Sexuality and Integration: Gay Iranian Refugees Navigating Refugee Status and Integration in Canada

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ABSTRACT

During the past two decades, Canada has accepted over hundreds of LGBT asylum seekers, including gay Iranian men. Iran is among the very few countries where some same-sex sexual interactions are illegal and punishable by the death penalty. Iranian sexual minorities to leave their home country to seek asylum with United Nations' (UN) offices located in Turkey. Currently, a majority of those who seek asylum based on their sexual orientation or gender identities (SOGI) are resettled to the United States and Canada. Yet, despite the groundbreaking legal actions in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) rights and the services provided for the resettlement and integration of refugees, including SOGI refugees, there is a noticeable lack of research on the daily lives of LGBT refugees in Canada. This study concerns the integration practices of gay Iranian refugees, as an example of racialized sexual minorities, in Canada. The central question in this study is: how do sexuality, race, gender, class, and ethnicity as well as their interactions, regulate racialized sexual minority refugees' belonging to various social groups and their access to rights such as housing, education, healthcare, and employment in their host country? My discussions in this study are based on six months of field work with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Canada (total interviews N = 35; total audio recorded from interviews ≈ 60 hours). I used snowball sampling for participant recruitment in Canada and found participants in Toronto, Vancouver, and Ottawa. To theorize the findings of this study, I merge the academic scholarship on migration and integration, refugee studies, and queer migration. I connect these bodies of research to the larger body of sociological theory by relying on a Durkheimian understanding of social integration as well as a Bourdieusian approach to social inequalities. In chapter 2, I apply intersectional methodology to my analyses of doing research among refugees as representative of vulnerable populations. I focus on relations between marital status and

insider status, sexuality and internal gatekeepers, and ethnicity and obtaining signed consent forms. I demonstrate the utility of intracategorical intersectional methodology in enabling researchers to reflect upon the ways that participants' markers of identity intersect with those of the researchers. In chapter 3, taking integration as a category of practice and relying on Halbwachs's theory of collective memory, I analyse gay Iranian refugees' interactions with Canadian society at large, the Canadian gay community, and Iranian Diaspora. My findings indicate that memories play the role of proxies that inform gay Iranian refugees' interactions in Canada at the intersection of race-ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and nationality. In chapter 4, I argue that overreliance on refugees' deployment of social capital for integration has grave shortcomings for refugees' senses of belonging. I draw on Bourdieu's writings on social capital to highlight internal group differences, social inequalities, and the vital convertibility between financial, social, and cultural capital in building transferrable resources for refugee integration. In chapter 5, I analyze gay Iranian refugees' pre-migration transnational lives and understandings of the asylum process, their post-migration transnational ties, and their activism practices. I underline refugees' agencies, and recommend analytical and methodological shifts to simultaneously explore refugees' pre-migration and en-route lives in addition to their post-migration lives in order to secure a comprehensive vision of transnational practices among refugees. At a theoretical level, I draw on Bourdieusian social theory and argue that it is necessary to deploy de-nationalized methods of inquiry to account for intra-group diversities as well as border-crossing social ties in addition to economic ties. In chapter 6, I conclude my study by outlining a few policy recommendations such as the creation of safe spaces in refugee welcome centers as well as the necessity of implementing culturally sensitive therapy and mental health medical services for racialized LGBT refugees.

PREFACE

This thesis is an original work by Ahmad (Aryan) Karimi. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Iranian gays' transnational identity: Life in Tehran and transitions as asylum seekers," No. Pro00061481, April 8, 2016. Data collection and analyses in all chapters are my original work. Parts of Chapter 1 have appeared in publications with *Punishment & Society* and *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. Chapter 3 is now published with *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated to my sister whose presence gives meaning to my life. I also dedicate this dissertation to my research participants who so warmly accepted me into their lives, shared their stories with me, and were a source of continuous joy and inspiration during fieldwork.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On August 21st, 2014 the Toronto-based news agency, *The Star*, published a report titled "*Toronto's gay mecca a refuge for persecuted Iranians*". Parts of the report read:

> *While other Muslims pay homage to the holy city of Mecca, Elina Azari worships Toronto, the gay mecca for queer Iranians. A month ago, the 26-year-old native from Tehran followed the treks of other queer refugees stranded in Turkey and joined the growing Iranian LGBTQ community for a new life in what some of them call "Tehranto." Since 2012, more than 200 queer Iranian refugees have resettled to Canada from Turkey through Ottawa's government-sponsored refugee program. "Iran is not a safe place for gay people. I'd stayed in Turkey for two years and two months. Canada has adopted gay marriages for many years. It speaks a lot about how it treats gay people. I'm so happy to be here, to be who I am." According to the Toronto-based Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees, there are hundreds of queer Iranians who have fled discrimination and persecution to neighbouring Turkey to get refugee designations by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and be resettled to other countries. "In Canada, there are more financial support, allowances and health care to assist these newcomers. Now, we have a more established Iranian LGBTQ community here. People are drawn to Toronto and it has this ripple effect," said Arsham Parsi, who launched the advocacy group in 2008. Since its inception, the group has received 950 cases from Turkey and resettled 450 people, half of them to Canada. Homosexuality is a crime in Iran and still warrants public executions by the law, he said. While they are happy to taste the freedom and liberation they never had before, a new life in Toronto isn't without its challenges.*

> *Unemployment is a big issue for many of these newcomers because of their language barriers; sometimes they are also ostracized by the local Iranian community. Ehsan, 24, who was resettled to Toronto in July via Denizli, Turkey, said newcomers could also face discrimination by others in the gay community. (He asked his last name be withheld because he is not out to his parents and has lied to them that he is without status in Canada.) "People don't want to see you if you don't speak a lot of English," added Ehsan, flicking his nose with his index finger, gesturing the snobbish attitude he has received from some Torontonians.*

****

During the past two decades, refugees and asylum have become highly politicized figures and topics because in most Western nation-states providing asylum and refugee protection has led to admitting and resettling refugees into national territories and endowing upon them access to the rights that were previously restricted to citizens and native inhabitants of the nation-states. To make the matters worse, the arrival of refugees has also become a racial issue in the post-9/11 era during which the politics and rhetoric of war on terror, dispersed through negative media representations, have further racialized and marginalized the Middle Eastern migrants and ethnic minorities, including those of Iranian background, as threats to national security and social cohesion. In contrast to the 1980s and 1990s when the majority of refugees in the Western world were from the former Soviet Union countries, and thus of European background, the new wave anti-refugee rhetoric concerns the non-white non-European asylum seekers who are readily available for stigmatization and exclusion. To misrepresent and associate the refugees and migrants with various social ills and inequalities, right-wing politicians often resurrect the past socio-political controversies around the settlement and integration of Middle Eastern and North

African migrants in European countries as well as the terrorist attacks in the United States and Western Europe. Lucassen (2018, 388), analyzing the factors that have contributed to the recent apocalyptic rhetoric of "refugee crisis", emphasizes that:

> The final argument often invoked against admitting asylum seekers at present is that Western European countries… have not yet, in a manner of speaking, "digested" the millions of other Muslims, especially because they remain hostile to the core European values of democracy, separation of church and state, gender equality, acceptance of homosexuality and freedom of speech.

