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Trust Shaping in Forced Migrants' Institutional Encounters in the Finnish Welfare State

RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This article examines institutional encounters in the light of trust in the contemporary welfare state context of Finland from the perspectives of young forced migrants. Young persons with a forced migration background constitute a growing group in Nordic welfare societies, and institutional encounters are an essential part of their everyday life. Still, little is known about how trust is shaped and experienced in this context. Drawing on 12 interviews with young forced migrants, I examine how trust and distrust is shaped in the series of institutional encounters. In my analysis, I identify two dimensions of facework interactions affecting trust: the administrative and emotional dimension. Thus, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how the dynamic, multifaceted, contextualized concept of trust is shaped in the series of institutional encounters migrants face as part of migration governance.

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INTRODUCTION

In this article, based on empirical research in Finland, I examine encounters between young forced migrants and welfare state institutions from a trust perspective. Trust has been emphasized as essential in the resettlement of forced migrants (Essex et al. 2021; Turtiainen 2012). Trust in the institutional system is central for the system to function in the interest of society (Luhmann 1979). While previous research on forced migration in a European context has valuably examined trust by measuring levels (Castaneda et al. 2012; Nannestad et al. 2013; Pitkänen, Saukkonen & Westinen 2019), we know little about what shapes forced migrants' trust toward institutions in the Nordic welfare states. Therefore, I aim to fill this gap by analyzing bottom-up experiences through individual interviews, thus offering deeper knowledge on how forced migrants themselves experience institutional trust and distrust.

To examine the essence of trust, the trust relationship needs to be embedded and contextualized in a wider context (Möllering 2006). In this article, trust or distrust is embedded in the relationship between young migrants and institutions through institutional encounters. A prerequisite for using services related to the welfare system is the institutional encounters between the systems' representatives (street-level bureaucrats) and individual service users (Lipsky 2010). Settling in a Nordic welfare state context requires navigating in an, at least to some extent, unknown institutional framework. Within these *series of institutional encounters*, present in the everyday life of forced migrants, laws, norms, and societal values are turned into practice by street-level bureaucrats. Hence, both immigration control and welfare policies are implemented in institutional encounters (Abdelhady, Gren & Joormann 2020).

Previous studies show that forced migrants have increasingly been subject to various nationalist and welfare chauvinist bordering practices challenging the social justice-based ethos of Nordic welfare states (Keskinen 2016). The challenging bureaucratic procedures in migration governance emphasizing the significant role of discretionary bureaucratic power have been conceptualized as bureaucratic violence (Abdelhady, Gren & Joormann 2020; Näre 2020). This controlling, exclusionary and disciplining form of bureaucracy, which dehumanizes forced migrants, is often neoliberally influenced (Abdelhady, Gren & Joormann 2020; Elsrud & Lalander 2022) and operates partly through institutional encounters. Such encounters offer a useful empirical setting for examining how trust toward institutions is shaped.

Empirically, I draw on individual interviews with 12 young adults with forced migrant backgrounds. The research participants migrated to Finland during or in the aftermath of 2015. Either arriving as asylum seekers or quota refugees, they experienced migration trajectories involving coercive elements. These groups of migrants (usually) share the experience of a long series of encounters with public service institutions, despite being in various stages of their settling process(es) with different formal status positions. Hence, the informants recalled their institutional encounters from various positions relating to precarity, residential security and access to welfare services. This offered an opportunity to examine their experiences of institutional encounters, trust and distrust beyond the legal categories.

I start by examining conceptualizations, causes and theories related to trust in previous research. Then, I present my data and methods along with a discussion on ethical research aspects. In my analysis, I show how facework interactions are crucial for shaping trust in the system, and I identify two dimensions of trust shaping:

administrative and emotional dimensions. Finally, I conclude by discussing practical implications of the study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON TRUST

Being a well-researched area over disciplines for decades, trust has been defined in various ways (Lyon, Möllering & Saunders 2015). Rousseau et al. (1998), presenting one of the currently most established definitions, conceptualize trust as an *intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another*. However, few of the established definitions of trust take into account the asymmetric power dimensions embedded in the relationship between street-level bureaucrats and forced migrants.

