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## LIMINALITY & REFUGEE WORKPLACE INTEGRATION

### A LIMINAL LENS ON INTEGRATING REFUGEES INTO THE WORKPLACE: CONCEPTUALISING A THEORETICAL MODEL

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Agata Vitale (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in Clinical Psychology at Bath Spa University, UK, and a Chartered Member of the British Psychological Society (Division of Clinical Psychology). Her research focuses on how the intersection of risk factors related to gender, social, and health inequalities affect the social recovery of vulnerable groups. Agata is currently working on developing community-based creative interventions to promote mental health, strengthen resilience, and support the community integrations of individuals affected by multiple levels of traumas, including migrants, forced migrants and human trafficking survivors.

**A Liminal Lens on Integrating Refugees into the Workplace: Conceptualising a  
Theoretical Model**

**Abstract**

The integration of refugees into workplaces in their destination country remains a global concern. We meet the challenge of this problem by conceptualising a theoretical model using a liminal lens; more specifically through the three thematic lenses of liminality as process, liminality as position and liminality as place. By addressing the research question; “*how does a liminal lens provide new insights into refugees’ integration into the workplace?*” we make three contributions to extant literature. Firstly, we offer a dynamic perspective of refugees’ integration into the workplace. Secondly, we provide a synthesis that brings together key factors at the micro, meso, and macro levels that are germane to refugees’ assimilation into the workplace. Finally, we contribute to human resource literature by showing a more nuanced view of the role of HRM, specifically how an ambidextrous HR architecture can help firms explore refugees as a talent pool, while exploiting existing talents.

**A Liminal Lens on Integrating Refugees into the Workplace: Conceptualising a  
Theoretical Model**

**Introduction**

Among migrant populations, refugees are the most vulnerable as they are forced to leave their country and are usually exposed to multiple pre and post-migratory stressors (Mann & Fazil, 2006). These factors can affect their physical and mental health (WHO, 2018), and ultimately their overall ability to settle into their host countries (Li, Liddell, & Nickerson, 2016). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; 2019) shows that in 2018 alone, 13.6 million people were displaced, but only 92,400 refugees were admitted for resettlement in 25 countries in the same year. A joint report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNHCR (2018) argues that sustainable employment for refugees remains a global issue.

To address the multifaceted challenge of integrating refugees into the local workplace, we adopt a liminal lens in conceptualising our theoretical model. Liminality is a state of transition, and succinctly captures the challenges that refugees endure, which leads to our research question; *“How does a liminal lens provide new insights into refugees’ integration into the workplace?”*. We argue that a liminal lens offers unique insights to the issue of refugees’ workplace integration as it brings together social and organisational anthropology, which is crucial given that refugees oscillate between the two domains in their journey to settle in their destination country (Beech, 2011).

In attempting to find a solution to the problem of refugees’ integration into the workplace, previous studies have explored various aspects of refugee employment. These studies have examined issues at an individual level, such as refugees’ wellbeing (WHO, 2018) and vocational behaviour (Newman, Bimrose, Nielsen, & Zacher, 2018). While there is extensive

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academic and grey literature focused on the macro level, e.g. government institutional support (Böhme, 2018), much more work is required at the meso level, i.e. the organisational level. Paucity at the meso level remains because organisational literature has generally focused on other groups of migrants such as expatriates and, even then, many such studies have been in the field of international business rather than human resource management (Szkudlarek, Nardon, Osland, Adler, & Lee, 2019). Indeed, more contribution is needed from the field of human resource management (HRM) (Al Ariss & Sidani, 2016) at the organisational level, especially given HRM's central role in developing talent and extracting value from human capital. We recognise this need, and we answer this call (Nardon, Szkudlarek, & Toh, 2019) by placing HRM at the heart of our conceptualisation of a theoretical model.

We make three contributions to extant literature. First, by conceptualising our model through a liminal lens, we provide a dynamic perspective of refugees' integration into the local workplace, reflecting the interplay between *liminality as process*, *liminality as position*, and *liminality as place*. Through our first contribution we answer calls from scholars, in particular Söderlund and Borg (2018), to apply liminality as a lens in organisational research given its ability to provide new insight. Second, we provide a synthesis that brings together key factors at the micro, meso, and macro levels that are germane to refugees' integration into the workplace. By doing this, we extend the work of scholars that focused on individual-level factors, e.g. Wehrle, Klehe, Kira, and Zikic (2018) and answer the call of scholars, i.e. E. S. Lee, Szkudlarek, Nguyen, and Nardon (2020), who argue that the challenge of refugees' integration requires a multi-level approach, in particular by emphasising the need to incorporate macro level contextual factors into refugee studies. Finally, the conceptual model makes a theoretical contribution because it places HRM at the heart of the model, which to our knowledge is the first in the context of refugees' integration into the workplace. We contribute to human resource literature by showing a more nuanced view of the role of HRM, more

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specifically how an ambidextrous human resource (HR) architecture can help firms explore refugees as a talent pool while exploiting the talent of existing employees. An ambidextrous HR architecture addresses refugees' liminality by enabling the sustainable integration of refugees into the workplace. Such an architecture does this by creating conditions for existing and refugee employees to be ambidextrous and to be able to work in an ambidextrous environment (Zimmermann, Raisch, & Birkinshaw, 2015) where both sets of employees co-exist harmoniously. The inclusion of an ambidextrous HR architecture answers calls from scholars, i.e. Al Ariss and Sidani (2016) for HRM to feature more prominently in extant research.

In sum, our point of departure from past research is that we adopt an integrative approach (Corley & Gioia, 2011) in making a theoretical contribution. Corley and Gioia (2011) argue that a theoretical contribution can be made by adopting a novel and original approach to integrating prior research. We argue that the theoretical model is original not just because liminality is adopted as a lens but also because of the way we frame the three different types of liminality across multiple levels of analyses. In addition, we are guided by Thomas, Cuervo-Cazurra, and Brannen (2011) who argue that while constructs in a model are essential, an equally important contribution is the originality of the logical relationship between constructs, which is offered by our model. In conceptualising the theoretical model, we adopt guidelines provided by Busse, Kach, and Wagner (2017), Shepherd and Suddaby (2017), Gilson and Goldberg (2015), and Whetten (1989). The next section argues the value of using liminality as a lens. We then discuss the methodology in conceptualising our theoretical model, and present the model itself. We then develop propositions that logically link relevant constructs in the model that emerge from using liminality as a lens.

### **Liminality**

From an anthropological perspective, liminality is a state that is temporary and transitional (Bamber, Allen-Collinson, & McCormack, 2017) as it describes a process of personal change (Borg & Söderlund, 2015; Turner, 1969). One of the originators of the concept, Van Gennep (1960), cites ritual initiations of adolescent to adulthood, such as boy-to-man and girl-to-woman, as examples. The concept, he argued, has three key stages; separation, liminality and incorporation. Separation is the withdrawal and detachment from one's (i.e. the liminar) existing environment or situation. Liminality is the transitional phase in which the liminar has left their previous status but has yet to attain their new status. At this phase, the person is between and betwixt objects or places that are characterised by ambiguity. Finally, at the incorporation stage, the liminar has completed the ritual, and has reached the new phase and is expected to adopt certain norms.