Several polls conducted in North American and European countries, notably a 2016 Pew Research Center poll conducted in Europe, show that a majority of respondents see refugees not only as burdens on the social welfare systems but also as potential risk factors who increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks (Esses et al. 2017). Such perceptions specifically target a small subgroup of refugees, the young male Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa (Zorlu and Frijters 2018). Providing protection, resettlement, and integration rights and services become even more controversial once the statistics reveal that currently, the majority of refugees arriving in the West are from a small number of nations in the Middle East and Africa. In Canada, for instance, more than 80 percent of the resettled refugees in 2010 were from Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran (Reynolds and Hyndman 2014).

In the Western world, these all too familiar issues make daily headlines, set families up against each other, and polarize politics. The resurgence in anti-immigrant attitudes and right-wing populism concerning racial and ethnic minorities has, for example, fueled the Trump administration's tightening of border controls, the Italian government's rejection of migrant

rescue boats, and the Hungarian Parliament's approval of detaining all asylum seekers. From a humanitarian perspective, these examples are a pervasive social and political failure vis-à-vis the treatment of migrants and refugees.

Although not immune to global trends, the Canadian government and many Canadian citizens have pursued a more gracious path regarding the admittance and resettlement of refugees. In 2015, for instance, the Canadian Government announced that Canada would resettle over 20,000 Syrian refugees. While much lower than the European Union's intake of over 700,000 asylum applications in the same year, Canada, as a traditional immigration country, has managed to introduce itself as a pioneer of human rights and refugee resettlement at the global stage. For instance, until recently Canada has been known as the top destination for gay Iranian refugees, second only to the United States.

Iran is among the very few countries where some same-sex sexual interactions are illegal and punishable by the death penalty due to an amalgam of Islamic laws (Karimi and Bayatrizi 2018). A web of legal, political, and social hurdles in addition to severe violations of citizenship and human rights have compelled Iranian sexual minorities to leave their home country to seek asylum with United Nations' (UN) offices located in Turkey. Currently, a majority of those who seek asylum based on their sexual orientation or gender identities (SOGI) are resettled to the United States and Canada as well as a few Western European countries including the United Kingdome and Germany.

The egregious state-sanctioned discrimination against and mistreatments of sexual minorities has led some states in the western hemisphere to gradually redefine their interpretation of national refugee laws and international norms to extend protection to SOGI asylum seekers

(LaViolette 2010). As a result of socio-legal and grass-roots movements, in 2008 the UN developed and released United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity to officially include sexual minorities as eligible for asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

These social and legal progress build upon decades-old experiences and struggles around providing protection and new life opportunities to those who flee various forms of violence. Beyond the debates around the law and legal constructions of refugee categories, the questions of whether and how to protect those who seek asylum inside or outside the national territories of the nation-states are now among the most critical humanitarian and policy concerns of politicians and social scientists. These concerns revolve not only around financial and political solutions but also around racial and social differentiation between those who seek asylum and those states that, adhering to the 1951 Refugee Convention, must provide the protection.

After being recognized as a Convention refugee, and upon resettlement and arrival to their host countries, most refugees and immigrant populations address the integration challenges and fulfill their new life opportunities by seeking recourse to the resources of the social groups to which they are most closely tied (Ager and Strang 2008; Strang and Ager 2010; Hanley et al. 2018). These social groups, if well-established as in the case of ethnic or religious groups, may facilitate the integration of the newcomers by sharing information on housing, employment, and access to services in addition to providing access to community resources. Ethnic communities and religious groups may thus complement state-provided services that target the integration of refugees and immigrants. There is, however, robust research findings that demonstrate the inefficiency of the "conventional story of ethnic assimilation" (Espiritu 2006, 413) by underscoring the limits and disadvantages of relying on ethnic networks for integration purposes

(Portes and Landolt 2000; Portes 1998; Evergeti and Zontini 2006). More specifically, scholars claim that inter- and intra-group inequalities regulate individuals' access to community resources through the interplay of gender, class, religion, and age (Ryan et al. 2008; Anthias 2007; Woolcock 1998; Shah et al. 2010). Zontini (2010), for example, argues that the, often patriarchal, ethnic networks limit rather than facilitating integration and promoting the rights of immigrant women in Italy. Thus, in the absence of scholarly research, the question remains whether facilitatory functions of the social groups and government services are as effectively and straightforwardly applicable to racialized sexual minorities.

In sum, despite the groundbreaking legal actions in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) rights and the services provided for the resettlement and integration of refugees, including SOGI refugees, there is a noticeable lack of research on the daily lives of LGBT refugees in Canada, or elsewhere for that matter (Lee and Brotman 2011). To address this lacuna, as it might be gleaned from The Star's report, this study concerns the integration practices of gay Iranian refugees, as an example of racialized sexual minorities, in Canada. By asking several overlapping questions, as discussed below, I aim to dis/uncover and analyze the main processes that regulate gay Iranian refugees' integration and settlement in Canada.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Why?

There are multiple lines of interdisciplinary research concerning the health issues or academic and employment attainments of sexual minorities (Steele et al. 2009; Anderson and McCormack 2015; Ward and Winstanley 2006) as well as their relations and interactions with their families and communities (Sun et al. 2014; Savin-Williams and Diamond 2000). Also, there

is a growing body of literature focusing on the Western states' asylum apparatus in relation to SOGI refugees (Murray 2014; Kahn and Alessi 2017; Shakhsari 2014; Dauvergne and Millbank 2003; Lewis and Naple 2014) in addition to a recent interest in sexuality of migration and sexual minority immigrants of racial backgrounds (Carrillo 2018; Dhoest 2016; Cantu 2009; Adam and Rangel 2015; 2017). This latter body of research, at times, explores sexual minority refugees' new lives in their new host countries, not as refugees, but rather as immigrants, thus dismissing their experiences of "refugeeness" (Lacroix 2004) and subsuming them as members of their respective ethnic communities (Peumans 2014). There is indeed a gap in research with regards to racialized sexual minority refugees' integration who may share many characteristics of the native-born sexual minorities as well as the racialized sexual minority immigrants while also presenting characteristics distinct from both of these groups.

