner values stop me from doing it. (One child, after migration, married, inactive, more than 10 years in migration)

Additionally, those few women who do end up taking jobs beneath their qualifications due to circumstances in which the existential motivator of the husband's high income is temporarily weakened or absent (e.g., divorce, husband going through temporary financial hardship) experience the shame of this de-qualification to the highest degree.

But it [having a cleaning job] really hurt my ego, because my partner was a professor at WUN.... And it didn't do my ego any good that I earned more at home than he did in academics, so my career was more secure... and then I became such a housewife. (One child after migration, cohabitation, inactive, more than six years in migration)

She was still a little worried [speaking about her mother] back then, because I was a nurse's aide: Oh my God, my little girl, you graduated from college, and now you're carrying bedpans. (Two children before and after migration, married, active, more than 10 years in migration)

These cases highlight that backstage integration is not defined by labour market inactivity alone as both prolonged labour market inactivity and employment far below one's qualifications are structured by the same backstage dynamics, in which the ongoing management of shame and status loss regulates women's integration trajectories.

Similarly to other migrant groups (e.g., Pietka, Clark, and Canton 2013; Zschomler 2023), this population has a strong coexistence between de-qualification and language skills. Women perceive that low language skills limit access to occupational positions similar to those they held in Hungary.

And now I am supposed to work packing shelves in a Spar or a Billa without any knowledge of the language; let's just say I have a degree and a good job back in Hungary? (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, married, four years in migration)

Even though women's perceptions of their language skills vary, they tend to consider them low regardless of their language qualifications. Skilled mothers also position themselves at a much lower level than their real labour market opportunities are likely to exist (Festinger 1954). Their anxiety related to de-qualification is, therefore, a paralysis resulting from a negative self-perception. Women likely perceive that the language proficiency expected of them in a suitable job is linked to an elaborate language code (Bernstein 1971), which they cannot meet in German. They believe that their German language skills are only sufficient for physical work several levels below their level of education, so anxiety is caused by fear of being relegated to physical work.

They say I speak well, and they praise me, but I am not pleased with myself.... Let us put it that way: someone with a different personality could feel completely comfortable or more liberated. (One child, before migration, inactive, married, four years in migration)

The Mechanism of Backstage Integration

Backstage role and integrator role. Women easily engage in voluntary inactivity in the Austrian labour market as the family is not financially dependent on their earnings; they attempt to avoid de-qualification at all costs, import traditional mother ideals from home, and have followed their husbands and families, all of which solidify their identity as de-emancipated mothers. Together, these factors provide an exemption from entering the labour market and, simultaneously, a permission to work within the family while supporting family integration. The backstage role means not only physical isolation but also a deep inner identity crisis and emotional realignment for the women who immigrated to Vienna. In this situation, the professional "self" is pushed into the background in order to ensure the smooth running of the family, and thus a de-emancipatory turn occurs, and these women in Vienna find themselves in a patriarchal family system.

For me, it was a loss of identity. I was career-oriented, I was successful, I was fast-paced, I was constantly organizing events, I was full of friends, and then I found myself in such a completely opposite situation within a few months. Without friends, without

a job, without money. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, married, eight years in migration)

Somehow, my own life completely took a back seat to what would happen to me, to what I would do in the future. My only goal was somehow to...cherish this little child....But what about me? Where am I in all this? (One child before migration, inactive, married, eight years in migration)

There is no documented experience of similar de-emancipation dynamics among highly educated Hungarian women living in Hungary or abroad. De-emancipation here does not imply external coercion but an internally rationalized retreat, justified through motherhood and the ideal of maternal availability.

The research supplements other studies (Udayanga 2024) by showing that in this migration situation, women use their skills to support their families and not their careers by prioritizing the integration of their family members. This integrator role is an assumed, created behaviour and lifestyle. It results from unsuccessful integration into the labour market. It serves as a form of self-justification of a problematic life situation to oneself, one's husband, and the home-country social network. The integrator's role refers to the outside world; they do not take a job because they care for the family's affairs in the new country and the new life situation. Therefore, women are not directly involved in Austrian communities because of their inactivity; however, there is still an expectation placed on them as the quality and intensity of their family's contact with the communities depend primarily on them.

I pretty much push the cart on my own...I do the housework, the cleaning...I have to talk to the child and the [other] parents. (One child, before migration, partnership, inactive, four years in migration)

It's a burden that the responsibility is mine alone. (Two children, after migration, inactive, married, seven years in migration)

The example of mothers confirms the research on tied migration, motherhood penalty, care penalty, and de-qualification and adds a new dimension to it: It shows how the backstage and integrator role can become a form of social status and autonomy reordering for formally emancipated European women. Refusing low-status jobs is possible not only to avoid status loss but also for identity protection, and silent withdrawal is also a legitimizing tool for mothers.

Backstage integration. Backstage integration refers to a form of segmented integration in which migrant women remain

outside the labour market while simultaneously engaging in two parallel integration processes, which arises due to their inactivity in the labour market, their roles in family life, and the voluntary role they play as integrators through their ability to advocate for their interests. In the Austrian sphere, women are connected to the communities with an integrative role, helping their children and husbands to thrive. We define this integration as proxy integration, which is specifically linked to institutions, without cultural and emotional belonging but with functional and practical relationship to group members. In the Hungarian sphere, direct integration happens with strong emotional and cultural belonging and identification toward group members. We named this co-ethnic integration. The two integration processes coexist in parallel and operate according to very different dynamics. The main differences between the two lies in the sense of belonging and level of integration.

Due to women's inactivity in the labour market, they choose to help their children and family succeed as a field for self-realization. They thus invest their excellent skills in integrative work.

Integrative work links specifically to Austrian institutions (children's school, kindergarten, or other institutional frames, such as doctor's offices or other administrative institutional centres) with typically superficial interactions. Navigating such places is crucial for the integration success for their families, which becomes an important task for this demographic group. This leads to the proxy integration of these women into the Austrian institutional sphere. They must assume the role of the hyper-competent administrator who can seamlessly navigate various institutions so that the integration of their children and husbands can be successful, yet due to the advocacy being in favour of their family members and not their own, we cannot talk of real integration, only integration by proxy. Simultaneously, it is important to note that there is no emotional, identity-based integration either; they do not associate themselves with the Viennese culture or values despite the effort they put into understanding and navigating their institutions.

