

On Taking Responsibility for Undocumented Migrants

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Do societies have an ethical responsibility to care for and about the health of undocumented migrants? Some people claim that societies have no responsibility to care for undocumented migrants because these migrants have no legal right to be in the country. But this view tends to ignore ethical responsibilities that are independent of legal status. Other people claim that all human beings, in virtue of their dignity and status as human beings, have a right to the highest standard of health. But this view tends to ignore ethical responsibilities that arise out of relationships between a society and the undocumented migrants who are living and working in that society. In this article, I take a different approach. In the case of undocumented workers, I try to show how these workers are used in the economy and why a widely accepted pattern of responsibility should be extended to them. In the case of undocumented young people, I try to show how these people are socialized in a society and why a widely accepted pattern of responsibility should be extended to them. Toward the end of this article, I reflect on the nature and limits of these arguments.

Introduction

About 7 million years ago, a population of great apes began to evolve into the genus we now call human (*Homo*). For about 6 million years, these humans continued to evolve and migrate within Africa. After that, groups of humans migrated to the Near East, South Asia, Europe, Australia, East Asia, North America, South America and the Pacific islands (Diamond, 2005: 35–52). Over the long course of human history, migration has been the norm.

Human migration continues to the present day. People move for a variety of reasons: political, environmental, economic, familial and personal. They move to escape wars, conflicts, persecution and discrimination. They move to avoid floods, droughts and environmental degradation. They move to respond to poverty, unemployment and structural adjustment. They move to find opportunities to earn money, provide support for their families and build better lives. And some move because they are curious and adventuresome.

Nation-states now try to control, authorize and document migration. These efforts have created a new class of migrants: undocumented migrants, undocumented immigrants, irregular immigrants, illegal immigrants or illegal aliens. Whatever these migrants are called, the policies and practices that affect them raise important

ethical issues. The biggest ethical issue concerns the role of nation-states: Do nation-states have an ethical right to regulate and limit immigration? There are important ethical concerns that favor this right (Walzer, 1983: 38–40; Rawls, 1999: 8–9, 38–39), but there are also strong ethical arguments in favor of open borders (Carens, 2013: 225–287). Because I want to focus on a different ethical question, I am not going to recount and evaluate this debate. For the sake of the discussion in this article, I am simply going to assume that nation-states have a qualified right to regulate and limit immigration.

I was planning to focus on the following question: Do societies have an ethical responsibility to provide health care for undocumented migrants, for people who do not have legal standing in those societies? But this question is too narrow because I am concerned not only about health care, but also about other factors that have a profound effect on health. For example, work conditions and pesticide exposures have a profound effect on the health of agricultural workers. So I want to focus on a somewhat broader question: Do societies have an ethical responsibility to care for and about the health of undocumented migrants?

Elsewhere, I have argued that two common approaches provide inadequate responses to this ethical question (Dwyer, 2004, 2009). One approach appeals to a broad view of human rights. This approach claims that

all human beings—migrants and non-migrants, documented and undocumented—have a right to health care and healthy conditions. Indeed, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights recognizes ‘the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health’ (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1976: article 12). In the human rights approach, the right to health is something that all human beings are entitled to in virtue of their inherent worth and dignity as human beings.

Although the human rights movement is very important, and undocumented migrants are sometimes treated in ways that no human being should be treated, appealing to a broad account of human rights does not adequately address the ethical question. Since human rights are claims that people have as human beings, this approach tends to obscure distinctions between cases. An undocumented worker in a wealthy country, someone abroad who works for a subcontractor, a poor farmer in another country and a foreign prince who wants an organ transplant—all these people are human beings, but they may have different ethical claims. Although I believe that people in a particular country have some ethical duties to all human beings, I also believe that they have more responsibilities in some of these cases. The human rights approach does not really illuminate responsibilities that are connected to relationships, structures and contexts.