Liminality transcends different spheres of everyday living and provides a more realistic perspective of organisational life, which is crucial given it is virtually impossible to draw sharp lines of distinction between personal and work domains (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). As such, liminality has the capacity to shed new insight into phenomena in societies and organisations (Walsh, Meyer, & Schoonhoven, 2006). For example, Beech (2011) argues that, in a changeable context, liminal spaces are longitudinal experiences that provide opportunities for identities to be reconstructed. His empirical illustrations show the process of identity reconstruction of two individuals that were similar to the three phases in Van Gennep's (1960) work; experimentation (i.e. trying out different versions of self), reflection (i.e. self-questioning in changeable situations) and recognition (i.e. 'epiphany' of a new identity that seems 'right').

Literature has framed liminality positively and negatively. Borg and Söderlund (2015) argue that liminal experiences can help develop 'liminal competencies' that enable individuals to deal with dynamic and ambiguous environments, however, Daly and Armstrong (2016)

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suggest that liminality brings with it precarity. Liminality has also been observed as an experience by choice and compulsion. Di Domenico, Daniel, and Nunan (2014) suggest that liminality was the choice of entrepreneurs when they chose to transition to home-based online business ventures, while Al-Abdin, Dean, and Nicholson (2016) argue that the Arab Spring compelled many living in affected regions to experience liminality.

The preceding discussions underscore the unique contribution that liminality offers in furthering our understanding, especially because both social and organisational perspectives must be considered together in the study of refugees' integration into the workplace (Beech, 2011). Liminality highlights the effect of being in 'transition' and brings to the foreground the notion of 'threshold', in particular, where the boundaries of thresholds may lie (Hawkins & Edwards, 2015) as refugees to move from permanent to temporary liminality (Bamber et al., 2017). In other words, what does it take for integration to take place and when does integration start to take hold. A liminal lens also makes a unique contribution because it highlights the different sources of liminality and their impact. In their review of the concept, Söderlund and Borg (2018) identified three themes; *liminality as process*, *liminality as position*, and *liminality as place*. They argue that these themes enable more nuanced insights to be discovered, especially in dealing with the increasing challenges brought about by the growing temporality and dynamism of life across societies and organisations. Table 1 illustrates the differences between each theme.

The focus of the first theme, liminality as process, is associated with change in the individuals' identity as they transition over time. Closely aligned to Van Gennep's (1960) original conceptualisation, the scope of liminality as process includes rituals (Johnson, Prashantham, Floyd, & Bourque, 2010) resulting in intrapersonal change (Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). Hawkins and Edwards (2015) argued, for example, that students experience

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liminality as process in their learning, as they experience a sense of being lost and have self-doubt as they transition to becoming enlightened learners.

Liminality is also described as a position that is focused on roles. This second theme is increasingly pervasive, especially with the growth of boundaryless and portfolio careers involving temporary workers (Garsten, 1999) and consultants (Barley & Kunda, 2011). In their study of management consultants, Sturdy, Schwarz, and Spicer (2006) found that consultants played many roles including a social role with their clients at business dinners that are equally important in enhancing their chances of increasing client satisfaction. In this paper, the scope of liminality as position involves organisational roles as Budtz-Jørgensen, Johnsen, and Sørensen (2019) show that liminality as position are prominent in contemporary matrix organisations and in project management as individuals find themselves between roles and functional departments.

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INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE  
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The final theme is liminality as place, and it is focused on spatiality (Söderlund & Borg, 2018). Shortt (2015) argues that liminal spaces are physical areas that are on the ‘border’ or boundary between two dominant spaces, and are not completely part of either. Examples of liminal space include lifts, corridors, and doorways. The scope of liminality as place in this study involves spaces both within and external to the physical workplace as individuals experience liminality as place when they travel for work (Edwards, 2011), or when they mix working from the office and their home (Di Domenico et al., 2014). Research in liminality as place emphasises how movement between locations can induce uncertainty as individuals have to operate in structures that may have competing values and institutional logics (Söderlund & Borg, 2018).

## **Conceptualising a Theoretical Model**

### **Liminality as a Lens**

In this study, liminality as a lens helps to identify the boundary conditions and the selection of key constructs in the theoretical model in conceptualising how refugees may be more effectively integrated into an organisation's workforce. Liminality is versatile in how it is applied but it is especially pertinent and useful in understanding the challenges involved in the integration of refugees into the workplace. We argue that the use of a liminal lens is justified because a significant issue that derails the integration of refugees into the workplace is due to them being; in-between refugee and 'settled' status, and betwixt places. Academic, e.g. Wehrle et al. (2018) and grey literature, e.g. OECD and UNHCR (2018), demonstrate consilience as extant evidence suggest that these are among the key factors that disrupt refugees' integration.

The use of a liminal lens is especially relevant in this study because it allows scholars to develop a more parsimonious (Whetten, 1989), balanced (Feldman, 2004) and cohesive (Corley & Gioia, 2011) theoretical model. A liminality-informed theoretical model enables parsimony because it identifies boundary conditions that prioritise the most important and nuanced constructs, for example, well-intended organisational practices and governmental policies that may result in the unintended consequence of unsettling refugees (OECD & UNHCR, 2018). The lens also brings balance, specifically, in providing comparable emphasis from the micro, meso, and macro perspectives as government policy and organisational systems shape refugees' future as much as refugees' own behaviours (Szkudlarek et al., 2019). A liminal lens enables cohesion, in particular, how the constructs relate to one another in determining the successful integration of refugees in the workplace.

While this is a conceptual paper, we ground our arguments in literature. Table 2 shows our literature search and screening steps in identifying articles that informed our

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conceptualisation. We used both abductive and inductive processes (we show this process as a diagram in Figure 1). An abductive process was used to identify three themes; migratory and vocational stress, and identity reconstruction from liminality as process; nature and access to jobs that conflict with their home role and personal circumstances from liminality as position; and country-specific dispersal policies from liminality as place. We then used an inductive process to identify the constructs arising from these themes; refugees' psychological and social capital in addressing liminality as process at the micro level; organisational climate that embraces diversity and inclusivity, and firm cultural intelligence that informs an ambidextrous HR architecture that, in turn, addresses liminality as position at the meso level; and local labour markets as a boundary condition in framing the model to address liminality as place at the macro level. We also used the inductive process to develop relational conjectures between the constructs.

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INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE  
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As a result, we conceptualised a theoretical model by identifying and proposing new links between the constructs (Whetten, 1989) within the stated boundary conditions (Busse et al., 2017) that offers new insight (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). With further guidance from Shepherd and Suddaby (2017) in adopting a 'storytelling' approach, our model explains how refugees can be integrated into the workplace (Figure 2).