If necessary, I actively intervene in the institutional operation. For example, with the doctor...I took a Hungarian evaluation form, which I translated, so that they could try to fill in the criteria. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, married, eight years in migration)

All you need to know about my relationships at the playground and at school is that with Austrians, the relationship only goes as far as greetings. (Two children before and after migration, married, active, more than 10 years in migration)

My children like to study at the Austrian school, they were not traumatized by the school. But I saw that it was not over. I have to spend the afternoons with them to supplement what they might not get either because of their Hungarianness or because of unprofessionalism. The entire school system is terribly mediocre, they do not expect outstanding performance from anyone. (Two children before and after migration, married, inactive, more than 10 years in migration)

I'm fine with everyone and we chat very nicely in the locker room, but we don't do optional extracurricular activities together. Not even when they call. I always try to avoid them. (One child after migration, married, inactive, more than five years in migration)

On the other hand, women's social integration primarily occurs within the Hungarian community in Vienna, triggering their co-ethnic integration. They are strongly connected to the Hungarian community outside and have no relevant connection to Austrian social groups. Because of Vienna's cosmopolitan nature, women living there do not feel any pressure to integrate into Viennese society; however, this is not due to something like an integration paradox that Geurts et al. (2022) theorize. The integration paradox suggests that migrants with higher educational attainment often show a lower level of national belongings to the host country than migrants with lower education, meaning that more educated migrants feel less at home in their new country. According to their research, the "world citizenship" as an underlying mechanism of higher educated migrants' ideology may explain their weaker attachment to their country of residence. Instead, the weak belongings to the host nationalities of the examined Hungarian women can be explained by that it ensures a life within their comfort zone, and like economic migrants, they are not motivated to integrate culturally (Boski 2013).

We don't want our children to identify with this kind of society...Austrians lack deep human connections. Everything is much more beautiful on the surface than in the reality. (Two children after migration, partnered, nine years migration)

Several interconnected factors contribute to the formation of segregated groups. First, the growing size of the Hungarian population can easily lead to the comfortable situation of finding mothers in a similar position. This, in turn, reduces the interest in finding external friends and increases isolation (Dunbar 2021) as the size of the homogenous group that gives a sense of security increases (Krueger 2007). Furthermore, in an uncertain migration situation where there is no objective standard, people often compare themselves to others to establish the validity of their own situation through

observation-based social learning and social-comparison mechanisms (Bandura 1971; Festinger 1954).

We meet Hungarian mothers like this, in a playground, in a park here, or at someone's house, so sometimes we meet a few with children. So, having someone to talk to about everything is nice. (Two children, before and after migration, divorced, active, more than 10 years in migration)

Group identity is based on stereotypes constructed in contrast to Austrians. In such a situation, stereotypes against other cultures and nationalities are reinforced, and group identity is strengthened; for example, the BIRG effect (Tajfel 1978) is displayed. The BIRG effect ("basking in reflected glory") is a phenomenon where individuals present themselves in a positive light by sharing the successes of a group regardless of whether the individual's performance is actually related to the group's successes. In the case of the Hungarian women studied, this phenomenon appears in the identity-affirming narratives of co-ethnic mother communities. This narrative helps cohesion within the Hungarian community and separation outward, toward Austrian communities. Mothers cited numerous examples that downgrade Austrian values and Austrian people as justification for their self-segregation (Tajfel et al. 1979). Women who find it difficult to let go of their roots at home and long for a life away from the host country tend to regard Hungarian values above Austrian values (Freitas-Monteiro 2024).

In the hospital, when my daughter was a newborn, the nurse told me that bathing is enough about once a week, and then it dawned on me that my God, that's why Austrians are so unkempt, because it starts from birth. (One child after migration, partnered, five years in migration)

Austrians are horribly selfish people. Austrian mothers are terribly cold. I see it in the playground in general. They don't sit down to play with their children, they just sit and smoke. (Two children after migration, married, seven years in migration)

When you see Gryllus or Judit Halász³ it does not mean the same to them as it did to me, so they give us an essence that we do not have elsewhere. My husband and I agreed that the cultural blossoming from the age of zero to six—that's what we call it—is entirely different in different countries, and I think Hungary is very cool in this respect. (Two children before and after migration, married, inactive, five years in migration)

It is highly relevant to see that accordingly, women's identity construction often centres around being a stay-at-home

³Hungarian singers.

mother with young children in Vienna. This identity results in an accessible joint group membership and creates a significant shared sense of identity within the group. It is striking that the cultural similarities with the Austrians regarding motherhood seem to remain invisible to Hungarian women. Similar values do not build a bridge between the two social groups, while the labour market situation of Austrian mothers would be an easy example for mothers to follow. Since the husband ensures the family's livelihood, mothers could choose the path of Austrian women without remorse instead of self-segregation. This positively affects the women's behaviour and perceptions of other group members. The group's self-serving attributions and different peer categorizations can be observed. It can be said that the group under study has a set of shared beliefs, views, values, and emotions that form a specific system with specific characteristics, which can be explained based on living together in Viennese society and which make the collective consciousness of the group under study a distinct reality. The interactions of the group members outside their homes in Vienna are primarily between themselves, so they have an accurate knowledge that others also hold these consciousnesses and intersubjective social representations of the group.

But I am also influenced by the fact that mothers live like that here so that the others do not work either. (One child, before migration, partnership, inactive, more than 10 years in migration)

All of these presented mechanisms together explain the lack of belonging associated with proxy integration and its strong presence in co-ethnic integration. Women are in a complex life situation and mental state in which they consciously make the decision to operate the proxy and co-ethnic integrations in parallel. In order to avoid the shame of de-qualification, women have a legitimate excuse for not going to work since they manage the integration of their family. They can show the outside world that they have integrated into Austria since they maintain contact with the institutions. In Hungarian communities, they receive confirmation that it is impossible to connect better with Austrians since they are different from them and can be in an emotionally safe environment. This way, they do not have to leave their comfort zone. The comfortable backstage world is financially maintained by the husband and culturally legitimized by the Hungarian value system.