A second approach appeals to a narrow account of desert. According to this account, migrants who are in a country illegally, have no right to benefits in that country. The reasons commonly given for this conclusion are inadequate. People sometimes stress that undocumented migrants have broken the law. This is true, but many citizens have also broken laws. For example, the practice of working off the books, of failing to report cash income, is very common. People sometimes claim that poor citizens are more deserving of health benefits than undocumented migrants are. But it is not clear why we should pit the interests of disadvantaged citizens against the interests of undocumented migrants. Maybe both groups are more deserving than wealthy citizens who benefit from social structures, policies and subsidies. People sometimes claim that undocumented migrants receive benefits without paying taxes. But undocumented migrants do pay various taxes. They often pay value-added tax, sales tax, tobacco tax, alcohol tax and fuel tax; they sometimes pay property tax and income tax. Besides, arguments about whether they receive more public benefits than they pay for assume that society should be viewed and regulated by a private

business model: the amount that people take out should be directly proportional to the amount they put in. But that is a very questionable assumption. The inadequacy of these reasons may have a common root: a view of social membership that focuses too narrowly on legal citizenship.

In this article, I shall sketch a third approach to the ethical question about undocumented migrants. My approach is not as broad as the first approach. I do not argue in terms of human rights, of what societies owe people in virtue of their status as human beings. But my approach is not as narrow as the second approach. I look beyond what societies owe people because they are legal citizens. I look for and at other grounds of social responsibility. I shall consider the situation of undocumented workers and the situation of undocumented young people. In each case, I rely on the situation and context to guide the inquiry and to help identify morally salient features. Then I use those features to show why some widely accepted patterns of responsibility should be extended to cover undocumented migrants.

In the last section of this article, I shall reflect on the nature and limits of these arguments. I shall try to make more explicit the way I use the context to help identify morally salient features and guide ethical reflection. I shall also try to make more explicit the way I use and extend existing practices of social responsibility to cover the issues at hand.

Undocumented Workers

To begin, consider a case of an undocumented worker. Roberto Silva grew up, married and began raising a family in a village in Zacatecas, Mexico. But he had difficulty earning enough money to support his family. So he decided to do what some other people in his village had done: go north for work. He borrowed money and paid a guide to smuggle him into the USA. After he arrived there, he made contact with a cousin in California. Once he got there, he began working in the agricultural fields in the Central Valley. The work was demanding and exhausting, but he was able to save some money and send it home to support his family. He dreamed of saving enough money to return home and start a business.

Mr Silva is not alone. About 11 million people are working or living in the USA without legal authorization (Passel and Cohn, 2012). About 7 million are from Mexico, and about 4 million are from other countries. About 60% entered the country illegally, but about 40% were authorized to enter and then overstayed their visas

(Selby, 2013). Some are newly arrived, but others have been living in the country for many years.

The phenomenon of undocumented migration is not limited to the USA. People without legal authorization are living and working all over the world. There are undocumented workers from Africa in Spain, from Indonesia in Malaysia, from Burma in Thailand, from Haiti in the Dominican Republic, from Zimbabwe in South Africa and so on. Some countries are both a source of and a destination for undocumented migrants. Mexico, for example, is both a source of migrants to the USA and a destination for some migrants from Central America.

While legal systems forbid undocumented migration, economic systems encourage it. In a global economy, companies tend to outsource jobs when the added transportation costs between countries are lower than the differences in labor costs between countries. But some jobs cannot be outsourced. Houses have to be cleaned, children have to be watched and gardens have to be tended locally. And even when jobs can be outsourced, it makes economic sense to keep them local if workers are reliable and cheap enough. These economic considerations shape the employment pattern of undocumented migrants.

Many undocumented migrants work in agriculture, construction, the food industry and the service sector. But the most distinctive feature of their employment is not the economic sectors in which they work. The striking feature is the kind of work they do. They plant fields, spray pesticides and harvest crops; they dig ditches, scrape paint and move materials; they prepare food, cook meals and wash dishes; they clean toilets, watch children and tend to the elderly. In general, they do difficult work, under somewhat disagreeable conditions, for low rates of pay, without many protections and benefits. In fact, they do many of the jobs that citizens try to avoid. Their work serves to hold down prices or increase profits for a whole range of goods and services.