Faced with this paucity of knowledge about racialized sexual minority refugees' lives and integration after resettlement, one is left wondering about how to understand their experiences, needs, and agencies with regards to their social relations, access to health and employment services, and transformations in identities. Consequently, one might ask when and how the sociology of migration and/or refugees will address the specificities of this social group and include the research findings on racialized sexual minorities in theory building and complementing the scope of the sociology of international migration. Lastly, in the absence of scientific data and analysis, how should we improve or design new refugee integration policies to address the needs of the ever-increasing numbers of the racialized SOGI refugees?

Fitzgerald and Arar (2018, 388) underline the importance of sociological research on refugees, in general, in three ways:

> First, migration theories explain a subset of mobility: labor migration. Expanding the inquiry to include people who flee violence challenges theorists of international migration to define their scope conditions and to consider interacting factors that explain movement as well as decisions to stay. Second, in contradistinction to many underpoliticized theories of international migration, refugee studies rightfully focuses on the role of states in shaping the flows and life chances of mobile persons. Finally, attending to refugees expands the range of cases to be considered when analyzing other concerns in the sociology of international migration, such as integration, transnationalism, and citizenship.

I contend that research on racialized LGBT refugees accomplishes all that Fitzgerald and Arar (2018) have underlined as contributions of sociology of refugee by: shedding light on the intra- and inter-group diversities in migration and integration practices and underlining the insufficiency of the ethnic lens in studying the migration processes and integration practices (see chapter 3); revealing that integration services and policies informed by a simplified and community-based (i.e., communitarian) definition of social capital minimize the state's responsibility in guaranteeing access to rights for refugees (see chapter 4); demonstrating that refugees are not entirely detached from their border-traversing communities since they participate in various forms of transnational activities (see chapter 5).

The Present Study

I will explore gay Iranian men's navigation of daily life at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity, refugee status, nationality, and class in relation to Canadian society,

mainstream White Canadian LGBT groups, and Iranian diasporic groups. The central question in this study is: how do any of the above factors, as well as their interactions, regulate racialized sexual minority refugees' belonging to various social groups and their access to rights such as housing, education, healthcare, and employment in their host country? I will merge the academic scholarship on migration and integration, refugee studies, and queer migration. I connect these bodies of research, in its merged form found in this study, to the larger body of sociological theory by relying on a Durkheimian understanding of social integration as well as a Bourdieusian approach to social inequalities.

More importantly, and in addition to the above mentioned justifications for this study, I am particularly interested in foregrounding the voices of racialized sexual minority refugees (Smyth et al. 2010) to demonstrate that Canada, similar to many other Western societies, has become a multicultural society beyond the early days of Canada, as a White Confederation, because immigrants of diverse backgrounds have settled and have become part of the Canadian society for several decades now. This diversity casts doubt on the usefulness of approaching integration as solely a duty of the newcomers and invites us to pay particular attention to social heterogeneities in integration practices of all individuals and citizen, native-born and immigrant alike (Korteweg 2017).

Further, I am interested in debunking the myth of Toronto's gay mecca. The current anecdotal reports and right-wing rhetoric on racialized SOGI refugees in the Western world often contrast accounts of intrinsic violence against sexual and gender minorities in their homelands, "homosexuality is a crime in Iran and still warrants public executions by the law", versus an all-encompassing and inherent tolerance of sexual and gender minorities in the West, "they are happy to taste the freedom and liberation they never had before", reports The Star. These

accounts, at best, conflate, and at worst, discredit the racial, religious, and national characteristics of the LGBT refugees who come from different racial-ethnic backgrounds, hold different religious beliefs and belong to different nation-states: these reports make recourse to the Orientalist language and imageries of the Middle East, "Muslims", "city of Mecca", and "worship", not because these LGBT refugees bear sociocultural similarities, but because such rhetoric create a "single, essential, transhistorical refugee condition" (Malkki 1995, 511) that celebrates and exalts freedom and liberation as inherent to Canadian society (Thobani 2007) and condemns discrimination and persecution as ingrained to the non-Western societies such as Iran or Turkey. The Star's report on the Iranian LGBT refugees is thus part of the sweeping anti-immigrant attitudes and right-wing populism targeting refugees and immigrants from the Global South.

It is striking how the current anti-refugee rhetoric eradicate the roles of the Western states in instigating the social, political, and economic upheavals that result in displaced and refugee populations in the Middle East while, simultaneously, presenting the Middle Eastern countries as inherently violent and the refugees that hail from that region as unable to accomplish integration. These histories and relations of power are of utmost importance in this study of gay Iranian refugees' integration in Canada. Indeed, in a world system (Wallerstein 1976) in which the Iranian society is marginalized and in a way subordinate to the Western nations that enjoy hegemonic positions, <u>do the mainstream Canadian LGBT communities in bigger cities such as Toronto, Canada's gay mecca according to The Star, welcome the gay Iranian men regardless of their race and nationality? How does the post 9/11 politics of war-on-terror targeting the Middle East, to which Canada is an accomplice and a subscriber, play a role in regulating gay Iranian refugees' social relations in Canada? How do the images and messages dispersed around the</u>

world through western media as well as several activist groups' pursuits inform gay Iranian men's imageries of the West and their decisions to leave their home country?

How?

Any qualitative research project that asks "how or why questions about processes unknown before the start of the study" (Small 2009, 25) would best benefit from methods of data collection that grant, but also call for "logical rather than statistical inference, for case rather than sample-based logic, for saturation rather than representation as the stated aims of research" (ibid, 28). Accordingly, this study is based on a six-month ethnographic fieldwork with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Canada which resulted in three phases of conducting interviews and a total of 35 interviews in addition to extensive field notes taken during and after each interview and gathering. In my research, I explored Iranian gay men's experiences of migration, asylum, and resettlement in Canada at the intersections of sexuality, race, gender, class, and nationality. I used snowball sampling to find participants in Toronto, Vancouver, and Ottawa. I reached out to a community-activist friend who had been resettled to the United States and asked for my contact information and project description to be forwarded to potential participants and upon having their expression of interest, I communicated with them through social media and telephone.