Proximity as legitimizing mechanism. Vienna's location, which is very close to the Hungarian border, is a relevant specificity in the backstage integration of these women. Faced with labour market losses, tied migration, and the difficulties of

motherhood, mothers hesitate to settle permanently in Vienna. The proximity of Vienna to Hungary makes this easier. The combination of all of these features reinforces the sense of the transitory nature of migration and helps to identify with the backstage role. This sense of temporariness helps ease the tension of labour market inactivity, allows for an overemphasis on the maternal role within the family, and also legitimizes convenience-based integration.

My feeling about the intellectual Hungarian mothers is that they are coasting.... They cannot articulate their long-term goal; right now, I am at the point where I am studying, and I am learning a language. Generally speaking, they [Hungarian mothers] say I am not yet at the stage to work and will never work. Some mothers have lived here for five, six, or seven years. They are intellectuals who are just learning a language. They are constantly learning the language, not working or doing anything else. (Two children, before and after migration, inactive, married, four years in migration)

The proximity makes it easy to stay in touch with those at home, cherish cultural values, look back, and constantly reassess migration decisions.

It was two and a half hours by train, so it wasn't a long distance, and there was a time when I went home every two months, even for a weekend, leaving on Friday night and coming back on Sunday night. (One child, after migration, married, active, more than 10 years in migration)

Those who go home on weekends will never get used to it, because after a while you have to decide whether you live here or somewhere else. (Two children before migration, married, inactive with casual work, five years in migration)

As women maintain links with their home country, they also keep the pathways open for temporary migration (Triandafyllidou 2022) so they can return home if needed.

I hoped that one day we would go home... I thought that one day this would be over. (Three children, before and after migration, married, active, more than 10 years in migration)

Transience in mothers' lives is also likely to be a legitimating tool. It legitimizes the absence from the labour market because they can say it is easy to return home from Vienna anytime. Consequently, transience is likely a dysfunctional or unviable reference point for those who settle further away from home.

Then there were different scenarios, like we will go back to Hungary, and I will try to find a job there. (One child, before

migration, married, inactive with casual work, six years in migration)

We had a very definite idea. My husband and I agreed on three years... the eldest child starting school and the youngest starting kindergarten, and we thought that we would be home by then. (Two children, before and after migration, married, inactive, seven years in migration)

But now this topic has been forgotten. I even quit my job at home. (Two children, after migration, married, inactive, seven years in migration)

It is important to note that geographical proximity and the feeling of transience are not causally related but rather phenomena and narrative that go hand in hand in the lives of the women studied. For women, transience is a means of legitimizing their status and explaining their difficult situation, but it is important to emphasize that this is linked to a life course (motherhood with young children) and the secure income of their husbands.

Social surfing. The act of social surfing facilitates the enactment of backstage integration. It denotes an attitude of opportunistic social mobility or strategic group affiliation (essentially as a free rider) as women navigate the social landscape to determine when it is beneficial to perform a strategic switch—moving from a Hungarian context to an Austrian context or vice versa—for utilitarian adaptation. In this framework, navigation refers to the ongoing tactical assessment of which context is most advantageous in a given situation, while switching represents the functional execution, the discrete transition from the Hungarian context to the Austrian context or from the Austrian context to a Hungarian one based on that assessment. During social surfing, a dual-identity individual emphasizes her nationality in one context (in communities of Hungarian mothers in Vienna) and her integration identity in another (e.g., a parent in an Austrian school, wife of a man who works in Austria), according to her current interests.

Moms have to really put in the effort to create an alternative Hungarian reality for their children, but at the same time we also blend in with what the Austrians are much better at. (Three children before and after migration, married, nine years in migration)

Institution-related surfing in women's lives means that their participation in and use of institutions is selective and instrumental (almost exclusively linked to institutions related to children), but at the same time, women do not identify with the values and functioning of institutions, so

their use is limited to practical entry and exit. The feeling of emotional and cultural belonging remains in the Hungarian environment. When navigating Austrian institutions, mothers make the conscious decision to switch from their emotional role within the Hungarian context to a competent, Austrian-aligned administrator role to represent their family's interests. However successful they are in this assumed host country-aligned role, they do not identify with the values of the host country, they are only representing the interest of their families, integration happens by proxy of the children, and only for the practical promotion of interest are they integrating. They want to remain outside of the Austrian system and values, so they do: It is not an internalized, emotional or intrinsic switch but a practical and benefit-oriented one.

We coined the term “social surfing” in order to capture a behaviour that is particularly characteristic of and prevalent in the accounts of these mothers who are highly educated but become de-emancipated within migration. In our view, it is a behaviour that is not adequately explained by existing frameworks such as transnationalism or liminality. Although, it is important to keep in mind that further careful research would be required to determine whether this practise is specific to this group or can also be observed among other migrant populations. We suppose that the phenomenon fits into the perspective of transnationalism (Faist 2015; Kivisto 2001; Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992) insofar as it interprets everyday life not in a single nation-state space but in a cross-border social field; however, social surfing is not simply the experience of boundary change and lasting set of ties that reaches across borders but the tactical navigation between them. Nor is it simply a temporally and spatially uncertain state of in-betweenness (Katta et al. 2024; Turner 1969; Weidenstedt et al. 2024) as literature on liminality defines as it is a strategic, conscious role switching and mobility between affiliated groups for benefit.

Interviewees often articulated the duality as a layered form of belonging in which Hungarian identity functions as an emotional and cultural core while Austrian affiliation operates as an instrumental extension:

The main root is Hungarian, the side root is Austrian. (Two children, before and after migration, married, inactive, seven years in migration)

At the same time, they feel excluded or are excluded to a lesser or greater extent from the Austrian group in Vienna according to their German language skills. Social surfing in this migratory context is thus about mobility between identities. Social surfing is theorized based on the multiplicity of

egos (Sorokin 1947), according to which each enduring role is a separate part of the self within a personality.