Recent research across disciplines emphasizes the dynamic features and the continuous process-like changes related to trust (Lewicki & Brinsfield 2015; Möllering 2006). Meyer et al. (2008) argue that limiting trust to a linear process removes the possibility to see trust as a complex web of interactions. Trust has been analyzed as a contextualized process in forced migration studies examining journeys of trust (Lyytinen 2017) as well as through phases of compulsory dispersal (Hynes 2009). Essex et al. (2021) point out that trust is shaped by a range of premigration experiences, as well as experiences upon settlement. In line with this, Eide et al. (2020) found that reasons for trusting were complex and changed considerably over time for unaccompanied minors during resettlement. The youngsters constantly reassessed trustworthiness among their social relations.

In reviewing research on trust in a forced migration context, Essex et al. (2021) conceptualize trust as *relational*, depending on the relationship between the refugee and the other party; *dynamic*, being renegotiated several times; and *contextual*, strongly depending on the surroundings. These three features highlight the dynamic, non-static, and strongly embedded attributes of trust, which is also the way I embrace trust for the purpose of this article.

Research in social sciences emphasizes trust as having both emotional and calculative/rational parts, thus being a mix of reasoned rational thoughts and emotions (Möllering 2006). The emotional aspect of trust has been emphasized by Lyytinen (2017), who, in her research on refugees, conceptualizes trust as a discursively created emotion and practice. Emotional aspects such as recognition (Turtiainen 2012), understanding (Heino 2016), and friendliness (Feldmann et al. 2007) have also been shown to affect trust shaping among forced migrants. Giddens talks about ontological security as a sense of safety, predictability, and routine, and argues that ontological security creates trust (Giddens 1991). However, for forced migrants the ontological security might be lacking or threatened, which can affect trust building processes (Lyytinen 2017).

Looking at concrete causes of distrust or trust, previous research highlights the challenging, unpredictable abstract system as a main cause for distrust. Hynes (2009) identifies the dispersal system as one cause of mistrust among asylum seekers, while according to Eide et al. (2020), the system requirements, rules and regulations in care institutions are causes for distrust. Svenberg, Skott and Lepp (2011) explain distrust toward the health care system among Somalis in Sweden in terms of expectations not being met and clients being left with a feeling of dismissal. This can be interpreted

as forms of procedural injustice, which can be detrimental in shaping trust (Fersch & Breidahl 2018; Kumlin & Rothstein 2005).

Giddens (1990) access point theory highlights the intersection of institutional encounters and trust. He argues that the arena for the interaction between the individual and the abstractive system can be referred to as an access point. Giddens names two ways of interactions through these access points: 'faceless' and 'facework' commitments. In a faceless encounter, the service user interacts with the abstract system without encountering a person. In a facework interaction, the service user interacts with a real person in copresence (Giddens 1990).

However, Giddens' theory has been criticized for gaps when applied to real life situations (Kroeger 2017; Meyer et al. 2008). In Giddens' theory, facework interactions are described as a meeting with a representative of the system and a lay person, lacking a closer examination of the power dynamics. However, these two parties are not isolated from social structures in society when they interact. Instead, several causes affect the way they position themselves in relation to each other. Here, Lipsky's theorization of how street-level bureaucrats make policy through their actions and non-actions within their professional role (Lipsky 2010) offers a useful lens to scrutinize power asymmetries in the encounters. Street-level bureaucrats function as gatekeepers of the welfare system (Heino 2016), entailing an asymmetric relationship between themselves and the user. This problematizes the necessities of trust in institutional encounters among migrants (Fersch 2016; Turtiainen 2012).

Previous research on trust in institutional encounters has emphasized the role of the street-level bureaucrats as crucial (Fersch 2016; Fersch & Breidahl 2018; Giddens 1990; Lyytinen 2013; Meyer et al. 2008). First, street-level bureaucrats are perceived as the face of the institution, as translators explaining the system (Fersch & Breidahl 2018) and bringing the services to the citizens (Fersch 2016). Second, in migration research, representatives of one institution are often considered representatives of the welfare state in general but also, more broadly, as representatives of the new host country (Fersch 2016; Kumlin & Rothstein 2010; Turtiainen 2012).

Regarding levels of trust, Giddens (1990) argues that, in order to have trust in a medical system, one must first have trust in the physician. Here, in contrast to Luhmann (1979), Giddens claims that trust in the system requires social trust. Giddens asserts that facework interactions transfer social trust toward the representatives into institutional trust toward the system (Kroeger 2017). Luhmann, on the other hand, sees trust in the system as a prerequisite for trust in the system's representatives.