I started my fieldwork during the fall of 2016 and interviewed eight participants in Vancouver. Later, I worked with 11 more participants in Toronto and Ottawa during the winter of 2017 and conducted observations and interviews in public spaces of cafes, parks, malls, and workplaces. I attended one gathering at one of my participants' home in celebration of Persian New Year but did not conduct any interviews. Next, and upon initial data analysis, I conducted 13 follow-up one-hour interviews via phone and Skype. I also conducted three two-hour interviews in Vancouver during the fall of 2017 (total N=35).

It is noteworthy that except for one interview which was in English, I conducted interviews in my participants' native language, i.e., Farsi, to mitigate harmful power dynamics stemming from second-language skills (Edwards 1998) even though all participants had a good command of the English language. All participants were born and raised in Iran, had a university education, except for one case, and self-identified as gay. My participants' age range was 22 to 37, and their length of stay in Canada ranged from 2 to 7 years.

I emphasize that I understand my participants' subjective narratives, reflected in the empirical accounts and quotations in the following chapters, as authentic (Guba and Lincoln 1994) worldviews and fractions of the multiple constructed realities (Schutz 1945) rather than components of a single tangible reality. In order to communicate these worldviews with the reader, I will (re)use quotations that best reflect my participants' authentic realities. The philosophical underpinnings of my approach to authentic reality, rather than a single truth, build on Alfred Schutz's (1962; 1970) sociology of everyday life that define the daily life as a topic of research and not merely a source of inquiry.

In a series of essays on the methodologies of the Social Sciences, Schutz (1962, 5) argues:

> There are no such things as facts, pure and simple. All facts are from the outset facts selected from a universal context by the activities of mind... [Facts] carry along their interpretational inner and outer horizon… This does not mean that, in daily life or science, we are unable to grasp the reality of the world. It just means that we grasp merely certain aspects of it, namely those which are relevant to us

> either for carrying on our business of living or from the point of view of a body of accepted rules of procedure of thinking called the method of science.

I acknowledge that such sociological studies might be characterized as uncritical acceptance or sanction of common-sense knowledge and criticized as epistemologically and theoretically micro-level and thus unable to address macro-level phenomena. However, according to Schutz's sociology of everyday life, micro-level research does not impose any limitations on our vision and knowledge of the social phenomena because "the micro-situation is in these ways always and already open to the macro-situation, and the macro-situation always and already dwells within the micro-situation" (Nasu 1999, 76). Accordingly, the researcher's task is to study and present intricate and common but temporary accounts of that which considered being true (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Accomplishing this task is possible through authenticity which entails representing the discovered range of realities and paying sufficient analytical attention to this range of phenomena (Seale 1999).

During the past two decades, migration and refugee studies scholars have also emphasized the importance of conducting empirically- and theoretically-informed sociological research to produce cumulative knowledge without resorting to grand theories of migration (Portes 1997). In Castles' (2003, 27) words, "such a theory would be so general as to be vacuous". These scholars invite for mid-level theories "that can help explain specific empirical findings by linking them to appropriate bodies of historical and contemporary research" (Castles 2003, 27). Thus, in line with the sociology of everyday life, I focus on everyday social interactions and describe the subjective meanings of my participants' actions notwithstanding my conceptual and theoretical analyses of social interactions.

Refugee:

Historically, persecution and forced migration have been a common experience of individuals and social groups who become excluded from their communities "at times of acute political crises or rapid and fundamental redefinition of their economic, social or ethnic identity" (Zetter 1988, 1). However, since the World War II the refugee, as a figure and label, has become a "specific social category and legal problem of global dimensions… [which has] emerged as a knowable, nameable figure and as an object of social-scientific knowledge" (Malkki 1995, 499).

Definition

In 1951, the Geneva Convention codified and presented the modern definition of refugee:

> Article 1 of the Convention contains the relevant standards, and reads as follows:
>
> A. For the purpose of the present Convention, the term refugee shall apply to any person who:
>
> (1) Has been considered a refugee under the Arrangements of 12 May 1926 and 30 June 1928 or under the Conventions of 28 October 1933 and 10 February 1938, the Protocol of 14 September 1939 or the Constitution of the Refugee Organisation; Decisions of non-eligibility taken by the International Refugee Organisation during the period of its activities shall not prevent the status of refugee being accorded to persons who fulfil the conditions of paragraph 2 of this section;
>
> (2) As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of

> the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In the case of a person who has more than one nationality, the term 'the country of his nationality' shall mean each of the countries of which he is a national, and a person shall not be deemed to be lacking the protection of the country of his nationality if, without any valid reason based on well-founded fear, he has not availed himself of the protection of one of the countries of which he is a national.
>
> B. (1) For the purposes of this Convention, the words 'events occurring before 1 January 195 V in Article 1, Section A, shall be understood to mean either (a) 'events in Europe before 1 January'; or (b) 'events occurring in Europe or elsewhere before 1 January 1951' (Convention of 1951).

The 1951 definition was later modified with regards to its Eurocentric scope. In 1967 the Protocol

Relating to the Status of Refugees incorporated post-1951 refugees and explicitly included those from outside Europe in the definition. It is important to note that "all Western European countries, as well as Australia, Canada, and the United States, are signatories to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol" (Castles and Laughna 2005, 40).

Yet, after more than seven decades since its modern inception in 1951, the term refugee and the field of refugee studies have not gained consensus among policy makers and scholars

from different disciplinary backgrounds. While in 2001 Richard Black reminded us that "there is still far from a clear consensus on what the term - and more importantly the field of refugee studies -should or should not include" (Black 2001, 64), in 2018 Fitzgerald and Arar warned that "there is surprisingly little overlap between refugee studies and the sociology of international migration" (Fitzgerald and Arar 2018, 388). The latter scholars re-pose Mazur's (1988) two-decade-old claim that "whether sociology has a contribution [to refugee studies] distinguishable from that of geography, anthropology, economics or political science. . .remains to be proven". Acknowledging the validity of these claims, I must point out that there have been several conceptual and theoretical reflections from across disciplines on refugee and the field of refugee studies (see for example Kunz 1981; Richmond 1993; Hein 1993; Malkki 1995; Bates 2002; Zetter 1991; 2007; Bakewell 2008).