It is like they [Hungarian mothers] are taking the best out of everything; they do not work here, and the kids are doing well. Why doesn't anyone who lives here belong here? Why do they spend the summer at home? Why do they make friends with Hungarians? Why doesn't anyone here accept that I am already a Viennese? For me, it is so ambiguous. . . . Practically no family spends Christmas here. Moreover, in England, that is not a question. In England, we live there, so we have our Christmas there. However, here, since it is accessible, we take the good [things] from here and the good [things] from there. (2 children, before and after migration, inactive, married, 4 years migration).

Social surfing can occur as migrants build their assessment of social position on how they feel included in social groups by others and by their own senses. However, migrants are often made aware that these two assessments do not necessarily overlap. Therefore, migrants could create—through the enactment of specific symbolic boundaries—new social boundaries between themselves and others (Stock 2021). In the case of Hungarian mothers, their contrast group can become their husbands, the group of women in low-skilled jobs, or Hungarian mothers who did not migrate. Migration changes the composition of the social spaces into which people are incorporated and shifts the rules and values that decide what gives someone social respect or status (Reed-Danahay 2017). Migrants' assessments of social position are not necessarily bounded by a social space framed by the country; since migrants have social relations spanning across countries, it enables them to situate themselves in transnational spaces in which status hierarchies are reconfigured through cultural, social, and economic forces that are not exclusively shaped by state forces (Stock 2021). As the women studied have close connections to Hungarian society due to the proximity, this dual comparison could be even more enhanced.

Discussion

The article presents the concept of backstage integration and social surfing by showing the findings of an in-depth interview study of highly educated Hungarian mothers with young children in Vienna. Results showed that previously privileged, emancipated, and autonomous women lost their favourable social position, retreated into labour market inactivity, and developed a de-emancipated position in the family during migration. Our research data draw attention to the fact that the reasons for staying out of the labour market are not religious, refugee status related, or due to a solely patriarchal family model (see Freedman 2019; Liebig and Tronstad

2018) but socio-psychological, contributing to the literature (e.g., (Anderson et al. 2007; Balogh et al. 2022; Dumont and Monso 2007) by showing that to avoid the de-qualification shame, mothers use various aversive and legitimization strategies (Freud 1936; Vaillant 1995). However, we think that these maladaptive coping mechanisms may help these women manage the social pressures of life in Vienna, like conflicts or negative social experiences, but they may exacerbate their problems in the long term.

Mothers' migration led to a backstage role in the family and a backstage integration in Austria, meaning withdrawal from the labour market, a proxy integration into the Austrian social groups, and co-ethnic integration into the Hungarian migrant group. We found that backstage integration is triggered explicitly by the migration event and is facilitated by a complex socio-psychological, cultural, and existential system, which we call backstage motivators and the factors of proximity and the sense of transiency. Backstage integration involves a form of self-segregation into co-ethnic group and proxy connection to the Viennese group in which there is no compelling force for mothers to think about permanent settlement. It is an integration of convenience in which no effort is required to fit in. In order to realize backstage integration, women engage in social surfing, in which they take advantage of the co-ethnic group of Hungarians living in Vienna and the Austrian social group in Vienna for their benefit.

Migration can also shock privileged social groups and trigger negative self-defining processes (Lehtovaara and Jyrkinen 2021), perpetuating an unfavourable status. Therefore, it is not only the family unit that needs to be considered in the success of integration as in our cases, in families considered as winners of migration, the husband's success in the labour market is an obstacle to the wife's integration success. Migration is a gain for the husband and a loss for the wife, and what is a gain for the family in the short term can turn into a loss in the midterm, as studies (Brydsten and Baranowska-Rataj 2022) proved that the labour market position of children is strongly determined by the labour market position of their mothers (not just their fathers). We suppose that this may also be true in a migration context.

The study's findings partly confirm more general patterns observed across Europe. Riaño (2021), for example, highlights that highly skilled migrant women often withdraw from the labour market due to family obligations and gender norms. Contrary to our data, the experience in Finland is that highly educated women take on low-prestige jobs in order to support their families (Lehtovaara and Jyrkinen 2021). At the same time, the Finnish example also highlights that the career paths of educated women are shaped by gender-related

social norms and expectations, including discourses on motherhood, family, and work. In this sense, the Hungarian graduate mothers in Vienna reflect a broader phenomenon of “silent withdrawal,” which is not imposed by structural factors but driven by emotional, cultural, and identity-based constraints.

The research contributes to the theory of circular migration by revealing that voluntary withdrawal from the labour market is not only explained by legal or economic dependency but also by cultural identity, role expectations, and a deep-rooted fear of devaluation. While previous research (e.g., Herrero-Arias et al. 2021; Riaño 2021) has addressed these dynamics, this study extends the lens to de-emancipation among highly educated, privileged women in Eastern Europe. It suggests that integration challenges are not always structural but often stem from internalized norms and identity negotiations. This demographic figure highlights the broader relevance of the issues explored in this study. Consequently, future research could benefit from comparative studies examining how similar sociocultural events unfold in different national and regional contexts.

Data showed that proximity, freedom of movement across borders, and the persistence of strong cultural ties to the country of origin raise the need to clarify the conceptual distinction between mobility and migration. Our research findings show that qualitative tools can be used to identify small groups of migrants who may be more involved in temporary migration (Triandafyllidou 2022). This research shows that when a group enters motherhood and migration at the same time and space, a complex and complicated situation can emerge that impacts the vision of migration. The coincidence of these two critical life situations leads mothers to feel that they cannot judge how long their difficulties will last, so they postpone their migration and integration decisions as there is always the theoretical possibility of returning home easily after leaving Vienna.

Based on our current data, we cannot assess the temporality of backstage integration as the data provide a cross-sectional picture of the situation of women. It is conceivable that this is not a static, “permanent” withdrawal but rather a temporary situation that extends over time and often drags on, typically beginning in the early stages of migration and during the period when the children are young and which the participants initially frame as temporary but may remain in for several years. In our sample, women typically mention language learning and subsequent employment as planned steps, but these plans are often postponed due to everyday care burdens and psychological barriers (avoiding shame) so that the “transitional” nature of the backstage state can become prolonged or even permanent. Accordingly,

it is appropriate to use the term as a process whose outcome is open in the longer term.