I want to suggest that the use of undocumented migrants is just a new variation of an old practice or pattern. Societies have always had dangerous, disagreeable, dirty and exhausting work that needed to be done. Societies could respond, and have sometimes responded, by devising ways to share this work, improve its conditions or increase the pay and benefits for doing it. But often societies have responded by using marginalized people: slaves, indentured servants, castes, minorities, poor children, internal migrants or external migrants. Of course, there are local variations: the USA used slaves to harvest cotton, while Japan used a caste to slaughter animals and tan leather. The present

use of undocumented workers is a market-based variation of the old practice.

I have focused ethical attention on economic practices and structures because I want to shift perspectives. To view undocumented workers simply as human beings, and to focus on what a society owes all human beings, is to focus too broadly. This perspective misses the moral salience of work, practices and structures. To view undocumented workers as illegal aliens, and to focus on what society owes legal citizens, is to focus too narrowly. In a different way, this perspective also misses the moral salience of work, practices and structures. I want to suggest that society has substantial responsibilities on account of the practices and structures that it supports. It has some responsibility to people on account of the work they do.

Of course, someone will object that undocumented workers have voluntarily taken on their work; if they do not like it, they should return home. Here I would note two things. First, some undocumented workers have not freely adopted their present course; they have been deceived, coerced or trafficked. Second, although many have made a voluntary choice, within the background conditions, this choice does not obviate the question of social responsibility. Freedom of contract is not the whole of a social ethic. During the rise of industrialization, many men, women and children agreed to work under horrible conditions, for low wages, without protection and benefits. But most people came to see that society has a right and responsibility to regulate work, empower workers and require benefits. Today decent societies regulate safety, childhood labor, workers' rights, minimum wages, and other conditions. They also devise ways to promote health and provide health care. What I am suggesting is that this ethic, this practice and pattern, needs to be extended to undocumented workers.

I have suggested that society should take responsibility for undocumented workers, but I want to emphasize that taking ethical responsibility is not the same as determining legal responsibility. Taking ethical responsibility and determining legal responsibility serve different social purposes, have different grounds and lead to different sorts of inquiry. Determinations of legal responsibility focus on establishing causation, proving intent (or negligence), evaluating excuses and assigning costs according to culpability (Hart, 2008). But in considering ethical responsibility, at least in the case of undocumented workers, I have focused on the background conditions, social structures and common practices that support the use of undocumented workers in certain

ways. This ethical responsibility is closer to political responsibility than legal culpability.

I have appealed to a notion of responsibility that is similar in many ways to the model that Iris Marion Young develops (Young, 2011). To complement a liability model of responsibility, she develops a social connection model of responsibility. Her model focuses on political or social responsibility to take collective action in the future, not on legal responsibility for an individual act in the past. This is a responsibility for background conditions and social structures. It is a responsibility to act, with others, to change conditions and structures. All these features of Young's model are congruent with the argument that I have made.

But our arguments have different aims, scopes and levels of generality. Young aims to show how issues of justice and responsibility arise in domains that tend to be ignored. So she gives a general account of structural injustice and illustrates this account with examples from the global apparel industry and housing markets. And she gives a general account of the grounds of responsibility: people have some responsibility to work for change when they participate in and benefit from conditions and structures that unfairly disadvantage others. This responsibility may vary according to how people are situated with respect to these structures—according to their privileges, powers and interests. My argument is not so deep, ambitious or general. It takes much more for given. Since decent societies already take some political responsibility for conditions that affect labor and health, I simply tried to show why that responsibility should be extended to migrant workers. Of course, this argument does not have force for people who do not accept what I take for given.