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INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Figure 2 shows how the liminal lens (i.e. in the outer rim of the model) helps to provide a new perspective in identifying key factors that play a vital role in supporting refugees' successful integration into the workplace. Starting with liminality as process, the model highlights the role of refugees' psychological and social capital in directly supporting their workplace integration at the micro level. Next, the model illustrates liminality as position and the moderating role of firm-related factors; diversity and inclusivity climate, firm cultural intelligence and ambidextrous HR architecture, at the meso level. Finally, the model emphasises liminality as place in the form of labour markets, at the macro level, as a boundary condition that enhances the specificity of the theoretical model.

### **Liminality as Process**

Extant literature, e.g. Hawkins and Edwards (2015) situate liminality as a process at the micro level as it involves intrapersonal change. Liminality as process in the conceptual model provides a focus on individual-level factors that may enable refugees to integrate into their job roles more effectively (Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). Refugees are an extreme case in terms of international adjustments as the process of fitting into their new environment is perturbed by migratory and vocational stress, and significant reconstruction of identities, which means that the prospect of their integration into the workplace is far less likely to be successful than other migrants (Aycaan, 1997). Evidence indicates that, in addition to being forced to migrate, the lack of employment or underemployment represents the highest migratory stressor among all refugee groups, with detrimental consequences to their physical and mental health (Dhalimi, Wright, Yamin, Jamil, & Arnetz, 2018). In order to be productive employees, refugees need to shed their 'refugee identity' that is usually associated with the stigma of being a victim (Alfadhli & Drury, 2018) and rebuild an identity that enhances their dignity (Zeno, 2017). Finding suitable and meaningful employment is

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refugees' main priority as it allows them to rebuild an identity, internalise a sense of belonging and feel self-worth (Bloch & Hirsch, 2017).

### *Workplace Integration (Micro Level)*

Refugees' integration into the workplace is the primary aim of the theoretical model. However, to achieve integration, liminality needs to be reduced if not eliminated. By minimizing liminality, the chances of refugees being integrated in the workplaces increases both in terms of gaining employment and staying employed. The integration of refugees into the workplace remains a challenge as there are many factors that contribute to the protracted and unsustainable status quo. While some of these factors, such as the process of applying for refugee status (Vitale & Ryde, 2018), are beyond the employing organisation, the OECD and UNHCR (2018) argue that employers do have a significant role to play in championing refugees' integration into the workplace. Building on extant literature on refugee studies, we argue that sustainable workplace integration involves two aspects; the job (i.e. the role itself) and the workplace (i.e. the team refugees may work with as part of their job) (E. S. Lee et al., 2020).

**The job.** Gaining a job is paramount as it is the first indication of workplace integration that not only helps to reduce refugees' stress but it also signals the refugees' complete transition in becoming a productive employee. However, the key issue in relation to sustainability is the time-sensitive way in which refugees attain a job and the optimum level of employment (i.e. viable employment). The speed of refugees' integration is pivotal, however it remains problematic as it usually takes between five and six years, on average, for them to obtain their first job (Fasani, Frattini, & Minale, 2018). The longer it takes refugees to attain gainful employment the more likely their mental wellbeing and sense of self-worth will diminish (Vitale & Ryde, 2016). In addition, when refugees do find jobs, they are usually underemployed (Mackenzie Davey & Jones, 2019). Underemployment is an issue because it

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can be financially unviable for refugees and unlikely to resolve any of the issues that employment is expected to help address, as refugees remain anxious about supporting their family and themselves (Mackenzie Davey & Jones, 2019).

**The workplace.** The other aspect is the workplace, specifically the length of time the refugees remain in an organisation and their assimilation into part of the wider workforce with non-refugee employees in the organisation. The likelihood of refugees staying in employment is a crucial question as it certainly cannot be taken for granted that refugees will remain in their jobs for long. Studies have shown that refugees have a higher risk than other migrants of experiencing high employment turnover (Fasani et al., 2018). While there are many reasons for the turnover, it is nonetheless crucial for refugees to remain in their jobs and with their current employers because they are unlikely to find employment elsewhere quickly, which can rapidly undo the benefits of having the initial job (E. S. Lee et al., 2020). Sustainability refers to refugees staying in the same organisation. Refugees' employment across different organisations is unrealistic as they do not have a high degree of mobility. Therefore, remaining in their existing jobs or with their existing employer is the most likely way for them to have any longevity in being gainfully employed. Refugees that remain with a single organisation provide a stronger justification for the employer to invest and develop bespoke advancement opportunities for their existing refugee talent pool (this is discussed more expansively in a later section in relation to the ambidextrous HR architecture). Sustainable workplace integration also involves assimilation of refugee staff within the organisation as a whole with non-refugee colleagues (Sahin Mencutek & Nashwan, 2020). Such assimilation can have a substantial impact on refugees as it diminishes their liminal experience as they regain a stable identity, and a sense of self-worth and belonging. Refugees' workplace integration will reduce those feelings of being in-between states to

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shorter periods of time and fewer instances. Sustained work integration moves refugees away from a state of permanent liminality (Bamber et al., 2017).

### ***Refugee Factors (Micro Level)***

Scholars, e.g. Newman, Bimrose, et al. (2018) have examined the vocational behaviour of refugees in seeking employment, to obtain insight into the individual-level attributes that enable refugees to successfully attain gainful employment. Indeed, as argued, the migratory and vocational stress experienced by refugees severely tests their resolve (Vitale & Ryde, 2016). Literature indicates two critical factors, psychological and social capital, play an important role on the part of refugees in their integration into the workplace:

**Psychological capital.** Psychological capital is the positive psychological state of an individual, and includes the psychological resources of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Hope is the determination to pursue goals and overcome barriers by generating alternatives to meet overriding aspirations (Snyder, 2000), while self-efficacy is grounded in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory that is the individuals' confidence in their own abilities (Stajkovic, Lee, Greenwald, & Raffiee, 2015). Resilience emerges from negative experiences as it is described as the capacity to 'bounce back' from failure, and is the ability to overcome adversity by leveraging other psychological assets (Kossek & Perrigino, 2016). Finally, optimism is stylistic in having a positive outlook and expecting good things to happen (Cameron, 2013), that attributes positive incidents to personal action, in contrast to attributing adverse events to external causes (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

**Social capital.** Social capital is a broad umbrella concept that describes the positive links between the individual and others (Pearson, Carr, & Shaw, 2008). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) define social capital as *“the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed*

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*by an individual or social unit*” (p. 243). Indeed, Gericke, Burmeister, Löwe, Deller, and Pundt (2018), in their study of Syrian refugees in Germany, found that refugees accessed different types of social capital, through ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’, in their attempts to integrate into the workplace.

**Refugees’ psychological and social capital, and migratory stress.** Liminality as a process allows us to appreciate the challenges refugees face in overcoming migratory stress and in reconstructing their identities in order to adjust to their new environment. This theme is particularly relevant because without addressing the issues brought about by migratory stress, refugees may find it challenging to focus on finding and staying in their job (Li et al., 2016). We argue refugees may increase their chances of integrating into the workforce if any migratory stress they experience is attended to in the first instance. When refugees' mental wellbeing has been broadly addressed, they are likely to be in a better frame to reconstruct identities in preparation for their new life in a new country.