From the point of view of formal integration, the question remains: To what extent and in what sense can we speak of migration in sociological terms in the case of the women under study? Statistically speaking, these mothers are permanently settled as migrants, but the possibility of returning home will likely be a significant factor in their everyday decisions. This problem may be relevant not only for Vienna and Hungary but also for all neighbouring border countries where free movement is possible and labour market and social integration may be blocked. The uniqueness of the Hungarian patterns lies in the fact that traditional family values and geographical proximity are more strongly supportive of the experience of “transience” and cultural self-identification.

Finally, we see the significance of this study in that it highlights how the inactivity of highly educated women in migration is not necessarily a structural problem but may also be the result of complex social and psychological mechanisms. At the same time, the data also show that integration is not necessarily a linear, one-dimensional process; rather, as seen in the studied population, multiple integration dynamics can occur simultaneously. We believe these results, especially the concepts of backstage integration and social surfing, offer a conceptual framework—capturing labour market invisibility, proxy participation in host-country institutions, co-ethnic belonging, and strategic social mobility—that can be used to interpret other migrant groups with similar patterns.

Limitations

A few limitations must be taken into account when interpreting the results of the research. The sample included women who have close ties to their own ethnic group and to Hungarian networks. This may have influenced our results. Further research is therefore needed to determine how the integration strategies of migrant mothers who have loose or no ties to ethnic networks differ from those described here.

Our results showed that women do not return to the labour market or only do so at the cost of serious de-skilling. Further research is needed to identify other reasons for staying out of the labour market and remaining in the backstage that cannot be examined using the current data. In particular, it would be worthwhile to conduct research on language segregation and the related internal psychological processes. It is also important to emphasize that social status (e.g., financial resources, cultural capital, social capital) is likely to have a significant impact on the extent to which women are forced into the “backstage” and on their room for manoeuvre in the labour market and in integration

decisions. This dimension emerged as a new factor during the analysis, but the sample in this study did not allow for an examination of the effects of differences in status. Consequently, the results cannot be interpreted according to social status. Examining the effects of Hungarian social status in the context of migration and backstage integration could be an important direction for further research.

The present study has shown that women who occasionally take on casual work are also attached to backstage integration. A limitation of the interpretation of the data is that we did not collect detailed data on the occupational status and labour market situation of husbands. Accordingly, it was not possible to systematically analyse the relationship between the partner's resources (e.g., income and job security, type of employment contract: fixed-term/permanent) and women's marginal/casual employment. The data from this study therefore cannot reveal the dynamics behind taking on casual work. Although the interviews revealed that casual work does not support career continuity and that employment is often compulsorily linked to the household's existential situation, these relationships cannot be examined in a causal or comparative manner in the current sample. In a future study, it would be worthwhile to examine how the stability of husbands' labour market situation, their income level, the number of children, the amount of financial capital in Hungary (e.g., stocks, real estate), or in general, their previous social status in Hungary influence casual employment in a backstage situation.

Our data do not allow us to explore causal relationships between geographical proximity to Hungary and mothers' labour market integration. In our analysis, "proximity" appears as a narrative. Women often refer to the ease of returning and describe their situation as temporary. This is how they explain their postponement of investment in labour market integration, for example, by referring to language learning. Our research data collection is cross-sectional. For this reason, we did not treat the relationship between geographical distance, intention to return, and labour market integration as measurable explanatory variables but rather as part of the repertoire of meaning-making and legitimation. Furthermore, primarily longitudinal studies would be needed to examine the relationships between these factors.

ORCID iD

Eszter Balogh  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3183-6105>

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Achouche, Noa. 2022. "The Motherhood Penalty of Immigrants in France: Comparing the Motherhood Wage Penalty of Immigrants from Europe, the Maghreb, and Sub-Saharan with Native-Born French Women." *Frontiers in Sociology* 7:748826. doi:10.3389/fsoc.2022.748826.
- Anderson, Bridget, Nick Clark, and Violetta Parutis. 2007. "NEW EU MEMBERS? Migrant Workers' Challenges and Opportunities to UK Trades Unions: A Polish and Lithuanian Case Study." https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242758890_NEW_EU_MEMBERS_Migrant_Workers_Challenges_and_Opportunities_to_UK_Trades_Unions_a_Polish_and_Lithuanian_Case_Study.
- Ballarino, Gabriele, and Nazareno Panichella. 2018. "The Occupational Integration of Migrant Women in Western European Labour Markets." *Acta Sociologica* 61(2):126–42. doi:10.1177/0001699317723441.
- Balogh, Eszter, Fruzsina Mikó, and Márton Csanády. 2022. "Karrierhaszn-Dilemmák: Magyar Nők Lehetőségei Az Osztrák Munkaerőpiacon." *Szociológiai Szemle* 32(2):34–56. doi:10.51624/SzocSzemle.2022.2.2.
- Bandura, Albert. 1971. *Social Learning Theory*. New York, NY: General Learning Press.
- Bernstein, Basil. 1971. *Class, Codes and Control: Volume 1 – Theoretical Studies towards a Sociology of Language*. Vol. 1. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bielby, William T., and Denise D. Bielby. 1992. "I Will Follow Him: Family Ties, Gender-Role Beliefs, and Reluctance to Relocate for a Better Job." *American Journal of Sociology* 97(5):1241–67. doi:10.1086/229901.
- Blaskó, Zsuzsa. 2008. "Employment Trends of Mothers." https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/all/employment-trends-mothers?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- Boski, Pawel. 2013. "A Psychology of Economic Migration." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 44(7):1067–93. doi:10.1177/0022022112471895.
- Boyle, Paul, Thomas Cooke, Keith Halfacree, and Darren Smith. 2003. "The Effect of Long-Distance Family Migration and Motherhood on Partnered Women's Labour-Market Activity Rates in Great Britain and the USA." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 35(12):2097–114. doi:10.1068/a35138.
- Boyle, Paul, Zhiqiang Feng, and Vernon Gayle. 2009. "A New Look at Family Migration and Women's Employment Status." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71(2):417–31. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00608.x.
- Brydsten, Anna, and Anna Baranowska-Rataj. 2022. "Intergenerational Interdependence of Labour Market Careers." *Advances in Life Course Research* 54:100513. doi:10.1016/j.alcr.2022.100513.