I have been discussing the responsibility that societies have to care for and about undocumented workers. In this discussion, I have tried to bring about a shift in perspectives: to focus on the social role of undocumented migrants, not merely on their status as human beings or their status as illegal aliens. This shift involved two moves. First, I tried to highlight features like employment practices and social structures that are morally salient in this context. But I did not try to prove that these features are morally salient because they can be derived from or subsumed under abstract general principles of justice or dignity. I relied on a kind of recognition of what's salient and important in this context, and that recognition probably relies on embodied habits and norms. I will return to this point in the last section. The second move involved articulating some grounds of responsibility for trying to shape background conditions, social structures and common practices. But I

did not try to derive this responsibility from prior and more basic principles of justice or agency. I just tried to show that taking responsibility in this case fits a pattern of political responsibility that many people already accept. I am aware that this attempt to shift perspectives only works for people who already accept or embody certain normative patterns. I will return to this point in the last section.

My attempt to shift perspectives not only relies on some forms of ethical recognition and acceptance, it also leaves open the question of how to address multiple concerns. I will give one example. When I shift to the perspective that I have described, some people object that any attempt to improve the work conditions and health benefits for undocumented migrants within the country will lead to an increase in undocumented migration. In response to this objection, I would raise two points. First, whether my approach would lead to a substantial increase in undocumented migration is a complex empirical question. I think that other factors may be more important: wars, ethnic conflicts, environmental degradation, poverty and unemployment. My second point is that whether society should try to control immigration by maintaining harsh conditions and denying benefits is an important ethical question. A qualified right to control immigration is not an unlimited right to use all conditions and practices to achieve that end.

Undocumented Young People

Not all undocumented residents are working. Some young people are going to school, helping their families, playing with their friends and growing up. Consider a case study.

When Sophie Chen was 4 years old, her parents took her to New York. The three of them never returned to Taiwan. In Taiwan, her father had suffered a business loss and endured a family dispute. Because he wanted a fresh start, he wrote to a friend in New York and arranged for the family to visit on a tourist visa. After he saw the possibilities, the whole family stayed and began to construct a life. The father found work, remodeling restaurants and helping his friend. The mother took care of Sophie, had a second child, and did some paid childcare. Sophie was a healthy child, and rarely needed to see a doctor. She adapted quickly to life in a new place. Although she spoke Chinese with her parents, she never learned to read more than a few characters. As she grew older, English became her dominant language, the language that she used when she spoke with her sister and friends. She loved school and

did very well. Her favorite subject was mathematics. She did not miss Taiwan because the only place she remembered was New York. Now that she is in high school, she worries that she will not be able to attend college and develop a career because she is an undocumented resident. Her sister Irene is a citizen and has much better prospects.

Sophie Chen is not the only one in this predicament. Every year, about 65,000 undocumented young people graduate from high school in the USA (DREAM Act, 2011). They live in legal limbo, somewhere between the fear of deportation and the hope of citizenship. In 2012, President Obama instructed the relevant agencies to exercise prosecutorial discretion when dealing with undocumented young people who meet certain conditions (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, 2012). If these young people meet the required conditions, then legal actions against them will be deferred and they will be granted work authorization for renewable periods of 2 years. Although the program of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals has improved the life and health prospects of the young people who qualify, this program does not confer legal status, and the next president can alter it at will. So in the USA and other countries, it is still important to address the following question: What ethical responsibility does a society have for undocumented young people who have grown up in that society?

This question calls forth two familiar perspectives. Some people view the issue in terms of human rights. They use the language of human rights to express undocumented young people's ethical claims to health, education, work and other things that promote well-being. They use this same language to express society's responsibility to realize these rights. But this perspective does not quite fit the issue at hand. It seems to me that society has more responsibility to care for and about Sophie Chen than it has to care for and about a child who is growing up in Taiwan, China, Mexico or another country. Later, I will try to explain why.

Other people view this issue in terms of a narrow and legalistic account of desert. In their view, society has no responsibility because Sophie Chen has no legal right to be in the country. Because she has no legal claim, they do not view her as a social member who is entitled to benefits and support from the society in which she grew up. In their view, her parents, and only her parents, are responsible for this problem.