We argue that refugees’ high psychological capital enables them to draw upon on their positive psychological state, in particular their optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience, to overcome the migratory stress that is an inherent part of refugees’ liminal state (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Optimism enables refugees to hope and believe that they can have a brighter future. Self-efficacy is the belief in their own capabilities that they can shape their own fate. Also, resilience enables them to keep striving in the face of adversity especially in highly stressful times. Refugees that take advantage of their social capital will be able to access networks for emotional support to maintain or even increase their resilience in overcoming migratory stress. Psychological and social capital enables refugees to endure the challenging reformation process related to their old and new identity, and to be able cope with and exploit their new situations. Therefore, we propose:

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*P1*: Refugees' high psychological and social capital enables them to overcome migratory stress and is positively correlated to refugees' integration into the workplace.

**Refugees' psychological and social capital, and vocational stress.** In addition to migration stress, refugees are also likely to face vocational stress involving access and opportunity directly related to finding appropriate work (Baranik, Hurst, & Eby, 2018). Being unemployed or underemployed affects male refugees more as they experience a decline in social status (Mann & Fazil, 2006) as they often belong to patriarchal societies, where being the primary family provider is at the core of their masculinity. Unemployment or underemployment also has a more substantial impact on the identity reconstruction of refugees who had highly-paid, high-status jobs, as they often experience downward occupational mobility and deskilling (Luimpöck, 2019).

We argue that refugees that have robust psychological capital will have the determination and resourcefulness to overcome vocational stress and to keep persevering to obtain and retain employment. Also, refugees that have social capital are able to access relevant networks for resources to enable them to access employment opportunities, and to assimilate into their workplace. This self-reinforcing loop may become virtuous if refugees are successful in attaining gainful and optimal employment quickly, retaining those jobs and assimilating into their workplace, which then enhances their psychological and social capital. Therefore, we propose:

*P2*: Refugees' high psychological and social capital enables them to overcome vocational stress and is positively correlated to refugees' integration into the workplace.

### **Liminality as Position**

Extant literature, e.g. Barley and Kunda (2011) and Budtz-Jørgensen et al. (2019) associate liminality as position at the meso level because the number and nature of organisational roles are determined by organisational senior managers (Lundin et al., 2015). Liminality as position arises from contemporary approaches adopted by organisations to enable them to be flexible and is perhaps an inescapable attribute of modern organising and organisations (Bakker, DeFillippi, Schwab, & Sydow, 2016). This theme plays a vital role in the conceptual model as it highlights the need for organisations to design roles that enables them to achieve flexibility without causing liminality to refugees that they may employ. While employment is viewed as a positive outcome, however, inevitably not all jobs will fit with refugees' needs and such situations can place refugees in a paradoxical situation (Loon, Otake-Ebede, & Stewart, 2019).

We propose three critical meso-level factors that address liminality as position; diversity and inclusivity climate, cultural intelligence (both as general firm-level factors), and ambidextrous HR architecture (as a HR-specific factor). By considering these three factors, organisations are not just made aware how they can redesign work roles for refugees to negate or at least minimise underemployment but also how firms can incorporate refugees into their workforce in a sustainable manner.

### ***Firm-Level Factors (Meso Level)***

Organisations play a crucial role because, as Szkudlarek et al. (2019) suggest, refugees themselves cannot do it alone when it comes to their integration into the workplace. The inclusion of firm-level factors stem from the growing recognition of the importance of organisations playing more prominent roles (E. S. Lee et al., 2020) in being socially responsible (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016), and adopting diversity and inclusivity principles in the workplace (E. S. Lee et al., 2020; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez,

2018). Incorporating the role of organisations in the model is justified as studies, e.g. Sharma, Moses, Borah, and Adhikary (2020) have shown the positive effects of corporate adoption of the diversity and inclusivity agenda in championing social justice.

**Diversity and inclusivity climate.** The impact of having a diversity and inclusivity climate in organisations is well established as it helps to predict organisational commitment (Newman, Nielsen, Smyth, Hirst, & Kennedy, 2018), operational efficiency (Choi, Sung, & Zhang, 2017), team creativity (H. W. Lee, Choi, & Kim, 2018), innovation (Elia, Messeni Petruzzelli, & Piscitello, 2019) and overall performance (Guillaume, Dawson, Otaye-Ebede, Woods, & West, 2017). A diversity and inclusivity climate is an environment that recognises diversity's role in providing organisational competitive advantage and invokes inclusive practices that values everyone for their intrinsic self and includes every person in core decision-making (Shore et al., 2018).

The effects of diversity and inclusivity values are consistent with the conservation of resources theory (Xia, Wang, Song, Zhang, & Qian, 2019) and the rejection sensitivity theory (Creed, Hood, & Hu, 2017). In particular, if individuals feel accepted in a diverse and inclusive environment, they will tend not to conserve resources as they become vigilant about ill-treatment (e.g. bullying) but instead spend more time and resources in more productive initiatives such as professional development and integration. An organisations' diversity and inclusivity climate is an essential factor in shaping how the firm views and acts in providing employment opportunities to refugees and in looking after their wellbeing (Jaiswal & Dyaram, 2019). For example, firms that care about the wellbeing of refugees will not only provide more opportunities for refugees but also design roles that take into consideration refugees' personal circumstances, e.g. giving refugees the flexibility to care for their families during working hours (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014).

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**Cultural intelligence.** A related but distinct element is the firm's cultural intelligence. Although cultural intelligence has primarily been conceptualised as an individual-level capability, e.g. Lorenz, Ramsey, and Richey (2018), it is also posited as a meso level construct (Gölgeci, Swiatowiec-Szczepanska, & Raczkowski, 2017) indicated by top management behaviour and practices (Şahin & Gürbüz, 2020). Although cultural intelligence overlaps with a firm's diversity and inclusivity climate, it is nonetheless distinct. More specifically, while a diversity and inclusivity climate relate to capacity, while cultural intelligence is a higher-order dynamic capability (Moon, 2010). Gölgeci et al. (2017) define cultural intelligence as "*the capability to observe, interpret, and act upon unfamiliar and ambiguous social and cultural cues, and function effectively in situations characterised by cultural diversity and novelty*" (p. 859). Cultural intelligence is underpinned by the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 2001) and is regarded as part of the repertoire of firm strategic capabilities that includes dynamic capabilities (that in turn includes organisational ambidexterity) and organisational learning (Loon, Otake-Ebede, & Stewart, 2020). We argue that amongst these strategic capabilities, cultural intelligence is most relevant because it is the ability to obtain relevant information, draw sound inferences and appropriately respond to situations that are culturally diverse and sensitive (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Earley & Peterson, 2004). Many refugees bring with them substantial cultural capital that can add value to the organisation. However, such cultural capital is better recognised and leveraged when the organisation has cultural intelligence that allows them to do this.