In my analysis, I rely mainly on both Giddens' (1990) and Lipsky's (2010) theories while emphasizing the dynamics of trust and, consequently, the need to analyze trust as a process, in line with Möllering (2006). Like Essex et al. (2021), I refer to *shaping* trust, not *building* trust, to highlight the complexity of certain causes shaping trust either positively or negatively. While Giddens uses the concept of facework commitments, I use the concept of *facework interactions* to emphasize the impact of the interaction in the process of trust shaping.

DATA, METHODS, AND ETHICS

In order to examine the 'concurrent simplicity, complexity and ambivalence of experienced trust' (Möllering 2006: 163), I carried out 12 semi-structured interviews

with young forced migrants in Finland. The informants lived in the Uusimaa and Pirkanmaa regions in Finland and were approached through associations working with migrants, educational institutions and municipalities' immigrant offices.

In this study, I refer to my informants as forced migrants. The concept of forced migrant grasps holistically the roots to forced migration highlighting factors behind the need to leave, such as power dimension, post-colonialist realities seeing migrants as subject owning their narratives (Banerjee & Samaddar 2019). Six of the informants had been granted asylum quite recently, while four were still waiting after years. Thus, the asylum seekers went through the asylum process during a time of tightening policies after the 'long summer of migration' (Kasperek & Speer 2015) and faced the new restrictions in the Aliens Act in 2016, which complicated asylum seeking in Finland (Näre 2020). Two informants arrived as quota refugees having a secure position in terms of residence permits.

Nine of the informants were men and three women. At the time of the interview, they were between 17 and 32 years old. Six of the asylum seekers had arrived as minors, two unaccompanied, and thus navigated what Kaukko and Wernesjö (2017: 7) call 'multiple liminal stages,' including transition from childhood to adulthood, settling in a new country and (re)negotiating their identities. When I met Sami and Fatima, they were 17 years old. Demir and Hashem had recently turned 18, while Mahdi was 20. Ammar and Shadia were in their early 20s and shared experiences of stronger independency. Sophia was in her late 20s and a mother of small children. Sahid, Hamid, Jemal, and Ali were in their 30s. Three of the interviewees identified as black.

I approached the concept of institutions from my informants' point of view. This includes encounters with various public service institutions that emerged as significant in their everyday life: public employment and business services (TE-services), social insurance institution services (KELA), local municipality-level social services, school, the Police, and the Finnish Immigration Service (MIGRI). Despite offering different services, all these institutions are experiences of the welfare state and its system, perceived as bodies officially assigned authoritative power. In line with Lipsky (2010), these institutions, enacting street-level bureaucracy, are to some extent structurally similar although performing diverse work tasks, and can be jointly analyzed.

Regarding forms of the encounter, my informants primarily recalled experiences of *meeting* personally with various representatives of institutions, that is, facework interactions, which therefore are the main focus for my analysis. While I collected the data during the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the experiences shared related to face-to-face meetings that took place before the pandemic. The qualitative semi-structured interviews were mainly individual (nine) and one interview was carried out as a group interview with three informants. The semi-structured interviews were carried out face to face in libraries, coffee shops, in private homes or online during 2020–2021.

The data was pseudonymized and analytically scrutinized using qualitative content analysis and coded thematically using NVivo. During the interviews, some of the informants referred to a particular case or event several times in various phases of the interview. Therefore, in order to make the quotes regarding this experience coherent in the results section of this paper, I have combined quotations that refer to one subject, without changing the meaning of the narratives. In the text, these gaps are marked accordingly ([...]).

As the concept of trust entails cultural, contextual, and language variations, the interview questions mainly focused on the institutional encounters in general, not directly on trust. Hynes (2009: 98) puts it well: 'the plurality of meanings of trust must be acknowledged, for example according to class, age, gender, particular country of origin and ethnicity,' thus, the informants were asked how they perceived trust themselves.

When doing research with possibly vulnerable groups, such as forced migrants, ethical concerns must be considered throughout the research (Leinonen et al. 2020). As a researcher with a privileged background, it has been necessary to scrutinize my positionality during the course of the research. First, I strived to carefully listen to and analyze the informants' words and bring their knowledge into a context (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Hugman 2010) without misconceptualizing the informants' narratives as a researcher with a Western and Nordic perspective. Second, I asked migrants (all of whom are settled in Finland) in my networks to join a reference group. During the research process, I received valuable input from members of the reference group, especially regarding the interview questions. Third, throughout the process, I followed international codes of ethics in forced migration studies (Clark-Kazak 2019). A statement from the ethical committee at the university has also been obtained.