I want to shift perspectives. I do not want to focus on what society owes young people because they are human beings, nor on what society owes young people because

they are legal citizens. I want to highlight features that seem morally salient, and point out grounds of responsibility that seem morally appropriate. My idea is to explore how society socializes young people, how this process shapes them as social members and why society should take some responsibility in cases like Sophie Chen.

I shall begin by highlighting aspects of the process of socialization. John Dewey begins his philosophical reflections by exploring human beings' practical engagement in the world, by looking at human beings as concerned and interactive participants in everyday affairs. This starting point leads him to describe important aspects of socialization, of how we come to embody ways of engaging in and responding to situations. He focuses particular attention on the acquisition, development and role of habits (Dewey, 1983).¹

Dewey analyzes human conduct in terms of habits, impulses and reflection. Although he recognizes the important role of both biological impulses and reflective thinking, he deliberately begins his analysis with habits. He wants to call attention to habits of acting, feeling and thinking, and how the social environment shapes these habits. He uses and extends the term 'habit' to call attention to those acquired dispositions that organize and shape our ways of responding to situations (p. 31). These habits are not passive; they actively seek, perceive and respond to situations. And even when particular habits do not seem to be engaged in an activity, they often influence the habits that are overtly engaged.

Most of what we do, feel and think depends on habits. We acquire and use a language. These habits involve much more than the use of a vocabulary and grammar. They involve a mastery of tones, performatives, interactions and much more. We acquire habits of politeness. These habits involve attitudes, gestures, gazes, greetings and much more. We acquire habits of eating. These habits shape what, where, with whom and how we eat. We acquire habits of bodily comportment. These habits include habits of posture, carriage, sitting and walking. We also acquire habits of seeing, thinking and feeling. When we learn a complex practice like medicine, we learn more than a mass of facts. We start to see symptoms and signs, that is, we see patterns and meaning that we did not see before. When we study a discipline like philosophy or history, we acquire habits of relevance and inference, and a sense of what counts as a good question or objection.

Most of our habits are acquired in a social context, under conditions that are shaped by custom.

This is most obvious in the case of language. Dewey writes:

There is no miracle in the fact that if a child learns any language he learns the language that those about him speak and teach, especially since his ability to speak that language is a pre-condition of his entering into effective connection with them, making wants known and getting them satisfied. Fond parents and relatives frequently pick up a few of the child's spontaneous modes of speech and for a time at least they are portions of the speech of the group. But the ratio which such words bear to the total vocabulary in use gives a fair measure of the part played by purely individual habit in forming custom in comparison with the part played by custom in forming individual habits. (p. 43)

Social customs shape not only individual habits of language, but many other habits as well.

Social contexts shape habits, and habits shape character. Dewey notes how habits interpenetrate, how one habit can influence other habits even when that particular habit is not overtly engaged in particular activities. He gives the following example:

The habit of walking is expressed in what a man sees when he keeps still, even in dreams. The recognition of distances and directions of things from his place at rest is the obvious proof of this statement. The habit of locomotion is latent in the sense that it is covered up, counteracted, by a habit of seeing which is definitely at the fore. But counteraction is not suppression. . . . Everything that a man who has the habit of locomotion does and thinks he does and thinks differently on that account. (p. 29)

The interaction of habits is connected to character. Dewey says, 'Were it not for the continued operation of all habits in every act, no such thing as character could exist. There would be simply a bundle, an untied bundle at that, of isolated acts' (p. 29). But habits do interact in ways that we refer to as character, although a person's character is rarely complete and fixed.

With all this in mind, I want to return to the ethical question about undocumented young people. What I said about social contexts, habits, and character applies to Sophie Chen and many undocumented young people. The social context in which Sophie Chen grew up included her family life but also the wider social life of neighborhood, school, and society. These contexts worked to shape habits of language, politeness, bodily comportment, thinking and feeling. And these habits interact to shape character and identity. Given this

formation and life, what is society's responsibility to care for and about Sophie Chen and others like her?