- Buber-Ennsner, Isabella. 2015. "Childrearing in Austria: Work and Family Roles." *Journal of Research in Gender Studies* 5(2):121–46.
- Budig, Michelle J., and Paula England. 2001. "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood." *American Sociological Review* 66(2):204–25. doi:10.2307/2657415.
- Christiansen, Thora, and Erla Sólveig Kristjánsdóttir. 2020. "When You Are a Professional: Highly Skilled Immigrants' Experiences of the Tension between Avowed and Ascribed Identity." Pp. 53–69 in *Mobility and Transnational Iceland*, edited by K. Loftsdóttir, U. Dís Skaptadóttir, and S. Baldur Hafsteinsson. Reykjavik, Iceland: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Ciupijus, Zinovijus. 2011. "Mobile Central Eastern Europeans in Britain: Successful European Union Citizens and Disadvantaged Labour Migrants?" *Work, Employment & Society* 25:540–50. doi:10.1177/0950017011407962.
- Cooke, Thomas J. 2001. "'Trailing Wife' or 'Trailing Mother'? The Effect of Parental Status on the Relationship between Family Migration and the Labor-Market Participation of Married Women." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 33(3):419–30. doi:10.1068/a33140.
- Cooke, Thomas J. 2008. "Gender Role Beliefs and Family Migration." *Population, Space and Place* 14(3):163–75. doi:10.1002/psp.485.
- Cooke, Thomas J., Paul Boyle, Kenneth Couch, and Peteke Feijten. 2009. "A Longitudinal Analysis of Family Migration and the Gender Gap in Earnings in the United States and Great Britain." *Demography* 46(1):147–67. doi:10.1353/dem.0.0036.
- Cooney, Richard, Karin De Angelis, and Mady Wechsler Segal. 2011. "Moving with the Military: Race, Class, and Gender Differences in the Employment Consequences of Tied Migration." *Race, Gender & Class* 18(1/2):360–84.
- Correll, Shelley J., Stephen Benard, and In Paik. 2007. "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?" *American Journal of Sociology* 112(5):1297–339. doi:10.1086/511799.
- Drobota, Florentina. 2022. "Intra-European Migration. A Gender Perspective." <https://behorizon.org/intra-european-migration-a-gender-perspective/#:~:text=All%20in%20all%2C%20more%20Europeans,at%20Beyond%20the%20Horizon%20ISSG>.
- Dumont, Jean-Christophe, and Olivier Monso. 2007. *International Migration Outlook 2007*. Paris, France: OECD. doi:10.1787/migr_outlook-2007-en.
- Dunbar, Robin. 2021. *Friends: Understanding the Power of Our Most Important Relationships*. London, UK: Little, Brown.
- Dupcsik, Csaba. 2015. "A Tradicionális Család Konstrukciója a Magyar Társadalomtudományokban." *Socio.hu Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 5(2):101–23.
- Eich-Krohm, Astrid. 2007. "Make It or Break It—Women's Career Interruptions in the Age of Professional Migration: Analysis of German Female Migrants to the United States." *International Journal of Sociology* 37(2):75–93.
- European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. 2025. "2025 Skills Forecast Hungary." https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/skills_forecast_-_hungary_2025.pdf.
- Eurostat. 2022. "Population on 1 January by Age Group, Sex and Country of Birth." doi:10.2908/MIGR_POP3CTB.
- Faist, Thomas. 2015. "Making and Remaking the Transnational: Of Boundaries, Social Spaces and Social Mechanisms." Working Paper No. 132. Center on Migration, Citizenship and Development. https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/fakultaeten/soziologie/fakultaet/arbeitsbereiche/ab6/ag_faist/downloads/WP_132.pdf.
- Festinger, Leon. 1954. "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes." *Human Relations* 7(2):117–40. doi:10.1177/001872675400700202.
- Folbre, Nancy. 2018. "The Care Penalty and Gender Inequality." Pp. 748–66 in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and the Economy*, edited by S. L. Averett, L. M. Argys, and S. D. Hoffman. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fortney, Judith A. 1970. "International Migration of Professionals." *Population Studies* 24(2):217–32. doi:10.1080/00324728.1970.10406125.
- Freedman, Jane. 2019. "A Gendered Analysis of the European Refugee 'Crisis.'" Pp. 704–20 in *The Oxford Handbook of Migration Crises*, edited by C. Menjívar, M. Ruiz, and I. Ness. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Freitas-Monteiro, Teresa. 2024. "Migration Motivation and Ethnic Identity of Migrant Couples: Tied versus Lead Movers." *Review of Economics of the Household* 24(1):161–97. doi:10.1007/s11150-024-09708-7.
- Freud, Anna. 1936. *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*. London, UK: Hogarth Press.
- Gaillard, Jacques, and Anne Marie Gaillard. 1997. "Introduction: The International Mobility of Brains: Exodus or Circulation?" *Science, Technology and Society* 2(2):195–228. doi:10.1177/097172189700200202.
- Geurts, Nella, Tine Davids, Marcel Lubbers, and Niels Spierings. 2022. "A Cosmopolitan Explanation of the Integration Paradox: A Mixed Methods Approach." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45(16):412–34. doi:10.1080/01419870.2022.2093613.
- Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 2017. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Gönenç, İlknur Münevver, Menekşe Nazlı Aker, Huriye Güven, and Özlem Moraloğlu Tekin. 2020. "The Effect of the Personality Traits of Pregnant Women on the Fear of Childbirth." *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care* 56(2):347–54. doi:10.1111/ppc.12440.
- Guhlich, Anna. 2017. *Migration and Social Pathways*. Opladen, Germany: Verlag Barbara Budrich.
- Herrero-Arias, Raquel, Ragnhild Hollekim, Haldis Haukanes, and Åse Vagli. 2021. "The Emotional Journey of Motherhood in Migration. The Case of Southern European Mothers in Norway." *Migration Studies* 9(3):1230–49. doi:10.1093/migration/mnaa006.
- Jack, Dana Crowley, and Diana Dill. 1992. "The Silencing the Self Scale: Schemas of Intimacy Associated with Depression in Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 16(1):97–106. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.1992.tb00242.x.