TRUST SHAPING DIMENSIONS IN THE SERIES OF INSTITUTIONAL ENCOUNTERS

In the following section, I discuss my analysis of trust shaping in institutional encounters, by distinguishing two main dimensions of trust shaping, an *administrative* and an *emotional dimension*. Within these dimensions, I identify various causes both strengthening and weakening trust.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIMENSION OF TRUST SHAPING

One pattern that evolved strongly in the informants' narratives was how trust and distrust was shaped through perceived procedural justice and availability of information in the administrative process and the complex system. Whether or not the young migrants felt actively involved or aware of the administrative process had an impact on their trust relation toward the institution. I cluster these causes in what I call the administrative dimension.

Regarding procedural justice, in line with previous research (Gandolfo 2021; Hynes 2009; Ni Raghallaigh 2013), my informants referred to previous bad experiences with authorities in countries of origin and how these experiences affected trust. Hamid, arriving from Iraq and having waited for asylum in Finland for several years, explained when talking about the Police in Finland: 'It's not easy to trust them immediately because we have a bad experience in my country stuck in our mind.' In line with this, Hynes (2017) argues that the restoration of trust is crucial for refugees. However, many of the informants, despite previous bad experiences, were also rather trusting toward the institutions in Finland. This is congruent with previous research showing how some migrants socialize themselves into the trusting culture of Nordic societies (Nannestad et al. 2013). Similarly, Röder and Mühlau (2012) argue that first-generation migrants socialize themselves because of the *reference point hypothesis*, indicating that migrants evaluate their present situation based on past experiences of institutional performances. High trust levels in host countries despite bad previous

experiences in countries of origin or transit were explained by different institutional performances. Mahdi, despite having bad experiences in Syria, was very trusting toward the Finnish TE-services and MIGRI. At the age of 20, having been granted asylum and now in higher education, he explained why:

Mahdi: I am not used to trusting authorities. So like, I don't know what to say, if I want to trust something, it is going to take some time [...]. Every time I go to a governmental place it is like hell, you have to wait in a que, for hours, you don't get the best treatment, you have to bribe to get what you want, it's so bad. That's why I am not used to trusting authorities.

Me: Was it something you knew when you came to Finland, that the authorities are more trustworthy?

Mahdi: I was optimistic about my first days here, this is a different place, I was really optimistic. I had actually high expectations and they were in place even if they were high [...].

Me: Despite negative experiences previously, do you think you can trust the TE-service?

Mahdi: I can say that I can trust the TE-service. The treatment was really good, they asked me how I studied and how was it. It was like they kept in touch, called and asked questions.

In line with Essex et al. (2021), showing how trust is shaped by both premigration experiences and upon settlement, Mahdi's narrative entails trust shaping before arrival and in Finland. Due to high expectations and positive encounters in Finland, entailing perceived procedural justice as the 'treatment was really good,' Mahdi's distrust turned into trust. In line with Möllering (2006), positive expectations helped Mahdi to strengthen his trust and to take what Möllering refers to as the leap of faith. Further, the sense of procedural justice was strongly tied to the institutional performance enacted by the street-level bureaucrat. As suggested by Giddens (1990), the encounters with 'the face' of the system are vital for trust shaping as they are 'places of vulnerability for abstract systems, but also junctions at which trust can be maintained or built up' (Giddens 1990: 88). As shown by Eide et al. (2020), we see here how Mahdi's trust shaping depended on how he assessed and reassessed trustworthiness. Thus, bad experiences are not a static cause preventing trust, but should be recognized as a possible cause slowing trust building in facework interactions.

Vice versa, Hamid shared a narrative of how his trust grew into distrust due to what he perceived as procedural injustice:

MIGRI I don't trust because I have seen many mistakes they did here, some people (asylum seekers) have made a lot of mistakes here and they (MIGRI) gave them a positive answer [...] when I met them (MIGRI) I had full trust in them. But then, after a few months when I saw many negative answers with bad reasons, I can't trust them [...].