In this study, responding to Castles' (2003, 14) call for a sociology forced migration which necessitates "a developed body of empirical work and theory", and with eye on the 1951 Convention definition, I understand refugee as a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution due to his/her race, religion, nationality, and membership of a particular social group or political opinion and is outside of and ineligible for protection in the country of his/her nationality (Gissi 2018). This understanding not only underlines the presence of fear, but it also emphasizes the absence and failure of the countries of origin in the fulfillment of citizens' needs and safety (Shacknove 1985). This approach renders "refugee" not as an ontologically given category but rather an analytical "rubric that includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations" (Malkki 1995, 496). I, thus, reiterate Espiritu's (2006) call to challenge the glossy narratives of the

refugees as unassimilable victims and the West as the upholder of the “rescue and liberation” myth:

> We need to imbue the term “refugee” with social and political critiques—that is, to conceptualize the refugee not as an object of investigation, but rather as a paradigm “whose function [is] to establish and make intelligible a wider set of problems.” (Agamben 2002,1, cited in Espiritu 2006, 421)

This constructivist conceptualization of refugee, as a person who flees violence regardless of political-legal recognition of their status, brings the epistemological aspect of this study in line with its philosophical underpinnings, i.e., daily life as a topic of research; its goals, i.e., foregrounding the voices of racialized sexual minority refugees in revealing power relations and debunking the myth of Toronto’s gay mecca; and its methods of data collection, i.e., interviews and ethnography.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Refugees

In 2007, the Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) was developed to underline the severity of discriminations against sexual minorities around the world to encourage the UN and its related programs on refugees, UNHCR in particular, as well as independent nation-states, to recognize and eliminate criminalization of same-sex sexual acts. This led to the UN’s 2008 adoption of UNHCR Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

Scholars and activists were able to expand the 1951 Convention’s definition of refugee to include LGBT asylum seekers by defining sexual minorities as constituting a social group and

arguing that sexual minorities are thus eligible for asylum under the category of "membership of a particular social group" (Convention of 1951). These somewhat recent changes in UNHCR's mandate regarding the status of SOGI refugees do not indicate an absence of protection provided to this social group during the earlier decades; rather they are signs of solidification and recognition of sexual minorities' human rights at the international stage. Indeed, in the early 1990s, Canada became the first country to hear asylum claims those who had been persecuted in their home countries due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identities (LaViolette 2009). Since then Canada has become home to many LGBT refugees who have either filed asylum claims in Canada or have been resettled to Canada from third countries and asylum camps. The latest improvement in Canadian asylum apparatus came in May of 2017 as the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) implemented a new series of guidelines for decision-maker IRB personnel and with regards to SOGI refugees. The purpose of the new guidelines on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) is to:

> Promote greater understanding of cases involving sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) and the harm individuals may face due to their non-conformity with socially accepted SOGIE norms. This Guideline addresses the particular challenges individuals with diverse SOGIE may face in presenting their cases before the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) and establishes guiding principles for decision-makers in adjudicating cases involving SOGIE.

The recognition of sexual minorities as a social group and eligible for asylum builds on years of LGBT and human rights movements that brought to attention the relations between sexuality and social citizenship rights. Once racialized sexual minority asylum seekers are

recognized as refugees and eligible for permanent residency and citizenship in their host country, the question of access to various sets of rights gains importance vis-à-vis individual citizens whose status and identities falls at the intersections of sexuality, race, gender, class, nationality, and immigration backgrounds. If we understand citizenship "as a set of civil, political and social rights, as well as common membership of a shared community" (Richardson 2000, 107; see also Bloemraad et al. 2008), then the question becomes: how do any of the above factors, as well as their interactions, regulate racialized sexual minority refugees' social belonging and access to and integration services such as housing, education, healthcare, and employment?

INTEGRATION

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical approach to integration is informed by Durkheimian (2014 [1984]]) approach to social transformations and social integration. I will use Halbwachs's (1992) theory of collective memory and Bourdieusian social theory (1977; 1984; 1986; 1992) - both of which build on Durkheim's sociological thought - to address the shortcomings of Durkheimian functionalist understanding of society, individuals' agency, and intra- and intergroup power differentiations in modern societies.

Social cohesion and integration have long been among central themes in Sociology and sociological research. Durkheim (2014 [1984]) argued that division of labor in modern societies is the means through which individuals and groups learn about and adapt to their ever-changing roles as members of the society. Further, in response to the waves of internal and international migrations and social changes at the turn of the 20th century, he emphasized that integration, a means towards social cohesion, is not merely an issue of objective division of labor, but also a

matter of moral convictions, shared symbols, and ideas. This emphasis highlights the importance of individuals' social encounters in shaping different forms of national solidarity (Oosterlynck et al. 2016; Loch 2014).

Integration and social cohesion increasingly became problematic for societies such as Canada that have been receiving immigrants, aliens, who are of disparate social, cultural, and political backgrounds. In the early decades of the 20th century, sociologists addressed the social and policy concerns around social cohesion and integration through various forms of assimilation theory, i.e., "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them into a common cultural life" (Park and Burgess 1921, 735 cited in Kamali 2012, 83; see also Gordon 1964 for his seven categories of assimilation among immigrants in the United States). This theory assumes a unidirectional move towards a total and final assimilation with host society on the part of the newcomers.

With the intensification of immigration in the 1980s and 1990s, it became evident that immigrant populations' adaption strategies do not neatly follow the patterns predicted by assimilation theory. Scholars then turned to differentiating between socioeconomic and sociocultural modes of actions and measuring the former to mark immigrants' failure or success in adapting to the host society. The latter, the sociocultural mode of action, was relegated to the domestic sphere as a private issue. Gans (1997), for example, differentiates between assimilation as immigrants' move from ethnic to non-ethnic institutions and acculturation as newcomers' adoption of behavioral norms and values. Not surprisingly, he underlines assimilation as the more important factor in attaining social cohesion while arguing that, in some ways, slow acculturation may indeed hinder immigrants' assimilation (see also Alba and Nee 1997).

The above approaches to social cohesion and integration assume a positivist stance by separating individuals from their "objective" actions and measuring various forms of integration through socioeconomic factors such as educational attainments, employment status, housing, and political participation. These theories, however, overlook the very basis of social cohesion, i.e., moral convictions, shared symbols, and ideas. More recently, scholars have further questioned the traditional assimilation and integration theories that, influenced by rational-choice theory and economics, presumed linearity in social processes. These researchers emphasize that integration in host societies is neither unidirectional nor objective or independent of individuals' and groups' experiences (Karimi and Bucerius 2017; Soehl 2017; Anthias 1998). After all, without social belonging and participation, there are no grounds for social cohesion and integration (Durkheim 2014 [1984], 64). It is through the active participation of individuals in social group activities that the society attains cohesion and, in a sense, organic solidarity. Thus, idealistically, integration means active participation of individuals, refugee-migrant and non-migrant alike, in the reproduction of social life and formation of senses of belonging (Korteweg 2017; Oosterlynck et al. 2016; Wieviorka 2014). This definition contains within it the more common understanding of newcomers' integration practices as the adoption of host cultural norms while retaining home cultural norms (see for example Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou 2014).