To answer that question, I shall not try to articulate and justify a new pattern or conception of responsibility. I just want to show why it makes sense to extend a widely accepted pattern of responsibility to undocumented young people. In most societies, families take a lot of responsibility for the well-being of their young members. But in high- and middle-income societies, with complex structures, the societies also take considerable responsibility for the health, education and well-being of their young members. This assumption of responsibility serves many social purposes. It helps to compensate for deficiencies and variations in families. It helps young people to develop talents and realize potentials. And it enables and encourages young people to contribute to society's good. Indeed, societies are fortunate when many young people develop talents and realize potentials in ways that contribute to the overall social welfare. These and other reasons help to make sense of this widely accepted pattern of responsibility.

If one accepts this pattern of responsibility, and if one sees how young people develop habits and character, then it seems natural to extend this pattern to undocumented young people. Of course, undocumented young people are not legal citizens, but legal citizenship is only one form or aspect of social membership. Undocumented young people like Sophie Chen are social members in a deeper and more important sense (Carens, 2013). They have been socialized as members. In general, they have developed the habits, characters and identities that we expect of social members. And they have formed many deep relationships to the place where they live and with the people who surround them. There are individual variations among these young people, but that's also what we would expect. For some purposes, legal citizenship may be an important feature, but for the purpose of taking responsibility for health, education and well-being, the socialization process that I described seems more important.

I described a common feature of undocumented young people, and then I used that feature as grounds for extending a widely accepted pattern of responsibility. This kind of argument is open to many objections. I will consider two. Someone might object as follows. 'The society in which a child is socialized is not responsible for this problem. The parents are. They are the ones who decided to bring their child, without authorization, to a foreign country. As a result of their decision, the child was socialized in a country where she has no right to remain. That is the problem.'

I also believe that the parents should take some responsibility for the fate and well-being of their child. But I need to clarify the focus of my inquiry. I am not trying to assign causal responsibility, to pick out a key causal factor against a background of normal conditions. Nor am I trying to assign legal liability for a tort. In that practice, assigning responsibility is usually a zero-sum game—increasing one party's responsibility tends to decrease another party's responsibility. In this article, I am focused on ethical grounds for taking social responsibility. Given the situation of many undocumented young people, I suggested why society should take substantial responsibility for these people's health, education and well-being.

Consider another objection: 'But lots of children have lived abroad and been socialized in a country other than their birthplace. Would you extend social responsibility to the children of foreign diplomats, university professors and business people? And at the other end, would you deny social responsibility to children who have lived in a country for 12 weeks rather than 12 years?'

This objection calls attention to the relational aspect of my approach. I believe that some important ethical responsibilities depend on complex social relationships, and that these relationships vary with the contexts and histories of the people and institutions. Approaches that claim an expansive human right, independent of all relationships, are easier and neater. But they do not quite fit and respond to the problem; they do not work to highlight morally salient features of the situation. Since my approach is relational, I realize that ethical responsibilities vary with significant changes in social relationships. I know that there will be cases in between the case of Sophie Chen and the case of a child who grows up in her native country. While I believe that ethical responsibilities vary in nuanced ways, I also recognize that social policies will sometimes need to simplify ethical complexities, to draw clear lines over the gradations of ethical life. I will return to this point in the next section.

The Nature and Limits of these Arguments

In this section, I want to reflect on the nature and limits of the arguments that I have made. In the case of undocumented workers, I tried to show how these workers are used in the economy and why a pattern of responsibility should be extended to them. In the case of undocumented young people, I tried to show how these

people are socialized in a society and why a pattern of responsibility should be extended to them. By using the term 'pattern of responsibility', I have in mind clusters of normative responses from people, associations and institutions. For example, in the case of workers, people and societies often support their health and well-being through a whole range of responses. In the case of young people, adults, associations and societies often promote their health and well-being through a whole range of responses.

