

Institution: Coventry University		
Unit of Assessment: 19		
Title of case study: Centring migrant voices and perspectives in migration policy and practice		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: September 2015 –November 2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Heaven Crawley	Professor and PI of MEDMIG	September 2014 - Present
Katharine Jones	Associate Professor and named researcher on MEDMIG	April 2015-Present
Simon McMahon	Assistant Professor and named researcher on MEDMIG	September 2014-May 2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: January 2016- December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

The MEDMIG project has generated new insights into the dynamics of migration and experiences of migrants that challenge dominant political and media narratives and support the efforts of the UN, NGOs and the private sector to change policy and practice in the UK, Europe and beyond. Specifically, the findings from the research have **(a)** increased representation of migrant experiences and perspectives through extensive engagement with policy makers in the UK, Europe and internationally; **(b)** increased public awareness of migrant experiences, voices and perspectives through extensive media engagement; **(c)** supported the work of the UN and private sector in bringing about narrative change; and **(d)** increased understanding of migration among teachers and young people through the design and delivery of curriculum in schools in the UK and online teacher training. The influence of the MEDMIG research findings can be directly observed through the funding, underpinning objectives and impact pathways of the £20million GCRF MIDEQ Hub (2019-2024) led by Professor Crawley.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The underpinning research was undertaken by Professor Heaven Crawley, Dr Katharine Jones and Dr Simon McMahon at Coventry University and colleagues from the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham in 2015 and 2016. In 2015, the ESRC and the Department for International Development co-funded the Mediterranean Migration Research Programme in response to the increase in refugees and other migrants crossing the Mediterranean to Europe. This was largely represented by European politicians, policymakers and the media as a 'crisis'. In direct response to this, MEDMIG was one of eight projects selected to conduct research with migrant and refugee populations who entered Europe across the Mediterranean. The main purpose of the project was to develop new evidence on the dynamics of migration and ensure that migrant voices and perspectives were better understood and able to inform the development of appropriate policy responses by governments, international organisations and other actors. The MEDMIG project provided the first large-scale, systematic and comparative study of the backgrounds, experiences, aspirations and routes of migrants in four European countries (Italy, Greece, Malta and Turkey). The team conducted over 500 interviews with refugees and other migrants that had recently arrived from more than 30 countries and more than 100 interviews with stakeholders. In centring the voices and perspectives of refugees and other migrants, the research challenged underlying assumptions about the drivers of migration, the nature of migrant decision-making and people's

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journeys to Europe [R1, R2, R3, R4]. The research also drew attention to the ways in which knowledge and understanding of migration processes (typically produced in disciplinary silos within institutions in the Global North), reflect, feed into and reinforce dominant political, policy and media narratives. This was evidenced by supplementary analysis of 648 migration-related stories in UK tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, and undertaken in partnership with Migrant Voice and funded by the Open Society Foundation's Open Europe Initiative [R6] in 2016. Taken together, these projects have produced significant research findings that can be summarised in seven core conclusions and recommendations:

- (1) The representation of the movement of refugees and other migrants as linear, singular uninterrupted journeys or flows of people heading toward Europe is grossly misleading. These simplifications distract from what were often multiple separate movements which converged in Libya and Turkey – the places to which people initially travelled were often destination rather than 'transit countries'. Understanding those movements was critical in explaining the arrival of refugees and migrants in Italy and Greece during 2015 [R1, R2, R4]
- (2) The production of knowledge on migration is frequently produced in the Global North, driven by the political and policy interests of Europe and ignoring or marginalising the experiences of refugees and migrants prior to their decision to cross the Mediterranean [R1, R2, R3, R4]
- (3) There is often a complex and overlapping relationship between 'forced' and 'economic' drivers of migration to Europe. Many of those who left their home countries primarily for economic reasons effectively became refugees during their journeys and were forced to continue moving even when they had not originally intended to travel to Europe [R2, R3, R4]
- (4) Border controls create irregularity. Not all participants crossed all borders irregularly (without authorisation and/or the necessary documentation), all of the time. There were significant differences between groups depending on their nationalities, access to documents and other resources [R3, R4, R5].
- (5) Death and violence were a feature of migrant journeys and were exacerbated by immigration controls. 76% of respondents interviewed in Italy and Malta said that they had directly experienced physical violence. 29% stated that they had witnessed the death of a fellow traveller [R1, R5].
- (6) All participants engaged smugglers for at least one leg of their journey to mitigate risks of violence and death from state actors, bandits and dangerous terrain. Smugglers are a symptom, not a cause, of unequal access to legal migration [R1, R4, R5].
- (7) The voices and perspectives of migrants are rarely included in newspaper articles on migration that frequently rely upon 'victim' and 'villain' stereotypes [R6].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] Crawley, H., Düvell, F., Jones, K., McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2018) *Unravelling Europe's Migration Crisis: Journeys Over Land and Sea*, Bristol: Policy Press ISBN 978-1447343219 [monograph, will need to be provided directly to the Panel]

[R2] Crawley, H. and Skleparis, D. (2017) 'Refugee, migrant, neither, both: categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis'', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44(1), 48-64 doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224

[R3] Crawley, H. and Hagen-Zanker, J. (2019) 'Deciding where to go: policies, people and perceptions shaping destination preferences', *International Migration* 57(1), 20-35 doi.org/10.1111/imig.12537

[R4] Crawley, H. and Jones, K. (2020) 'Beyond here and there: (re)conceptualising migrant journeys and the 'in-between'', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1804190

[R5] McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2018) 'Navigating the Central Mediterranean in a time of 'crisis': disentangling migration governance and migrant journeys', *Sociology* doi:10.1177/10038038518762082

[R6] Crawley, H., McMahon, S. and Jones, K. (2016) *Victims and Villains: Migrant Voices in the British Media*, Migrant Voice/Coventry University <https://www.migrantvoice.org/resources/reports/victims-and-villains-migrant-voices-301020160519>

All underpinning research have been outputs from the ESRC funded MEDMIG project (<https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FN013506%2F1>).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Migration-related policy making is often driven by political priorities, supported by ill-informed assumptions about the motivations and aspirations of those who move, and ignoring, marginalising or misrepresenting the voices and perspectives of refugees and migrants themselves. Through the research team's migrant-centred approach and extensive engagement with the UN, parliamentarians, policy advisors, NGOs, media and the private sector, the MEDMIG research has contributed to significant shifts in public, political and media understanding of migration and supported UN, NGOs and the private sector efforts to create narrative change and influence policy. The main impacts include:

Increased understanding and representation of migrant experiences and perspectives through extensive engagement with policy makers in the UK, Europe and internationally

At the **UK level**, Crawley's MEDMIG-based evidence in 2016 to the House of Lords, EU Committee's Inquiry on 'Unaccompanied Migrant Children in the EU' [R1], was cited numerous times throughout the Committee's final report [S1]. The MEDMIG findings were also cited extensively in the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's (ICAI) 2017 review of the UK government's aid response to irregular migration in the central Mediterranean [S2]. At the **European level**, the research team worked closely with the European Commission's (EC) Joint Research Centre (JRC) on a series of policy briefings, seminars and launch of the MEDMIG findings in Brussels [R1]. As a consequence of this engagement, MEDMIG is referenced in the EC 2018 report *European migration: dynamics, drivers, and the role of politics* and informed the EU's Pact on Migration and Asylum adopted in 2020 [S3]. Additional impact has been realised through the results of MEDMIG being embedded within Friends of Europe initiatives that engaged more than 300 stakeholders within its network of policymakers in Brussels and facilitating direct contribution of refugees and migrants to policymaking processes [S4]. At the **International level**, the MEDMIG findings were presented at a side-event at the 2016 UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants in New York in partnership with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [S5]. Crawley also served as an expert adviser at UNHCR's thematic discussions in Geneva in 2017 and organised and delivered an expert roundtable on '*Ensuring a rights-based approach to refugee protection and assistance*' in November 2017, the report of which was published by UNHCR on their website. The report was presented at the UN High Commissioner's Global Dialogue event in December 2017, further extending the reach and significance of the MEDMIG research findings.