At the point of the interview, Hamid, age 28, had been waiting for asylum in Finland for six years, and having lost his ID, he had no formal documents and was in a very vulnerable position. What Hamid considered wrongful positive asylum decisions were the basis for procedural injustice and, thus, the causes for distrust. While having positive expectations about the institution as a starting point, or as a form of pretrust,

this changed into distrust or erode after time which shows how trust is processual and temporal, in line with previous research (Lyytinen 2017). Hamid experienced what Lyytinen (2017) refers to as trust violations shaping trust into distrust. Here, the violations took place as part of the bureaucratic violence encountered by young forced migrants in the aftermath of 2015 (Abdelhady, Gren & Joormann 2020).

In line with Hynes (2009) and Eide et al. (2020), identifying the *complex systems* as causes for distrust, several of the informants referred to the system when discussing trust. Sahid, age 24, who had arrived in Finland as an asylum seeker from Syria and was now holding a residence permit, mentioned KELA with distrust due to not understanding the processes:

I don't trust KELA because I recall applying for housing benefits and first they pay something and then it changed. A bit difficult because always the decision changes [...]. If I need help, I go to an association (referring to a civil society association helping with bureaucratic questions), they will help me. Always, if I go to KELA, it is so difficult. That's why I do not like going there.

In Sahid's case, the complex system, lack of information and not keeping him involved in the various phases of the administrative process were the main reasons for his distrust. Likewise, previous research has identified that unawareness of the administrative system creates distrust among forced migrants (Ni Raghallaigh 2013). For Sahid, the association functioned as an exit option, a place where he could get help and an explanation for how the system functioned. When the complex system created distrust, he turned to the association that he trusted. Related to the administrative decision, Shadia, having arrived as a minor in the refugee quota for Finland, also mentioned her disappointment in having to pay back housing benefits years later, as her family was not aware of the administrative process and the criteria regarding the benefits. Here, trust turned into distrust long *after* the facework interactions, again highlighting the temporal aspects of trust and distrust.

Interestingly, and quite contrary to Hynes (2009) and Eide et al. (2020), the system was also a reason *for* perceived procedural justice and, thus, trust. Ali, at 30, having arrived as an asylum seeker and now being granted asylum, stated clear trust toward KELA and its 'system,' whereas the social office was portrayed negatively:

Ali: For example, I can trust KELA, because they have one system, your name, your security number, your income. They will know everything.

Me: Is that good?

Ali: For me it is really good, it is really equal, it is same for me and you. It does not change. If you ask me about equal or trust, I can say KELA. But I think not the social office.

Me: Why?

Ali: Yeah, good question. In the social office it depends on who you meet. If they will like you, they will give you good decision.

First, Ali relied on the system, showing a sense of institutional trust due to procedural justice. Second, Ali showed a sense of social distrust toward the street-level bureaucrats at the social office. He perceived the social services in the municipality as having more discretion, creating a feeling of inequality and unpredictability as it

depended on *who* was involved in the facework interaction. This representative of the social office acted as a gatekeeper to the good decisions, unlike with KELA, which he perceived as having a more equal system. Related to Luhmann's (1979) and Giddens' (1991) theoretical thoughts on whether trust in the system's representative is required for trust in the system or the other way around, Ali's narrative shows the complexity of institutional and social trust. As in Ali's case, if the institution is ground for trust due to perceived procedural justice, this creates both institutional trust and trust toward the system's representative. On the contrary, if the system's representative creates distrust, this will result in distrust toward the institution, in this case the social office.

Hashem's trust was related to the long duration of the asylum decision process and the lack of communication from the institution. Arriving as an unaccompanied minor from Iran, he had been waiting for asylum for six years. Now, at the age of 18, he was frustrated and distrusting. A shortage of information was the main cause for his evolving distrust toward MIGRI after their facework interaction. He was stressed and could not sleep because of worry and not knowing the decision. This echoes what Giddens (1991) refers to as the ontological security crucial for trust shaping, or, in Hashem's case, the lack of ontological security. In Nordic research, the lack of ontological security—missing a sense of order, routines, and stability—has been previously emphasized as a cause for distrust among young asylum seekers (Eide et al. 2020). In a similar vein, Sami, now, 17 and having arrived from Iran at the age of 11, identified the lack of information regarding his family reunification as one reason for distrust. MIGRI promised to give him a decision by a certain date, but the day passed and no information came. Both Hashem and Sami exhibited a form of *trauma of waiting*, discussed by Weiss (2020) in relation to refugees waiting for resettlement in Norway. Through various forms of waiting, as a means of bureaucratic violence in the welfare state, forced migrants experience the welfare state as negligent and violent (Weiss 2020). The waiting made Sami disappointed and frustrated, leaving him with a feeling of being forgotten: 'I am still waiting for the decision, I have lived six years in Finland.' Again, this created a lack of ontological security, preventing him from trusting.