- Katta, Srujana, Fabian Ferrari, Niels Van Doorn, and Mark Graham. 2024. "Migration, Migrant Work(ers) and the Gig Economy." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 56(4):1102–12. doi:10.1177/0308518X241250168.
- Khoudja, Yassine, and Fenella Fleischmann. 2015. "Ethnic Differences in Female Labour Force Participation in the Netherlands: Adding Gender Role Attitudes and Religiosity to the Explanation." *European Sociological Review* 31(1): 91–102. doi:10.1093/esr/jcu084.
- Khoudja, Yassine, and Fenella Fleischmann. 2017. "Labor Force Participation of Immigrant Women in the Netherlands: Do Traditional Partners Hold Them Back?" *International Migration Review* 51(2):506–41. doi:10.1111/imre.12228.
- Kivisto, Peter. 2001. "Theorizing Transnational Immigration: A Critical Review of Current Efforts." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24(4):549–77. doi:10.1080/01419870120049789.
- Kleven, Henrik, Camille Landais, Johanna Posch, Andreas Steinhauer, and Josef Zweimüller. 2019. "Child Penalties across Countries: Evidence and Explanations." Working Paper w25524. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. doi:10.3386/w25524.
- Kovács, Éva, and Attila Melegh. 2007. "In a Gendered Space: Forms and Reasons of Migration and the Integration of Female Migrants." *Demográfia* 5(5):26–59. <https://demografia.hu/demografia/index.php/demografia/article/view/2938>.
- Krueger, Joachim I. 2007. "From Social Projection to Social Behaviour." *European Review of Social Psychology* 18(1): 1–35. doi:10.1080/10463280701284645.
- Lehtovaara, Heidi, and Marjut Jyrkinen. 2021. "Skilled Migrant Women's Experiences of the Job Search Process." *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* 11(Special issue No S7): 11–30. doi:10.18291/njwls.128588.
- Lengyel, György. 2014. "A Magyar Gazdasági Elit Képzettsége Nemzetközi Összehasonlításban." Pp. 103–114 in *A felsőoktatás kutatása*, edited by P. N. Tibor & Z. Veroszta. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó.
- Lewis, Michael. 1995. *Shame: The Exposed Self*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Liebig, Thomas, and Kristian Rose Tronstad. 2018. "Triple Disadvantage?: A First Overview of the Integration of Refugee Women." OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 216. Paris, France: OECD. doi:10.1787/3f3a9612-en.
- Melegh, Attila, Éva Kovács, and Irén Gödri, eds. 2010. *'Azt hittem célt tévesztettem': A bevándorló nők élet történeti perspektívái, integrációja és a bevándorlókkal kapcsolatos attitűdök nyolc európai országban*. Budapest, Hungary: KSH Népeség tudományi Kutató Intézet.
- Mincer, Jacob. 1978. "Family Migration Decisions." *Journal of Political Economy* 86(5):749–73.
- Muhirva, Jean-Marie. 2012. "Funnelling Talents Back to the Source: Can Distance Education Help to Mitigate the Fallouts of Brain Drain in Sub-Saharan Africa?" *Diversities* 14(1)., www.unesco.org/shs/diversities/vol14/issue1/art4.
- Németh, Ádám, Borbála Göncz, Josef Kohlbacher, György Lengyel, Attila Melegh, Zolt Németh, Ursula Reeger, and Lilla Tóth. 2023. "International Migration Patterns in and between Hungary and Austria." https://www.oeaw.ac.at/fileadmin/Institute/ISR/pdf/Forschung/MIGWELL_WP2_D.2.1_Final.pdf.
- Niessen, Jan. 2005. *Civic Citizenship and Immigrant Inclusion: A Guide for the Implementation of Civic Citizenship Policies*. Brüssel, Belgium: Migration Policy Group.
- OECD. 2022. *Reducing the Gender Employment Gap in Hungary*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing.
- Permoser, Julia Mourão, and Sieglinde Rosenberger. 2012. "Integration Policy in Austria." Pp. 39–58 in *International Perspectives*, edited by J. Frideres and J. Biles. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Pietka, Emilia, Colin Clark, and Noah Canton. 2013. "'I Know That I Have a University Diploma and I'm Working as a Driver.' Explaining the EU Post-enlargement Movement of Highly Skilled Polish Migrant Workers to Glasgow." Pp. 133–54 in *Mobility in Transition: Migration Patterns after EU Enlargement*, edited by B. Glorius, I. Grabowska-Lusinska, and A. Kuvik. London, UK: Routledge.
- Platt, Lucinda. 2009. "Review of the Book 'Unequal Chances: Ethnic Minorities in Western Labour Markets' edited by A. F. Heath and S. Y. Cheung." *European Sociological Review* 25(2):265–67.
- Pongrácz, Tiborné, and Evelin S. Molnár. 2011. "Nemi Szerepek És a Közvélemény Változásának a Kölcsönhatása: Jelentés a Nők És Férfiak Helyzetéről." Pp. 192–206 in *Changing Roles: Report on the Situation of Women and Men in Hungary*, edited by I. Nagy & T. Pongrácz. Budapest: TÁRKI.
- Pusch, Barbara. 2010. "Familial Orientations and Labour Market Integration of Highly Skilled Migrants in Germany, Canada and Turkey." Pp. 287–302 in *Kulturelles Kapital in der Migration*, edited by A.-M. Nohl, K. Schittenhelm, O. Schmidtke, and A. Weiß. Wiesbaden, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Reed-Danahay, Deborah. 2017. "Bourdieu, Social Space, and the Nation-State. Implications for Migration Studies." *Sociologica* 2. doi:10.2383/88198.
- Riaño, Yvonne. 2003. "Migration of Skilled Latin American Women to Switzerland and Their Struggle for Integration." Pp. 313–43 in *Emigración Latinoamericana: Comparación interregional entre América del Norte, Europa y Japón. Population Movement in the Modern World VII*, edited by Y. Matsuo. Osaka, Japan: The Japan Centre for Area Studies, National Museum of Ethnology Osaka.
- Riaño, Yvonne. 2021. "Highly Skilled Migrant and Non-migrant Women and Men: How Do Differences in Quality of Employment Arise?" *Administrative Sciences* 11(1):5. doi:10.3390/admsci11010005.
- Samuelson, William, and Richard Zeckhauser. 1988. "Status Quo Bias in Decision Making." *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 1(1):7–59. doi:10.1007/BF00055564.
- Schieckoff, Bentley, and Maximilian Sprengholz. 2021. "The Labor Market Integration of Immigrant Women in Europe: Context, Theory, and Evidence." *SN Social Sciences* 1(11):276. doi:10.1007/s43545-021-00279-3.
- Schiller, Nina Glick, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton. 1992. "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645(1):1–24. doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.1992.tb33484.x.