Raised public awareness of migrant experiences, voices and perspectives through extensive media engagement

The research team have used the findings of MEDMIG [R1, R2, R5] to significantly enhance public awareness and understanding of migrant voices and perspectives through the media. In a special issue of the *Escapism* magazine, the UK's biggest independent travel magazine with an average global readership of 250,000 and a UK readership of 88,000, MEDMIG data was used to raise awareness of the extent, challenges, and misconceptions of migration in the Mediterranean [S6]. An exclusive report in *The Independent* [S7] reporting on the findings of the MEDMIG project also enhanced awareness of the dynamics of migration in the Mediterranean, as did further articles and op-eds in *The Guardian*, *der Spiegel*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Times Higher*, *Open Democracy*, *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, *BBC* and *New York Times*. These articles brought the voices of migrants and refugees to the public in an evidence-based manner, challenging the popular media portrayal of migrants as 'victims' or 'villains'. As a result of this work, Crawley and McMahon secured additional funding from the Open Society Foundation's Open Initiative for Europe to undertake research with *Migrant Voice* on the representation of migrants in the British media during the 2016 UK General Election. This report [R6] was launched at the Palace of Westminster in February 2017, attracting an audience of politicians, NGOs and the public. The MEDMIG team also presented the findings at numerous events organised, for example, by ODI and The Frontline Club, providing the public with evidence that did not exist previously. Public engagement with this new evidence led to the MEDMIG project being runner-up in *The Guardian* Research Impact Awards in 2017 [S8].

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Supported the work of the UN and the private sector in bringing about narrative change

The MEDMIG team has worked closely with the OHCHR, using the MEDMIG findings [R1, R3] to support UN efforts to secure narrative change. Crawley has contributed to the development of various tools and messaging materials including the ongoing global campaign #StandUp4Migrants [S5]. This work is now being developed further through the GCRF MIDEQ Hub: OHCHR is a project partner and 'narrative change' is one of the project's core impact pathways. The team's efforts to secure narrative change have also engaged the private sector. As a result of the MEDMIG research project, Crawley, Jones and McMahon were commissioned by Ben and Jerry's to write *'Beyond Fear and Hate: Mobilising People Power to Create a New Narrative on Migration and Diversity'* which presents evidence and strategies for challenging negative public narratives towards migration and migrants and underpins Ben and Jerry's efforts to change the debate on migration and diversity [S9]. According to the Head of Ben and Jerry's Social Mission Strategy, this research was *'the foundation for us to explore external work under our 'One Sweet World platform' which resulted in 4 million views across YouTube and Facebook and a PR reach of 56 million. Furthermore, on the back of this research, 'we launched our 3 year strategy which was a complete focus for our work across Europe on supporting refugee and asylum rights'*. An additional impact of this work was the development by Ben and Jerry's of a public position around refugee and asylum rights that was launched at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019 [S9].

Increased understanding of migration among teachers and young people through the design and delivery of curriculum in schools in the UK and online teacher training