My arguments only have force for people who already accept, who already embody and institutionalize, certain patterns of social responsibility. If a person thinks that freedom of contract is the whole of social ethics, that society should not concern itself with background conditions and social structures, then my argument about undocumented workers has no grip. If a person thinks that parents bear sole responsibility for their children, that society should not concern itself with the well-being of children, then my argument about undocumented young people has no grip. Some arguments in ethics aspire to be universal and general in their scope. Mine do not. A lot of important work in ethics consists in appeals to people who share certain habits, institutions and patterns. This work tries to extend or adapt accepted practices to deal with new problems.

My arguments work by trying to show that certain features are reasons or grounds for extending widely accepted patterns of responsibility. These arguments depend on showing that certain features are morally salient in a given context. This contextualist approach falls between two extremes: using very abstract and general principles that hold across contexts and relying on particular judgments in each concrete case. Utilitarians, for example, use a very abstract principle to guide their inquiry and to help identify the features that contribute to judgments of what is good or right in the situation at hand. Radical particularists doubt that there are any right-making features that hold across contexts; they rely more on the discernment of sensitive moral agents to identify what is important in a particular case (Lance and Little, 2006). My approach was in between: I used the context to guide my inquiry, but I tried to identify features that seem salient in types of situations (Lance and Little, 2006; Pappas, 2008).

I looked at two types of situations: undocumented workers and undocumented young people. In each type of situation, I emphasized relational responsibilities: those responsibilities that depend on relationships between a society and the undocumented migrants in it. I did not deny that there are also some non-relational responsibilities: duties or responsibilities that we have to

people simply because they are human beings, independent of our relationships to them. But non-relational accounts do not give a full picture of our moral responsibilities.

Because relationships and contexts matter, each type of situation deserves its own inquiry. Consider a type of situation that I have not discussed: the case of environmental refugees. Human generated greenhouse gases are changing temperatures, precipitation patterns, ice sheets and sea levels. These changes contribute to heat waves, storm surges, floods, droughts, crop failures and disease patterns. As a result of these problems, millions of people are projected to be displaced within countries and across borders (IPCC Working, 2014). Those who flee across borders will be undocumented migrants because international law only recognizes people as refugees who relocate 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' (United Nations High Commission on Refugees, 1951). What ethical responsibility do people and societies have for people who are displaced because of climate change? Responses that focus solely on international law are too narrow. Responses that focus solely on the human status and dignity of these refugees are too broad. More adequate responses will also take into account how societies and people have contributed to emissions, how they have benefited from fossil fuels, what they have done to increase mitigation and adaptation, and what political practices they have supported (Dwyer, 2013). In this type of situation, contexts and relationships matter.

The arguments that I have made about undocumented migrants are not definitive. They are open to objections, subject to a balance of considerations and in need of social policies that simplify ethical complexities. But even these limited arguments can be very valuable. They can highlight important features, shift understandings, elevate democratic deliberations and lead to better policies. These valuable consequences depend not only on the quality of the arguments, but also on the actions of people. Since cases of undocumented migrants do not already appear under accepted patterns of responsibility, and since complex cases involve multiple concerns, taking responsibility for undocumented migrants has an active and creative aspect. People and societies need to take responsibility where it was not clearly assigned before. Although taking or extending responsibility has a creative aspect, it is not arbitrary. I tried to show why this extension makes moral sense.

Taking responsibility is also an expressive act. At the beginning of this article, I noted that the phenomenon

of migration has been a prevalent and persistent feature of human history. That is because many of the root causes—environmental change, war, persecution, discrimination, poverty and lack of opportunity—have been prevalent and persistent features of human history. How we should respond to these features is a deep ethical matter. The other deep ethical matter is how we should respond to the migrants who are in our societies. How we do respond to the causes of migration and to the migrants themselves will express a lot about what kind of people we aspire to be and what kind of societies we aim to construct.

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Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Note

1. Of course, Dewey is not the only philosopher to focus attention on the process of socialization. In the 20th century, Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein also explore the importance and meaning of socialization. Heidegger focuses attention on ways of being and coping that are ready-to-hand (Heidegger, 1962). Ludwig Wittgenstein focuses attention on language games and forms of life (Wittgenstein, 2001).

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