Participation in social life as an important aspect of integration requires analytical attention to individuals' experiences and actions as well as diversities in social lives, particularly in modern multi-cultural societies. Durkheim's view of society does not give much credence to individuals' agency, nor does he account for potential social conflicts and individual rivalries notwithstanding the presence of the rule of law in modern societies. To address the former problem, I use the sociological theory of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992) since it allows for

asking who remembers and how that happens, and therefore why certain individuals and groups choose certain integration practices in the host countries. Although collective memory has been prominent in social psychology and interdisciplinary studies, it has not gained the same tract in the sociology of migration despite its epistemological and analytical effectiveness.

Collective memory as a form of mid-level theory is effectively applicable to data collected through participants' narratives, i.e., to 'limited ranges of data-theories for example of class dynamics, of conflicting group pressures, of the flow of power and the exercise of interpersonal influence . . .' (Merton 1968 [1957]). Following a Durkheimian tradition that emphasizes the role of the past and historical continuities in creating solidarities, Halbwachs conceptualized collective memory as shared social frameworks of individual recollections (1992). Halbwachs puts his analysis against individual psychology by underlining that minds work along with each other and are influenced by social structures (Olick and Robinson 1998). Halbwachs sociological, but a more individualistic understanding of memory applies the theory of collective representation to the question of group memory to account for the interplay between individual and group memories (Olik 2008) as individual memories are socially mediated and are in constant communication with others. Individuals' participation in social life and the construction of shared memories presumes and entails:

> The possession of the ability to recognize the social [realities] and, simultaneously, to be recognized by other members of the community in which the individual acts. An individual's integrative social action, thus, is a dialectical process of self-realization that takes place in a familiar social context that provides the appropriate means for meaningful social action. These means are positions and possibilities necessary for individuals and groups to act according to

their dispositions, i.e., their incorporated knowledge of social life (Kamali 1999, 89).

It is the inequitable availability of these means and inequalities in individuals' access to such means including employment, education, social belonging and participation that go under-theorized in Durkheim's view of society. To address this problem, Bourdieu's understanding of social capital, the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network (Bourdieu 1986), draws on the Durkheimian (2014 [1984]) approach to integration, however, he addresses the gaps in Durkheim's theory regarding the under-theorization of inter- and intra-group differences and struggles.

Bourdieu's social theory revolves around the concepts of habitus, practice, capital, and fields. Habitus, formed under the influence of objective structures, is the subconscious system of lasting dispositions and the 'embodied history, internalized as a second nature', capable of reproducing and reshaping the objective structures (Bourdieu 1977). Habitus is reshaped - albeit not easily due to its subconscious nature - as a result of encounters with new social fields and other actors' habitus. Habitus, which is shared by people of similar backgrounds, simultaneously generates and limits practice. Bourdieu (1984) understands practice as the outcome of the interaction between actors' dispositions embodied through their habitus, the actors' diverse forms of capital, and the structures and power relations within each social field.

Bourdieu presents four convertible categories of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital defined, respectively, as financial profit, educational and intellectual qualities, a network of durable social relations, and the prestige and recognition of these forms of capital in each social field (Bourdieu 1986). In other words, capital is the power gained and exerted by each

individual within social fields. Each social field is comprised of certain social structures and individuals' and groups' multiple forms of capital which condition actors' positions within the social fields and in relation to other actors (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, see their discussion on the Logic of Fields). For example, education, economy, sports, and human rights activism (Keck and Sikkink 1998) have their specific, but interdependent, rules and structures and can be conceptualized as social fields.

The rules of the field are implicit, and actors internalize these structures over time into their inter-subjective habitus. The aggregation of these social fields yields a social space within which individual actors rely on their habitus to interact with the social fields. Any discord between the habitus and its respective social fields may result in or provoke transformations in habitus and fields. For instance, the circulation of the western discourses of sexuality around the world or the undertaking of migration to other locales challenges actors as they face new sets of rules and fields. Consequently, individuals, refugees in particular, will have to adapt their practices to their new environment and act according to the rules of new social fields to re-evaluate and accumulate capital (Thieme 2008). The forms and amounts of capital and the sets of dispositions and expectations that migrants bring with them might be insufficient or in discord with the new environment (Bauder 2008; Kelly and Lusis 2006).

In sum, it is indeed the simultaneous accumulation of economic, cultural, and social capitals and their convertibility rates that facilitate integration in the long run. Bourdieu's social theory presents a relational understanding of individuals' agency and social structures (Castles 2003; Lacroix 2014), underlines various power relations and social inequalities, and allows for analyzing refugees' integration practices without essentializing one aspect of social categories over other categories. In this study, I specifically seek to bring sexuality, as an often overlooked

factor, to the center of analysis along with the conventionally explored factors such as race and gender.

Sexuality and Integration

During recent years, queer migration scholarship has emerged as a body of literature to explore and 'theorize how sexuality constitutes a "dense transfer point for relations of power" that structure all aspects of international migration' (Luibheid 2008, 169). Although, migration studies have often taken the immigrant as asexual or as always heterosexual (Ahmad 2016), sociologists have started to explore and account for the ways sexuality may drive immigration, guide group membership, and affect integration in the host societies (Epstein and Carrillo 2014; Cantu 2009; Manalansan 2006; Gonzalez-Lopez 2005; Ahmadi 2003).

On the one hand, a growing body of research on LGBT migrants in the United States and Canada shows that racialized sexual minorities face marginalization within their ethnic groups as well as the white, mainstream LGBT communities (Carrillo 2018; Lee and Brotman 2013; Kahn et al. 2017; Adam and Rangel 2015; Grundy and Smith 2005). This widespread exclusion from ethnic communities and LGBT groups is because the former groups most often hold onto home-country cultures of patriarchy and sexism while the latter groups rely on "homonormative" (Duggan 2012) assimilationist equal rights agendas that demand racial minorities' assimilation into the white middle-class values.