In several of the narratives, we can relate to what Näre (2020) and Abdelhady, Gren and Joormann (2020) refer to as various forms of bureaucratic violence present in the everyday life of asylum seekers, but also Giddens' (1991) notion of ontological security as a cause for creating a trusting relation. Building on Giddens' notion of ontological security, a crucial part of ontological safety in relation to trust building is the *predictability* of what is to be expected in facework interactions and in the administrative process. This predictability enhances ontological security and thus trust. Vice versa, if the institutional encounters involve high levels of uncertainty in relation to the services and processes, as a form of bureaucratic violence, trust is eroded.

EMOTIONAL DIMENSION OF TRUST SHAPING

In addition to the administrative, more process-related dimension of facework interactions, trust was shaped strongly by the emotional mark of the encounter. What mattered for trust was the ability to see the human framed by the administrative system, which I show next. Trust and distrust was shaped through personal attributes such as recognition, respect, kindness and empathy. I refer to this as the emotional dimension shaping trust. Fersch (2016) also argues that 'intuition and feelings' were major factors for trust building among migrants in Denmark. However, in contrast to

Fersch (2016), showing how feelings as a promoter of trust were present mainly in the encounters with childcare professionals, my analyses show the emotional dimension of trust also present in encounters with several non-care giving institutions.

As pointed out by Giddens (1990), the experience of trust in facework commitments depends on the demeanor of the 'expert' of the system. In 18-year-old Demir's experiences at MIGRI, trust was a consequence of the street-level bureaucrat being nice and kind, asking about Demir's emotions regarding moving to Finland from Turkey, thus showing a sign of understanding and recognition. Here, it is notable that Demir's asylum process went quickly, and he talked about it in a positive light. Demir's experience echoes previous research emphasizing the importance of friendliness as a cause for trust among forced migrants (Feldmann et al. 2007).

Ali, when thinking about causes of trust, referred to how the personalities of street-level bureaucrats can affect trust:

So, I feel it's just the personality, it's just the person how you talk to him, how they give you the idea, how they can give you the [integration] plan so you feel it's positive or feel it's negative. It's maybe the same way as I can say to you: "drink water!" or "please, can you drink the water?" (Ali points at the glass on the table). So, it's something, the way they will talk to you. I feel like that.

Ali's experience echoes well with what Giddens (1990) refers to as demeanor, in other words the appearance or manner of the 'face' of the institution. When I asked if this was the case even if the administrative decision would be negative Ali replies: 'Exactly, it does not matter.' Ali's trust was thus shaped by the way the street-level bureaucrat brought the services to him. This sense of emotional trust can be argued to have been based on positive or negative feelings more than on rational thought (Möllering 2006). Ali was regulating trust based on the emotional aspects of the facework interaction. Hence, in Ali's institutional encounters, the emotional result of the encounter weighed heavier in his trust shaping than the decision.

Hashem, having waited for a decision on asylum for six years, stated clear distrust in MIGRI as he felt they were not able to understand his feelings:

I cannot trust the persons interviewing us at MIGRI. A person who has no experience of what we have can never understand the other person's feelings. And every time they changed, every time there was a new person. How can we trust in the first meeting? When we tell about our things, they are like okay okay [...] they look you in the eyes so that they scare you. How can you trust someone like that?

Thus, Hashem was questioning the ability of the interviewer to emotionally position themselves in his situation when they had no common experiences or ground to start from. As their perspectives were so different from each other's, distrust developed between them. In this citation, I understood the informant as perceiving the looking in the eyes as staring, questioning and thus threatening beyond different social/cultural specific ways of communicating. Hashem's distrust could be interpreted as caused by lack of recognition, a cause that has been identified as crucial for the trust creation process (Turtiainen 2012). Also, Svenberg, Skott and Lepp (2011), in their research on trust shaping among Somalis toward the Swedish health system, found

that distrust was based on negative outcomes of interactions in which the research subject felt dismissed and disrespected.