### ***HRM Factors (Meso Level)***

We argue that HRM plays a pivotal role in influencing refugees' integration into the workplace, in particular, the role of an ambidextrous HR architecture. An ambidextrous HR architecture enables firms to not only create bundles of HR practices that are appropriate and equitable to core and peripheral staff respectively, but also to gradually integrate the

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peripheral workforce into core operations over time. Contemporary ambidexterity literature, e.g. Zimmermann et al. (2015) shows how individuals play a crucial role for ambidexterity to occur. Specifically, individuals' ability to behave ambidextrously is enabled by the context that they work in, which in turn, is facilitated by the firm's HR architecture. We develop our argument by first drawing upon literature on the flexible firm followed by a discussion on HR architecture and developments in the concept of ambidexterity.

**The flexible firm.** Introduced by Atkinson (1984), the notion of a flexible firm has a long history as an important consideration for firms in gaining a competitive advantage (Volberda, 1998). Atkinson (1984) argued that there are essentially three types of flexibility; functional, numerical, and financial. While the idea of the flexible firm has evolved, it has nevertheless left an indelible impression on the way firms adapt to their changing environment. Many organisations, including public sector and charitable organisations, use temporary and fixed-term contracts as they differentiate between their core and periphery labour (Barley & Kunda, 2011). Firms can then create various 'HR portfolios' (Kalleberg, 2001) by leveraging on the interplay between core and periphery to reap the combined benefits of functional and numerical flexibility, leading to financial flexibility.

The division of staff according to core and periphery opens opportunities for firms to be imaginative in how they can tap into the refugee labour market that benefits both the organisation (in terms of enhancing its flexibility) and refugees (for sustainable employment). Studies involving the notion of the flexible firm have shown how firms integrate their core (i.e. permanent) staff working in functionally flexible jobs together with periphery (i.e. temporary) staff, bringing together functional and numerical flexibility in a gradual manner (Ritter-Hayashi, Knoblen, & Vermeulen, 2020). However, the segmentation of staff according to core and periphery reinforces the segmentation of labour markets, which can work against migrants and exacerbate poor integration due to their peripheral status. For firms to be

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genuinely part of the solution they need to go further by gradually integrating refugees into the workforce to negate the entrapment of unsustainable employment (Fernández-Kranz & Rodríguez-Planas, 2011). It is at this juncture that HR plays a pivotal role at the meso level by bringing together the discrete HR practices in a coherent manner.

**HR architecture.** The term ‘architecture’ has been used by strategic HR scholars to describe the nature of talent value creation in organisations (Kang, Morris, & Snell, 2007). HR architecture can be used as a way to understand how organisations can configure their HR systems and practices to enable the merits of the flexible firm to succeed in growing and integrating refugees’ talent into the firm’s overall human capital (Sparrow & Otaye-Ebede, 2014). In order to configure new designs, an architectural perspective enables firms to identify and ‘disaggregate’ skills, process, and structures from one another, and use these granular 'building blocks' (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Hansen, Güttel, & Swart, 2019). Such an approach builds on the work of Hansen et al. (2019) who argues that HR architectures are not just useful in dynamic environments but also in complex situations involving different employee groups that require strategic integration.

An HR architecture perspective allows firms to address refugees’ initial peripheral status by enabling organisations to adopt a synoptic view to integrate refugees into their core group over time. For example, a manufacturer hiring refugees as peripheral staff within its logistics function could redesign its manual warehousing-based jobs to include the use of technology to inventorise products (typically undertaken by more-skilled core staff), supported by on-the-job (e.g. practical) and classroom-based (e.g. reading instructions in operating machinery) training. Other HR practices that could be bundled include internal recruitment campaigns that enable refugees to apply for specially created (fractional or job share) roles that are more technically-orientated with fair and higher remuneration. Such a bundle of HR practices can be replicated to other areas of the firm e.g. facilities, which help

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bridge low-skill peripheral roles with higher-skill core roles by enabling refugees to be integrated in a gradual manner. But how do firms then balance the need to exploit its existing resources while exploring its optimum employment of the new refugee talent pool? The answer involves the underlying capacity of the HR architecture to be ambidextrous.

**Ambidextrous HR architecture.** Building on the notion of structural (Markides, 2013) and contextual (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004) ambidexterity, Zimmermann, Hill, Birkinshaw, and Jaeckel (2019) suggest that firms can optimise both through harmonic ambidexterity. The elements required for harmonic ambidexterity essentially operate on similar principles and elements of an ambidextrous HR architecture. In particular, it is how the structural elements and context come together to enable ambidextrous behaviours of individuals to emerge. Structural elements such as job descriptions and training processes, provide the context for employees' ambidextrous behaviours, such as work practices and routines, to develop. We argue that an ambidextrous HR architecture enables a firm to pursue dual goals that pertain to exploiting the advantages of its existing business-as-usual mode while at the same time be explorative in the way it helps refugees to integrate into the workplace (Malik, Pereira, & Tarba, 2019).

Keeping to the example of the manufacturer, the grouping of jobs into core and peripheral enables the firm to exploit the capabilities of its existing core employees to ensure that it remains competitive e.g. improving productivity and innovating incrementally, by shielding core workers from disruption. At the same time, such initial segmentation allows firms to explore how they can employ refugees in a bespoke manner that benefits the firm and the refugees. Peripheral jobs are not mission-critical and may not appeal to the local workforce especially in a buoyant economy. To enable the quick hiring of refugees, the firm may adapt the relevant job descriptions, establish bespoke learning and development opportunities and empower managers with more discretion to support refugee staff. Such

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trial-and-error approach to employing refugees, who may take more time to learn the job, in peripheral roles is unlikely to disrupt the finely-tuned operations of the firm that is serviced by core staff.

Continuing with the example, the firm can transition refugees into the core group by introducing a job-rotation system that involves refugees taking up peripheral roles across different functions e.g. inventory and facilities. The aim of the rotation is for refugees to understand and learn from these operations, and for the firm to find a future fit between the refugee and a functional role. As a result, refugees are recruited more sustainably as they are provided with opportunities to work across different functions, collaborate in mixed teams including peripheral and core staff, supported by bespoke learning and development opportunities and have a long-term career pathway that involves integration as permanent staff working on the firm's core operations.

Non-refugee employees develop ambidexterity by working in their performance-orientated business-as-usual teams and in teams including refugees that are development-orientated and may involve core staff coaching/ mentoring refugees. Refugees also develop ambidexterity as they work across different functions with different levels of development and proficiency at any one time. As a result, both existing non-refugee and refugee staff can learn to thrive in an ambidextrous work environment, as a result of the ambidextrous HR architecture.

**Diversity and inclusivity climate, cultural intelligence and ambidextrous HR architecture.** An organisation's diversity and inclusivity climate shapes the collective acceptance of refugees in its workforce and determines how far a firm the goes in providing employment opportunities to refugees. The capacity for a diverse and inclusive climate nurtures a capability for cultural intelligence. A firm's cultural intelligence enables the development of individual HR practices (e.g. job design) that leverage on the' firms

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collective cultural capital to fit with refugees' circumstances. These discrete HR practices are the foundation in creating bundles of complementary HR practices in an ambidextrous HR architecture for refugees. Therefore, we propose:

*P3.* The presence of a strong capacity for diversity and inclusivity, and cultural intelligence capability, is positively correlated to a firm's creation of an ambidextrous HR architecture that creates optimum opportunities for refugees.