On the other hand, the limited research on LGBT asylum seekers also shows that the Canadian refugee apparatus, similar to many other Western states (Dhoest 2018; Akin 2017), approaches SOGI asylum claims through an homonationalist framework that not only reproduces imperialist-colonialist dichotomies between the non-White refugee and the White host nation but

also, subjectively and on an ad-hoc basis, applies the homonormative, i.e., gendered, raced, and classed, norms and stereotypes on SOGI asylum claimants in deciding the fate of their claims. Although highlighting some of the consequences of such state-sanctioned legal practices in perpetuating the homonationalist and anti-refugee rhetoric on immigration and citizenship issues (Murray 2014, 2015), the research on LGBT asylum seekers has not explored the integration challenges and life opportunities of sexual minority refugees vis-à-vis various social groups and governmental services.

BACKGROUND

Canadian Context

Integration in the Canadian context encourages mutual recognition and adjustment at the policy level. Different from the U.S. and most Western European countries replete with strong assimilation discourses, Canadian multiculturalism emphasizes finding ways to integrate differences with the goal of inclusion (Reitz et al. 2017; Abu-Laban 1998) based on a political philosophy of "live-and-let-live" (Banting and Kymlicka 2010). Canadian multiculturalist policies and national rhetoric have encouraged the immigrants to perceive themselves as the potential equal parts of the society.

In a context where racial biases are officially denied (Boyer 2006) and job market discriminations and failure of recent immigrants in finding jobs are not disclosed in national news, immigrants express positive attitudes toward national policies and the Canadian national identity (Wenshya and Herbert 2006). This has also enabled the Canadian government to successfully "sell diversity" (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002) as a cultural-economic resource in the neoliberal global context. Highly skilled immigrants, "cherry-picked" through the Canadian

point-system, are admitted to Canada due to their "absorptive capacity" (Reitz 2012). This indicates an easier and faster integration process for immigrants into the Canadian economy which initially blinds them on the social inequalities. Observing and relishing the multicultural events and festivals, immigrants feel that "multiculturalism implies that Canadian society offers equality of opportunity" (Moodely 1983, 320).

Another factor in the faster socio-economic integration of immigrants in Canada is their already established global (read: Western) identities that are not much different from the Anglo-Saxon values even though they have been living in Asian or Africa cities (Moodley 2010). While the Canadian point-system, implicitly, shuns off migration as family-units, and Canadian multiculturalism pushes for privatization of cultural rights and non-controversial expressions of cultural difference, e.g., food, dance, and music, the recent highly skilled immigrants do not attend to the ethnic groups since they do not need their support to succeed in the job market (Parekh 2006; Moodley 2010). These recent immigrants are compatible with individualistic goals of integration policies in Canada in the absence of support for individual-group rights through federal or provincial funds.

However, more recently, scholars have discussed that racial, gender, and sexual biases are inherent to the Canadian nation-state and that the official multicultural policies are symbolic strategies of embracing neoliberal economies for the mainstream white, patriarchal, and heterosexual citizens (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002). Rietz (1988, 436) emphasizes that "tolerance for cultural retention does not automatically translate into economic equality for cultural groups. In the long run, co-optation reduces conflict, not inequality." Further, refugee studies scholars have argued that the current treatment of immigrants and refugees as potential threats to national security and social cohesion in Canada is symptomatic of the re-ethnicization

and securitization of citizenship (Winter 2014; Fassin 2013), resembling the right-wing political rhetoric of the refugee crisis in the European context (Baines 2017).

While Canada is one of the few countries welcoming LGBT refugees, the wake of re-ethnicization in Canada, similar to the culturalization of citizenship or civic integration (Triadafilopoulos 2011) in some Western European countries, places gay rights at the forefront of drawing legal, political, and cultural boundaries between non-Western immigrants and the native populations (Murray 2014; Jivraj and De Jong 2011; Mepschen et al. 2010). Research has already shown that the current social acceptance of homosexuality mainly targets white middle-class citizens and silences the voices of queers of color (Duggan 2012 [2003]) who, at group and local levels, strive to "address the complex intersections of sexuality with race, class and gender" (Grundy and Smith 2005, 390).

Refugee Integration in Canada

A sociological approach to refugee and refugee integration, rather than a political-legal one, means that the moment that the UN's and UNHCR's obligations of recognizing an individual as a Convention refugee come to an end mark the beginning of the states' of resettlement responsibility to address the refugees' integration needs (Fitzgerald and Arar 2018). Thus, refugees' arrival in their host country brings the state and its immigration and integration policies to the fore.

Most often, legally-sanctioned refugee status in the country of asylum enables refugees to access the governmental and private financial and vocational supports during the initial phases of resettlement and integration. In Canada, the recognized Convention Refugees and Protected Persons enjoy supports that often last up to a maximum of one year and include providing

temporary accommodation, the cost of food, rent, and household utilities and helping in the search for employment. Refugees in Canada are also eligible for Immigrant Loan Program and the Interim Federal Health Care as well as permanent residency status and Canadian citizenship and its ensuing rights. Yet, refugees face several interwoven challenges in their daily lives and integration practices, especially during the first years of their arrival in their host country.

Similar to many immigrant populations, refugees might experience a devaluation of their educational credentials and pre-migration work experience in addition to a weakening, even a loss, of social networks while abruptly engulfed in new linguistic and cultural codes. In contrast to the majority of immigrants, refugees often arrive with limited social, cultural, and financial resources and need distinct policies and programs that address their resettlement and integration needs concerning access to health care, employment services, shelter and accommodation, language classes, and cultural orientations (McKeary and Newbold 2010).

Currently, integration and resettlement policies in most Western countries, including Canada, presume automatic support on the parts of the immigrant families and ethnic communities for newcomers' access to paid labor and housing (Yu et al. 2007). These policies and their underlying premises portray refugees as responsible for integration and move the state and its institutions to the side (Smyth et al. 2010; Erel 2010). These policies, in line with "market-citizenship" (Brodie 1997) as an ideology that ties state membership to individuals' financial resources, reduce state membership to access to legal status and overlook social inequalities (Edwards et al. 2003; Somers 2008).

Brodie (1997), focusing on citizenship and social rights in Canada, argues that under market citizenship and due to a decline of welfare states, most aspects of social rights such as

education, housing, and health care are increasingly made available for purchase in the privatized market. The disconnect between state's agenda on refugees' economic-independence and refugees desire for social belonging, fails to recognize the circular-convertible relation between state-provided social rights, economic success, and the process of social capital accumulation for refugees who arrive with non-existing financial resources, community support, and cultural proficiencies. This recurring gap in policy with regards to refugees' integration requirements affects racialized sexual minorities most markedly because, in addition to navigating the above obstacles, those "persons designated as "Middle Eastern" in origin must navigate a precarious line between inclusion as deserving victim and exclusion as undeserving pariah" (Kyriakides et al. 2018, 61) in the post-9/11 era which has, reprehensibly, conflated the images and meanings of Middle Eastern, Muslim, and, to some extent, refugees with terror and terrorism .