Researchers have also identified the feeling of initially being mistrusted solely on the basis of being an asylum seeker (Hynes 2009; Ni Raghallaigh 2013). Likewise, both Hamid and Hashem mention not feeling respected or heard by MIGRI in the interviews. Hamid was accused of lying, and Hashem felt having been interrogated like a criminal. Hashem even mentioned being scared of the street-level bureaucrat; this shows the asymmetric power balance in the facework interaction and emphasizes the emotional aspect in the development of distrust. Jemal again shared a narrative of perceived discrimination during the encounter with the Police due to being a person of color: 'they do not trust me because I am black.' In Jemal's case, he perceived himself as not trusted by the street-level bureaucrats due to being young, male and a racialized asylum seeker. Here, Jemal's multiple identities were interacting to create multiple patterns of oppression, leaving him in a structurally vulnerable position from an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw 1989; Larsson 2015).

In addition to how the power asymmetries led informants to feeling disrespected and distrusted, as in the previous narratives, the informants also shared experiences of being steered or 'pushed' by the street-level bureaucrats. Shadia, now 21, having arrived as a minor quota refugee from Iran, recalled experiences on how the study councilor at her secondary school pushed her into studying practical nursing. Being young and trusting toward the councilor described by Shadia as 'very nice,' she did not question the guidance. Only years later did Shadia start to question the guidance after discussing the matter with friends, who were also young migrant women of color. Sophia, now age 27, having arrived as a quota refugee with little education, was guided by a social worker to stay at home with her children instead of putting them in daycare and thus having the possibilities to study, learn Finnish and become employed. Several times, she highlighted how good the guidance and the meetings had been from her perspective. However, from an intersectional perspective, she was in a very precarious situation, being a young woman of color, having little education, and clearly dependent on street-level bureaucrats. What left Shadia and Sophia especially vulnerable was the trusting and depending relation they had toward the street-level bureaucrats—they did not question their guidance. Previous research has highlighted limiting and bordering guidance for female migrants (Nordberg 2015; Souto 2016), and Kurki interprets these practices as exploitative racism (Kurki 2019).

In my data, an interesting and new aspect in the emotional dimension of trust shaping was that of the translators, positioned between the street-level bureaucrat and the client as a form of intermediary in the process of shaping trust toward the institution. Hashem and Sahid encountered threatening attitudes at MIGRI when asking about the possibility to change interpreters, and were told that they would have to make a new appointment and perhaps wait for years. Facing forms of bureaucratic violence, they accepted the interpreters, but were disappointed as the interpreters had different dialects and were not able to convey their narratives in a proper manner. In Hamid's asylum interview, several misunderstandings took place:

There is one main reason for not trusting, the translator. I had two translators, one from Syria, it's a different dialect from Iraq. Many times, I told the translator I did not mean this, I meant this. And the second translator was Kurdish, his Arabic very bad. I also had a bad experience

with him, even in dates, he told them a different date. He did not make them feel what I feel.

As the translator was not able to convey Hamid's feelings, the translator became the main cause for Hamid's distrust. Especially in the data related to interviews with MIGRI, the role of the translator became evident in the shaping of distrust. This echoes ideas of Näre (2020), showing how bureaucratic violence was present in many of the asylum seekers' lives due to incompetent interpreters. The role and consequences of the translator in trust shaping could also be seen as part of the administrative system in Finland and, thus, part of the administrative and formal dimension of trust shaping.

As another form of intermediary appeared familiar street-level bureaucrats at a previously familiar institution. These initial trustworthy 'faces' became 'trust bearers' through which trust was transferred when the clients encountered new unfamiliar institutions. Both Mahdi and Sofia trusted TE-services because they considered the social worker who took them there to be trustworthy. Sami had dealt with various institutions through the social worker at the reception center, and as he placed trust in her, he also trusted the other institutions. Here, social trust toward the social worker became a means for institutional trust toward the previously unknown institution. While this follows the line of thought of Giddens (1990) that trust in the practitioner creates trust toward the institution, these examples also show how social trust toward the practitioner can generate institutional trust toward another institution.

A third form of intermediators in the data were other migrants from the same community already residing in Finland. In Shadia's case, community members who her family trusted had recommended social workers in a certain municipality, so Shadia's family had chosen to settle in that municipality. Previous research on institutional encounters in the health sector in Sweden also recognizes this form of intercommunity information/disinformation among Somalis (Svenberg, Skott & Lepp 2011).