**The impact of firm-level and HR factors on refugees' psychological and social capital, and workplace integration.** Refugees' psychological and social capital can contribute to their own efforts to integrate into the workplace. However, the degree of success of their lone efforts is limited. Firm-level and HR factors are needed. A firm's diversity and inclusivity climate influences how the firm views and acts in providing employment opportunities to refugees. Its cultural intelligence allow firms to develop HR practices that enables a multicultural workforce to thrive. Similarly, firms need to be proactive in developing an ambidextrous HR architecture that exploit its business-as-usual mode of working with its existing staff but at the same time be explorative in the way it creates new structures and processes to integrate refugee staff. Firm-level and HR factors are collectively crucial as it allows the firm to create new or adjust existing contextual and structural elements to enhance or take advantage of refugees' psychological and social capital. Therefore, we propose:

*P4:* Firm-level and HR factors of diversity and inclusivity climate, cultural intelligence and ambidextrous HR architecture moderates the relationship between refugees' psychological and social capital, and the success of refugees' integration in the workplace.

### **Liminality as Place**

Scholars, e.g. Shortt (2015) argue liminality as place as being in-between or on the fringes of physical spaces such as buildings or cities. Refugees experience liminality as place because studies show that refugees frequently move between jobs (and physical location) for extended periods before they eventually settle, if they are fortunate enough (Lens, Marx, & Vujić, 2018). Liminality as place is both spatial and 'structural' (e.g. a way of doing things related to a place) involving situations where refugees are caught 'in-between' (Söderlund & Borg, 2018). Liminality as place is a barrier to refugees in accepting or embracing new societal structures and dwellings as they may be unable to adjust (Sáez & Marques, 2015).

We argue that liminality as place is relevant at the macro level because of dispersal policies adopted by many governments in relocating refugees across their respective countries (Fasani et al., 2018). These policies shape the boundary conditions in the form of the labour market in which refugees find themselves. The labour market, which includes employing organisations and employment opportunities (Godøy, 2017), in turn, significantly influence the refugees' experiences and chances of finding the appropriate employment (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2018).

Nonetheless, supply and demand in local labour markets (Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016) can change radically (Lens et al., 2018) and consequently altering dispersal policies (Borjas & Monras, 2017). In addition to potential changes in dispersal policies, refugees can face further liminality in terms of 'place' because they may be subsequently relocated if issues in the local area emerge such as the availability of accommodation; capacity of local health, education and other support services; and there are risks of increased social tension (Haberfeld, Birgier, Lundh, & Eildér, 2019). Of course, the ineffectiveness of dispersal policies to any degree may cause refugees, through their own volition, to subsequently

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migrate internally to find work, which can exacerbate the problem of liminality (Haberfeld et al., 2019).

### *Labour Market Conditions (Macro Level) as Boundary Conditions*

While many macro factors can play an essential role in shaping theory, we choose labour markets as the boundary condition as these are the local conditions that point towards the 'where' (which country and local area), 'how' (policies adopted by the 'place') and 'when' (temporal events specific to the country and local area such as the dynamics of demand and supply of labour) (Whetten, 1989). The liminality as place foregrounds the impact of relocation on refugees, the importance of place and the local labour market in shaping refugees' employment opportunities. More specifically, depending on when refugees enter the receiving country, labour markets may have high or low demand for labour, which impacts on refugees' fortune in obtaining a job (Zetter & Ruaudel, 2016). In addition, although dispersal policies are intended to increase refugees' chances of accessing jobs, these policies are sometimes not helpful as they do not always consider refugees' personal circumstances and they can break up individual refugees from their communities (Fasani et al., 2018). In sum, refugees' success in the job market is limited ('boundaried') by 'place' i.e. the local labour market. Therefore, we propose:

*P5.* The relationship between the constructs in the conceptual model are likely to change to reflect variations in the boundary conditions, i.e. the labour market, and influences the degree of success refugees have in gaining employment and sustainably integrating into the workplace.

The challenge of refugees' sustainable integration into the workplace requires a fresh and multi-perspective approach. While the model captures the essence of this multifaceted problem, it does not reflect all of the complexities. For example, as intimated in the preceding discussion, themes related to dispersal policies may have a direct moderating effect on

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refugees' psychological and social capital and workplace integration. However, no model could ever capture all the minutiae and convolutions of reality. The conceptual model, nonetheless, shows how key factors at the micro, meso, and macro levels are individually and collectively pivotal in addressing the issue related to the sustainable workplace integration of refugees. The conceptual model as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts and its value is in the synoptic view that it provides.

### Discussion

#### Theoretical Implications and Contributions

This paper set out to address the research question; *“How does a liminal lens provide new insights into refugees' integration into the workplace?”*. Liminality is a vital lens as it allows for a synoptic view of refugees' experiences that are critical for their integration into the destination country's workplaces. Refugees, if not effectively integrated, may find themselves in a permanent state of limbo and immobilised by their challenges (Bamber et al., 2017).

The model's liminal lens provides a novel multi-level perspective in addressing the issue of refugees' integration into the workplace. From a liminality as process perspective at the micro-level, the model specifies refugee's psychological and social capital as theoretical underpinnings that directly influences refugees' personal development and resources (Beech, 2011) that helps with their integration into their respective jobs and workplace. However, in the model we argue that such success is contingent on the organisation. From a liminality as process perspective at the meso-level, the model identifies firms' diversity and inclusivity climate, cultural intelligence and ambidextrous HR architecture as imperative firm-level factors (Hansen et al., 2019). Specifically, diversity and inclusivity climate is the capacity and cultural intelligence is the capability that stimulates firms to design and implement an ambidextrous HR architecture that enables both its refugee and non-refugee workforce to work effectively and cohesively for the long-term. The notion of an ambidextrous HR architecture

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is theoretically underpinned by literature on the flexible firm (Atkinson, 1984), HR architecture (Kang et al., 2007) and organisational ambidexterity (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). We also denote in the model that boundary conditions are crucial in enhancing the prognostic accuracy of the model (Szkudlarek et al., 2019). From a liminality as place perspective at the macro level, we argue labour markets are situational factors that delimits the generalisability of the model across contexts (Busse et al., 2017).

The research implications of the model highlights the value of a phenomena-driven perspective in theorising. Exemplifying to the adage “nothing is as practical as a good theory”, a statement credited to Kurt Lewin (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 19), a phenomena-driven approach tackles problems in contemporary phenomena that are relevant to practice. This approach also compels researchers to revisit their baseline assumptions and addresses the limits of extant theories (Von Krogh, Rossi-Lamastra, & Haefliger, 2012). By revisiting assumptions about the problem by using liminality as a lens, the model brings to the forefront contributing factors that exacerbate refugees’ permanent liminality. Informed by the phenomenon, the use of liminality as a lens modifies how we theorise potential solutions to the problem. Also, in placing HR practices at the heart of theorising, our model builds on extant theories premised upon refugees’ volition, and the interventions by multilateral organisations and governments.