- Seminario Luna, Romina. 2018. "Immigration Controls Creating Highly Skilled Precarious Workers: South American Migrant Women's and Men's Professional Trajectories in the Care and Academic Sectors." Pp. 63–94 in *Gender and Migration. A Gender-Sensitive Approach to Migration Dynamics*, edited by C. Timmerman, M. L. Fonseca, L. van Praag, and S. C. Pereira. Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press.
- Sert, Deniz Ş. 2016. "From Skill Translation to Devaluation: The De-qualification of Migrants in Turkey." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 54:97–117. doi:10.1017/npt.2016.9.
- Slobodin, Ortal. 2017. "The Voice of Trailing Women in the Decision to Relocate: Is It Really a Choice?" Pp. 261–273 in *People's Movements in the 21st Century - Risks, Challenges and Benefits*, edited by I. Muenstermann. London: InTech.
- Sorokin, Pitirim Aleksandrovich. 1947. *Society, Culture, and Personality: Their Structure and Dynamics*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.
- Steele, Claude M. 1988. "The Psychology of Self-Affirmation: Sustaining the Integrity of the Self." Pp. 261–302 in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 21, edited by L. Berkowitz. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, Inc.
- Stock, Inka. 2021. "Insights into the Use of Social Comparison in Migrants' Transnational Social Positioning Strategies." *Social Inclusion* 9(1):104–13. doi:10.17645/si.v9i1.3583.
- Tajfel, Henri. 1978. *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. London, UK: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, Henri, John Turner, William G. Austin, and Stephen Worchel. 1979. "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict." Pp. 33–47 in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Monterey: Brooks/Cole.
- Thibaut, John W., and Harold H. Kelley. 1959. *The Social Psychology of Groups*. New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Triandafyllidou, Anna. 2022. "Temporary Migration: Category of Analysis or Category of Practice?" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48(16):3847–59. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2022.2028350.
- Turner, Victor. 1969. "Liminality and Communitas." Pp. 94–113, 125–30 in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Publishing.
- Udayanga, Samitha. 2024. "Motherhood Penalty and Labour Market Integration of Immigrant Women: A Review on Evidence from Four OECD Countries." *Societies* 14(9):162. doi:10.3390/soc14090162.
- Vaillant, George E. 1995. *Adaptation to Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Venugopal, Vidhula, and Afreen Huq. 2022. "Migrant Trailing Spouses: Career Adaptability and Occupational Downshifting." *International Migration* 60(2):143–59. doi:10.1111/imig.12864.
- Weidenstedt, Linda, Andrea Geissinger, Birgit Leick, and Nabeel Nazeer. 2024. "Betwixt and between: Triple Liminality and Liminal Agency in the Swedish Gig Economy." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 56(4):1280–97. doi:10.1177/0308518X231172984.
- Ziegler, Lennart, and Omar Bamieh. 2025. "Does a Flexible Parental Leave System Stimulate Maternal Employment?" *Labour Economics* 95:102762. doi:10.1016/j.labeco.2025.102762.
- Zinatasa, Farirai, and Musawenkosi D. Saurombe. 2022. "Tied Migrant Labor Market Integration: Deconstructing Labor Market Subjectivities in South Africa." *Frontiers in Psychology* 13:806436. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.806436.
- Zschomler, Silke. 2023. "'Small Tragedies of Individuals' Lives': London's Migrant Division of Labour and Migrant Language Educational Settings." *Social Inclusion* 11(4):101–10. doi:10.17645/si.v11i4.7127.

Author Biographies

Eszter Balogh is an associate professor of sociology at the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and head of the International Migration Research Group. Current research interests comprise labor market and gender issues of Hungarian migrant workers. She also works on economic sociology and labour market issues. Some of her work appears in the *Review of Sociology*, the *Hungarian Statistical Review*, and *World* and she is the author of a monograph on economic sociology and coauthor of several volumes.

Zsuzsanna Szvetelszky is an associate professor of sociology at the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and research fellow of the Centre for Social Sciences. Current research interests comprise attitudes toward immigration, value transmission, and the labor market. Her work has been published in journals such as *World* and *PLOS ONE* and books, for example, *Religious Change and Continuity across Generations: Passing on Faith in Families of Six European and North American Nations* (Lexington Books, 2024).

Jázmin Szonja Ábrahám is a recent graduate of the dual BA program between Columbia University and Tel Aviv University, where she double majored in psychology and English literature. She graduated with honors, focusing on social psychology. Her undergraduate thesis examined the psychology of survivors, with particular attention to the intersection of past trauma, aging, and national trauma. She currently works as a nonfiction book editor and collaborates with colleagues at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, where she conducts migration research and coauthors studies on the labour market situation of Hungarian migrants. In addition, she contributes to academic dissemination and journal correspondence. She is a coauthor in a scientific article in *World*.

Judit T. Nagy is an associate professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and a member of the ICT Research Centre of the university. Current research interests comprise digital demography and migration studies, and she has participated in several research projects as an applied statistician. Her work has been published in journals such as *Nature (Scientific Reports)*, *World, Education Sciences, Computer Methods in Biomechanics and Biomedical Engineering, Current Issues in Tourism*, and *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning Education and Information Technologies*.