Finally, it is noteworthy that, while in the informants' narratives the 'faces' of the institutions were not necessarily portrayed in a negative way, and despite the street-level bureaucrats having good intentions, the encounter resulted in steering bordering practices. When forced migrants trust, be it because of procedural justice, emotional recognition or other antecedents, they become dirigible and steerable due to dependency and power asymmetries in the institutional settings.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this article, I examine young forced migrants' experiences of institutional encounters in the light of trust. Through the voices of young forced migrants, the article contributes empirically to both trust and migration research, emphasizing the potential of institutional encounters to shape trust for forced migrants settling in the Nordic welfare state. Theoretically, this work draws on Giddens' (1990) access point theory and Lipsky's (2010) theory on street-level bureaucracies. Furthermore, in order to enhance the understanding of trust in the context of increasingly welfare chauvinist and steering bureaucratic practices, it builds on the concept of bureaucratic violence (see e.g., Abdelhady, Gren & Joormann 2020; Näre 2020).

Recognizing the contextualized, relational and dynamic features of trust (Lyon, Möllering & Saunders 2015; Möllering 2006), the analysis shows how trust was shaped

in various ways throughout the series of institutional encounters in the migration trajectories of my informants. Two parallel dimensions emerged as central in trust shaping regardless of the institution in question: the administrative and emotional dimensions of trust. Within the administrative dimension, the primary causes of trust shaping appeared to be perceived procedural justice, information, and knowledge about the administrative process. Within the emotional dimension, recognition, and empathy emerged as crucial. The linear trust shaping process was interrupted, changed, or strengthened by positive or negative causes present in the administrative and emotional dimensions.

I also show that trust was shaped positively or negatively by intermediators such as translators, representatives of other institutions, or the migrant's own community. It would be relevant to look closer at the trust dynamics present in the interaction among the clients, the intermediators, and the institutional systems in future research. Consequently, institutional trust is complex depending on various causes such as experiences with authorities, expectations, and perceived procedural justice, shifting beyond the legal categories of forced migrants.

Regarding levels of trust, this paper shows how social trust can turn into institutional trust/distrust and institutional trust into social trust/distrust. Unlike Giddens or Luhmann, and in line with Meyer et al. (2008), I refrain from limiting the trust shaping process to linear, from institutional trust to social trust or vice versa. Instead, in this study, trust included a mix of social and institutional trust and a mix of rational and emotional trust while navigating the system. Recognizing various forms and levels of trust as intertwined and constantly re-evaluated, deepens the understanding of trust.

To conclude, while the notion of trust has a strong positive connotation in the Nordic welfare state, I argue that trusting the institution is not merely positive for young forced migrants. Regarding power asymmetries in the institutional encounters, all my informants were dependent, to some extent, on the institution if they wanted to access services or get permits. This has been problematized in previous research as *the debt of gratitude* for the various welfare services provided—migrants are assumed to feel gratitude (Kurki 2019: 58). In some cases, migrants can choose transnational exit options, for example, health services abroad, due to distrust (Fersch 2016; Svenberg, Skott & Lepp 2011). However, for the individuals in this study, there was no exit option, and several of the services offered by the welfare state, such as social allowances, unemployment benefits or integration training programs, were conditional on cooperation with institutions. We can thus ask if this is a form of somewhat *forced trust*, a form of trust constructed forcibly by the context, that in order to access the services or navigate further in the system, you must trust. If so, trust becomes a coping strategy and a means for accessing the services in the welfare state. However, trusting can result in further dependency on the face of the institution, which creates spaces for steering bureaucratic violence to operate.

Finally, this article has three practical implications. First, street-level bureaucrats and institutions have opportunities to strengthen trust by scrutinizing their processes and behaviors. Second, if institutions want to scrutinize the trust shaping process from the perspective of young forced migrants, feedback is crucial. However, none of my informants mentioned feedback possibilities after the institutional encounters. This growing group of welfare service users needs to be positioned as knowers and an integral part of developing the work of the institutions. Third, returning to the notion adopted by Rousseau and colleagues (1998) on trust as *an intention to accept*

vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another, trusting entails positioning oneself in a vulnerable position. In the case of young forced migrants, further vulnerability can create dependency, and it is crucial that street-level bureaucrats do not intentionally or unintentionally take advantage of this position.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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