A theoretical implication of the model, as phenomenon-based research, is that it highlights the merits of interdisciplinary and multilevel approaches (Buckley, Doh, & Benischke, 2017). The model draws from literature on labour markets and economics aimed at the macro level, HRM at the meso level, and vocational and social psychology at the micro level. A long-standing, multifarious and complex problem such as refugees’ workplace integration requires a phenomenon-based approach that bridges epistemological and disciplinary divides, and unites researchers with diverse backgrounds who have a shared interest in the phenomena (Von Krogh et al., 2012).

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In exploring the germane themes of liminality; as process, position, and place, that refugees are likely to experience as reflected in our model, we make three contributions. First, by adopting liminality as a theoretical lens in our conceptual model, we contribute to extant academic and policy-based literature on refugee studies as we offer a novel and cohesive perspective of refugees' integration into the workplace. Our model reflects liminality as a process in that refugees' integration needs to consider their personal experiences and resources. Additionally, by viewing liminality as position, we focus on organisational factors that can mitigate/ exacerbate refugees' liminality. Finally, liminality as place steers us towards recognising the significant role of the local labour market that drives employment opportunities.

Our first contribution builds on calls by scholars such as Söderlund and Borg (2018) to employ liminality as a lens, given organisational life is 'changeable' (p. 894), and because social and organisational domains are fluid in the context of refugees (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). The use of a liminality lens allows scholars to reveal and gain more insight into the tensions that being 'in-between' inherently produces. The role of liminality also highlights the importance of personal development in identity reconstruction (Beech, 2011). Such development is a crucial element as it infuses developmental processes in growing psychological and social capital (Loon & Casimir, 2008). The development of refugees enable scholars and practitioners to understand the intercultural transitions, in particular, the focus on micro-contexts for change (Aten, Nardon, & Isabelle, 2016; Loon et al., 2020). While the spatial and temporal dimension of liminality is helpful, equally pertinent is the focus on the ritual dimension that draws upon the socio-material context, e.g. the organisational context, in which the refugees find themselves.

Our second contribution is the development of a synopsis that amalgamates vital factors at the micro, meso, and macro levels. The integration of refugees into the workforce is a

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multifaceted issue that goes beyond a single level of analysis. We extend the work of scholars who mainly focus on the individual-factors of refugees, e.g. Wehrle et al. (2018), and answer the call of scholars, e.g. Szkudlarek et al. (2019) in underscoring the need to include macro level contextual factors in refugee studies. By synthesising the micro, meso, and macro levels, our second contribution builds on the work of scholars, e.g. Newman, Bimrose, et al. (2018) by developing a conceptual model that is more rigorously and robustly viable in estimating the success of refugees' integration into workplaces. While their personal experiences and capacity play a significant role, refugees also face organisational-level challenges such as discrimination (Dhalimi et al., 2018), and other barriers brought about by national and local systems, e.g. employment policies and practices (Zetter & Ruaudel, 2016). A multi-level view not only allows scholars to have visibility of the key constructs but also how these constructs may interact with one another in facilitating the integration of refugees into the workplace.

Finally, our model provides a more nuanced view of the role of HRM in the integration of refugees. In particular, we focus on the role of ambidextrous HR architecture that allows firms to explore new ways to recruit, develop, and integrate refugees into their workforce while at the same exploiting existing talents. We build on extant HRM literature, e.g. McNulty and Hutchings (2016) that studies the integration of expatriate and voluntary migrants into the local workforce, by focusing on the specific migrant population of refugees. By doing so, we answer the call from scholars, i.e. Al Ariss and Sidani (2016) for HRM to feature more prominently in explaining the integration of newcomers into the workplace. We show that an ambidextrous HR architecture brings together structures and contexts, through harmonic ambidexterity (Simsek, Heavey, Veiga, & Souder, 2009), to enable organisations to operate in dual modes that are appropriate for existing staff and new refugee staff as the latter may require bespoke support to enhance their integration (Hansen et al., 2019). The ambidextrous HR architecture builds upon the literature on contextual ambidexterity that focuses on the microfoundation of

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individuals (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), in particular, how an ambidextrous HR architecture can create conditions for organisational employees to be both ambidextrous and to be able to work in an ambidextrous environment (Zimmermann et al., 2015).

### **Evaluation**

We evaluate our conceptual, theoretical model based on an adapted set of criteria suggested by Shepherd and Suddaby (2017) in which our model i) offers a sound explanation, ii) is parsimonious yet comprehensive, and iii) is robust in illuminating the phenomenon in as many refugee populations as possible. Explanations bring different issues and bodies of knowledge to the foreground (Keil, 2006). Our model offers liminality as a critical explanatory stance as it highlights the need to consider and curb the liminal experience of refugees; and adopts HR as an explanatory stance (or ‘mode of construal’) as it can have a genuine impact on refugees’ workforce integration (Keil, 2006). The model is parsimonious yet comprehensive as it draws upon key constructs from extant literature relevant to liminality at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Finally, we argue that our model is robust as it exploits the utility of boundary conditions providing it with some degree of malleability in its application to refugees from different parts of the world settling into different countries.

### **Practical implications**

The practical implications discussed here involve the HR practices of training and development, employee wellbeing and engagement, and policies aimed at local authorities at the macro level. At a micro level, the model highlights the need to address the issues that are a result of liminality-as-process, specifically, the migratory and vocational stress that refugees have experienced. The most indispensable is providing training in the receiving country’s language and similar support that attends to local acculturation needs (Auer, 2018). Nonetheless, such training should also be offered and coordinated by local authorities. Doing so affords refugees the opportunity to enhance their social network in these events, which

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consequently increases their social capital as they not only connect with co-workers from the same firm but also potentially fellow refugees from their native country. Individual firms can help develop refugees' psychological capital by creating training programmes that not only increases their job-related knowledge, and skills to fulfil the needs of their current roles but also their self-efficacy and capacity for resilience for future roles.

From a training perspective, firms first need to provide intercultural training to enable the refugee and non-refugee workforce to work better together (Szkudlarek, 2009).

Organisation-based training for the non-refugee workforce is equally pivotal, especially for the individuals who may be involved in line managing refugees, coaching or mentoring refugee staff as a colleague, or more generally in engaging with refugees. A training regime that includes job rotation to promote on-the-job training, multi-skilling, and functional flexibility can enhance the implementation of an ambidextrous HR architecture. Other meso level practical implications to support an ambidextrous HR architecture involves redesigning jobs for refugees that recognise their broader skills and helps to promote multi-skilling across different functions. Finally, organisations can develop a tailor-made career pathway for refugees that provides them with the opportunity to move from their peripheral jobs and start to gain entry into core jobs.

From a meso level perspective, leadership is equally important as it not only nurtures an organisational climate that values diversity and inclusivity but it also enables the development of an ambidextrous HR architecture. Leadership must empower and guide staff to address contradictions that are often brought about by ambidexterity. Addressing contradictions can be achieved by enhancing collective sensemaking achieved by staff and managers communicating and discussing issues in open forums. Employee engagement methods that foster bi-directional communication not only help to increase firms' reflexivity

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in responding to refugees' needs and to inform the organisation of the effectiveness of their practices but it also promote trust between the parties (Loon, 2020).