The MEDMIG project data [R1] underpins the award-winning Maths of Migration (MOM) platform, a teacher-led collaboration between PositiveNegatives and Oaklands School which increases understanding of migration and the experiences of refugees and other migrants through curriculum development. MOM has used the MEDMIG database in open-access lesson plans for cross-curricular secondary school teaching which, to date, has been implemented in multiple UK secondary schools and downloaded nearly 8,000 times. The learning from the MOM teacher training course has been extended across other subject areas and geographically in the form of a MOOC entitled 'Teaching migration through data and storytelling' delivered via Future Learn. The first course ran from October to November 2020 under the auspices of the GCRF MIDEQ Hub, attracting 632 learners from 31 countries [S10]. A further demonstration of how MEDMIG has impacted education and increased understanding of migration among teachers and young people is evidenced through the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) that uses MEDMIG in online GCSE and A-level educational resources, the importance of which was cited by John Howell MP [S11] in a UK Parliamentary debate on the teaching of migration history in schools. Indeed, the Head of Research and Higher Education at the RGS (with IBG) further details the impact of MEDMIG by concluding that the project *'has fundamentally impacted our Education team in terms of how we deliver events for teachers on data skills and opportunities to work across the curriculum' and the 'research has enhanced understanding of migration in the 21st century and helped a significant cohort of teachers and students fundamentally reframe their understanding of a complex issue'* [S12].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

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- [S1] House of Lords, European Union Committee (2017) [Children in Crisis: Unaccompanied Children in the EU](#), 2nd Report of Session 2016-7 and personal letter of appreciation sent to Crawley by Committee. The report was subsequently cited in the [European Commission's reporting on EU actions to protect migrant children in Europe](#)
- [S2] Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) (2017) [The UK's Aid Response to Irregular Migration in the Central Mediterranean: A Rapid Review](#) (March 2017)
- [S3] Letter from the Advisor to the Deputy Director-General of the European [Commission's Joint Research Centre \(JRC\)](#) corroborating the use of the MEDMIG research in policy discussions around the European Union's [Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) adopted in 2020
- [S4] Letter from the Director of Europe & Geopolitics at [Friends of Europe](#), corroborating their use of the MEDMIG research in their work on changing the migration narrative in Europe, most notably through Crawley's contribution to the 2016 Balkan Summit on [Strengthening the Region's Ties](#) and at the joint conference [African Perspectives: Holding up a Mirror to Europe's Migration Policies](#) (December 2019)

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- [S5] Letter from the Senior Advisor on Migration and Human Rights at the Office of the United Nations of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) corroborating engagement with the MEDMIG research at the UN General Assembly meeting in New York (Sept 2016) and ongoing collaboration with Professor Crawley in efforts to bring about narrative change, including OHCHR's global campaign [#StandUp4Migrants](#)
 - [S6] [Special issue of Escapism magazine](#), co-edited by Crawley and showcasing the MEDMIG research throughout the 84-page publication. Escapism is the UK's biggest independent travel magazine with more than 88,000 readers in the UK, and average issue global readership of 250,000.
 - [S7] Exclusive report in [The Independent](#) citing the voices of refugees and migrants interviewed as part of the underpinning research
 - [S8] Evidence of [2017 Guardian Research Impact Award Runner-Up](#)
 - [S9] Report commissioned by Ben and Jerrys (2018) entitled [Beyond Fear and Hate: Mobilising People Power to Create a New Narrative on Migration and Diversity](#) (2018) promoted on the company's [website](#) and letter of corroboration from the Head of Social Mission Strategy Europe at Ben and Jerry's detailing the company's engagement with the MEDMIG research and the impact on their ['One Sweet World' campaign](#) and [video \(4m views across YouTube and Facebook, PR reach 56 million\)](#) – accompanying press release also available. Ben and Jerry's Social Mission Manager Europe also wrote about the collaboration for the [Huffington Post](#).
 - [S10] [Maths of Migration](#) online teaching resources created by [PositiveNegatives](#) and Oakwood School (and available free through [TES](#)) based on the MEDMIG database (accessible via UKDS) and accompanying statement of corroboration from PositiveNegatives outlining the use of the underpinning research for [CPD courses](#) and in the classroom, plus [evidence of enrolment on the Future Learn course](#).
 - [S11] Hansard Evidence from John Howell MP citing MEDMIG research in a [UK Parliamentary debate on the teaching of migration history in schools](#)
 - [S12] Letter from the Head of Research and Higher Education at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) outlining their use of the MEDMIG research in their [educational resources for secondary schools](#)
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