From a macro perspective, the conceptual model not only informs policymakers of the unintended consequences of its dispersal policies, but also of the importance and the effects that labour markets can have on the choice of the employers available to refugees. By taking a labour market view, policymakers can help to establish an 'ecosystem' within a location to support refugees. Policymakers can encourage and incentivise charities and other organisations from the voluntary sector to establish and enhance their operations in those locations, to more effectively support refugees (Chadderton & Edmonds, 2015). While it is important to support refugees directly (e.g. by providing shelter and food, and incentivising employers), policymakers in government can also help refugees indirectly by creating and coordinating institutional support, e.g. local authorities, charities and learning institutions, to minimise liminality as place. While some services to promote integration are available to refugees, there has been a lack of take-up (Chadderton & Edmonds, 2015) due to the lack of coordination and continuity across these initiatives. These initiatives need to be approached holistically as a multi-agency commitment increases the chances of continuity of the initiatives, and refugees will see the value of the initiatives if they are more connected (linking the micro, meso, and macro levels). As a result, may appreciate that these allied initiatives can lead to long-term future employment (Tomlinson & Egan, 2002).

### **Limitation and Future Research Directions**

While the adoption of a liminal lens has its advantages, it also has limitations as it accentuates certain factors and at the same time understates others. Future research should employ other perspectives such as focussing specifically on highly skilled or female refugees, to enrich our understanding and ultimately enhance the effectiveness of solutions in different segments of the refugee population. While the theoretical model centres on an ambidextrous

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HR architecture, this is only one dimension of HRM. Given its richness, there are other ways HRM can play a role in supporting refugees' employment, for example, outreach programmes when refugees are initially resettled in the receiving country (Bartel, 2001).

Future research may not only develop measures to test the theoretical model conceptualised in this paper, but it can also adopt a case study approach to identify specific HR practices that can play a role in enhancing refugees' integration into specific professions (Özdemir, Kickbusch, & Coşkun, 2017) and social settings (Alfadhli & Drury, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

Sustainable workplace integration of refugees has two key dimensions; the job (time-sensitivity in gaining employment and optimum level of employment) and the workplace (longevity in employment with an organisation and assimilation into the workplace with other colleagues). In the case of refugees, such meaningful employment denotes being able to find a job quickly and being able to stay in the job for a substantial amount of time, as this enables refugees to take care of their families and start a new productive life for themselves.

Supporting refugees to integrate into the workplace is not only essential for refugees themselves and their immediate communities, but it also allows organisations and countries to benefit from their human capital. However, liminality is a pervasive challenge to refugees. The liminality-based conceptual model highlights both challenges and potential solutions. By doing so, the model contributes to the literature by offering a dynamic view of refugees' workplace integration from a multi-level perspective, focusing on the impactful role of HRM in effectively integrating refugees into an organisation's workforce. A liminal lens layered on a multi-level and HR-orientated perspective allows for a closer examination of what works.

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### Appendices: Tables and Figures

**Table 1: Differences between liminal themes**

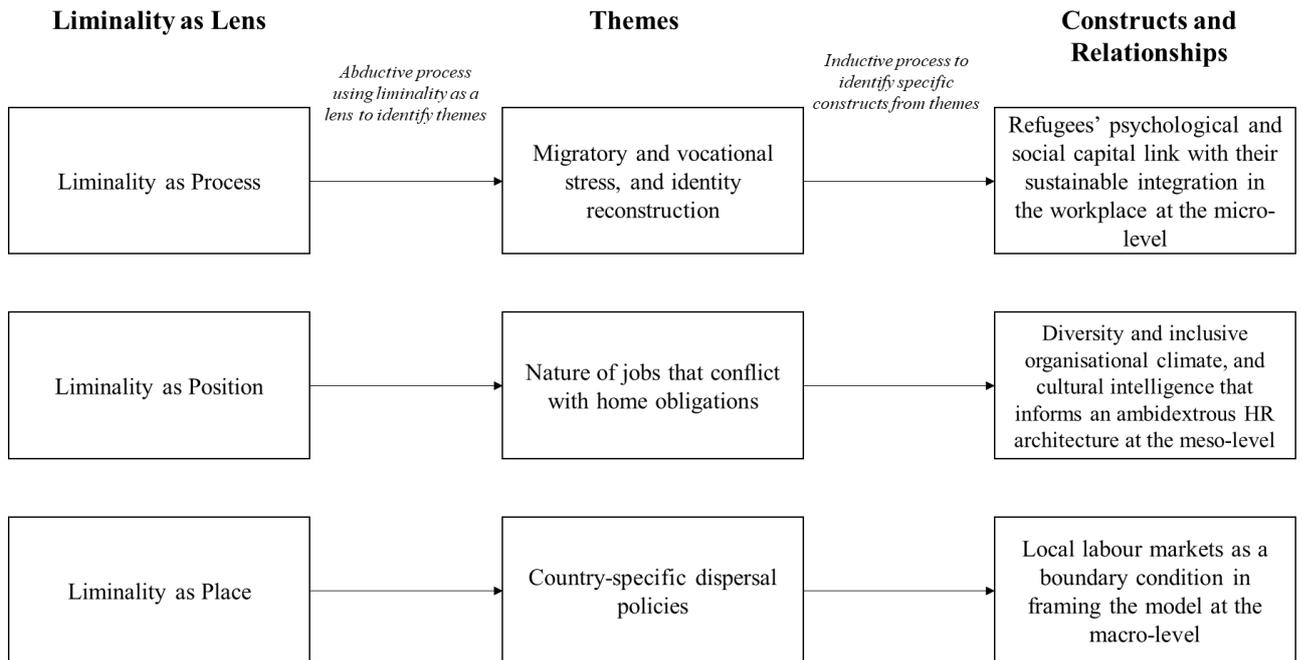
	<b>Liminality as Process</b>	<b>Liminality as Position</b>	<b>Liminality as Place</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Temporal liminality. Identity-based.	Positional liminality. Role-based.	Spatial liminality. Based on physical space.
<b>Scope</b>	Involves change within the individual.	Generally involves organisational roles but can also involve social roles.	Involves spaces both within and external to the physical workplace.

**Table 2: Literature search and screening steps**

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Database</b>	
	<b>Scopus</b>	<b>Web of Science</b>
1. Terms used: Migrant AND Employment OR Job OR Work	10,321	10,422
2. Duplicates removed	5,721	5,521
3. Terms used: Refugee	982	945
4. Limit to fields: Psychology and Business Management (includes Economics) and Social Science, and English and Articles only	671	642
5. Merged set, duplicates removed	652	
6. Apply liminal lens (liminality as a process; position; place) in review of abstracts to determine the relevance of articles	87	
7. Final number of articles used to inform the conceptualisation	65	

# LIMINALITY & REFUGEE WORKPLACE INTEGRATION

**Figure 1: Using abductive and inductive processes to develop the model**



**Figure 2: Theoretical model using a liminal lens for refugee workforce integration**