Despite all of this policy shortcomings, I must point out that refugees' decision to leave their home countries and seek asylum when possible, arrival in their host country, and resumption of their lives in safety can be an opportunity for self-discovery, transformation and recreation of life patterns, and even contribution to and support for those family members and friends who have stayed behind in home countries or have been stuck in protracted refugee situations in refugee camps. I argue for the recognition of refugees' agency with all due caution as I am aware that there is a thin line between recognizing refugees' agency and supporting them in becoming independent members of society versus, as in neoliberal market citizenship ideology, assuming that "refugees have the skills, capacity and agency to stand on their own and sustain themselves without" (Easton-Calabria 2018, 1) state and community intervention.

Asylum in Turkey

Gay Iranian men leave Iran for Turkey to seek asylum to the UN's offices because, as neighboring countries, they have geographical access and the financial means of undertaking this relatively short journey. The most important factor, however, is that Iranian citizens do not need a visa to enter Turkey for stays of up to 90 days. Despite fundamental similarities between the two countries with regards to homophobia and discriminations against sexual minorities, it is essential to recognize that, according to my findings, there is now a chain of connections, or what sociologists of migration call ethnic networks (Castles and Loughna 2005), between gay Iranian men who have sought asylum and have been resettled, those awaiting the results of their cases in Turkey, and those gay men who are in Iran and possibly contemplating and considering seeking asylum as an option should their situations worsen in Iran.

Turkey is a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, the country has opted not to subscribe to the 1967 Protocol. This means that Turkey's mandate with regards to providing asylum protection follows the Article 1b of the Convention and is geographically limited to persons who have become refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe, i.e., European citizens only. However, the bulk of "asylum seekers in Turkey originate from non-European states, notably from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan" (Soykan 2012, 37).

Accordingly, the Turkish government has designed its temporary protection system which allows foreigners to register for a residence permit and stay on the basis of open-ended international protection status. Previously, asylum seekers had to register their presence and residence in Turkey with Foreigners' Police and the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM) before submitting asylum applications with the UNHCR. The latter two organizations worked in tandem on processing asylum claims. Currently, and after

the surge of Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey and a lack of resources on the part of the UN, the Turkish government has launched a transition from ASAM-UNHCR to the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) as a central mechanism of processing applications for international protection.

The main repercussion of implementing a temporary protection system rather than subscribing to the 1967 Protocol and providing protection to non-European asylum seekers is the absence of any policies and mechanisms for the short-term or long-term integration of asylum seekers. Soykan (2012, 39) argues that:

> Without the prospect of local integration and rights explicitly guaranteed by law, the recognized non- European refugees are, within the current system, seen by the state as foreigners 'honoured' with the (temporary) protection against deportation, rather than as bearers of international rights.

Homosexuality in Iran

A Brief History

During the second Pahlavi, 1941-1979, modern homophobic psycho-medical discourses on sex and biology were published on a daily basis in magazines and journals as a way to control the population (Najmabadi 2011). Also, anti-regime groups, including Islamists and Marxists, framed homosexuality as a sign of Pahlavi decadence, Western import to pollute Iranian youths, and undermine the masculine soldiers of the nation (Gerami 2003). In the meantime, the state

was moving toward Westernization and neoliberalist values that urged for more individual freedoms to boost the economy and relations with the West.

During the 1970s, Iran further expanded its sociocultural ties with the West through tourism, international political, financial cooperation, and student exchange programs, while inside the country individual citizens had gained limited levels of independence from tight family structures due to changes in the market economy, immigration to urban areas as workers, and more legal support for women's empowerment (Moghissi 2008). In this context, the gay subculture had some space to develop in nightclubs, entertainment industry and among artists in Tehran, while homosexuality was tolerated but not admitted by the state (Afary 2009). Despite economic developments, family was still the main source of regulating individuals and their identities. Homosexuality in urban areas was tolerated under heteronormative politics but was explicitly depicted as abnormality, cultural deviancy, and sin by religious groups that gained power in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

The Islamic Republic has continued similar nationalistic politics while conflating nationalism with Islamic teachings. Religious nationalism in Iran portrays the nation and homeland as female bodies to be protected by men, soldiers of the nation. Islamic nationalism vigorously battles both women's excessive presence in public that threatens their family duties and homosexuality and non- heteronormative gender behaviors. After the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and during the Iran–Iraq war, 1980-1989, new gender and sexual identity categories were forged through framing men as masculine compatriots among leftists and soldier-brothers among Islamists group. Both groups shared the idea of guardianship over country and honor, mainly representing and referring to a female subject (Gerami 2003; Sadeghi 2008).

Homosexuality in Iran's Penal Code

As was mentioned in the opening of this chapter, Iran is among the very few countries where same-sex sexual interactions are punishable by the death penalty. My emphasis on the existence of such a law is not to single out one autonomous and singular factor as the only driver of emigration for gay Iranian men. I argue that this law, and its corollary terrors and implacable discriminations, must be contextualized in Iran's current social, political, economic, and religious turmoils. The following discussion draws on my co-authored paper with Zohreh Bayatrizi (Karimi and Bayatrizi 2018) on male homosexuality in Iran's new penal code.

Previously, according to Iran's penal code, intercourse between two men inclusive of penetration was punished by the death penalty. The punishment for non-penetrative sex was set at 100 lashes unless the active party was non-Muslim and the passive party was Muslim, in which case the non-Muslim penetrator is subject to the death penalty. Currently, however, the Iranian penal code makes a significant new distinction between active and passive partners in male same-sex intercourse. 'Active' men, or "tops", are no longer subject to the death penalty unless they are found to have committed adultery, used coercion, or if they are a non-Muslim penetrating a Muslim man. The passive partner in male same-sex sexual act is stigmatized as a man who has failed masculinity and should be eliminated from society while the active partner is still acting according to masculine norms and is eligible for certain special considerations (see for comparison, Kaufman's (2014) study on gender norms and British identity), except when there are aggravating circumstances such as rape and adultery.

Here resides a clue to the political underpinnings of the penal code in both its old and, especially, new formulations: perhaps underneath the obsession with natural masculinity and its expressions are anxieties about national-Islamic strength. The phallocentric hierarchy of same-

sex sexual acts has particular resonance within a male dominated political structure that is jockeying for positioning within a regional and global hierarchy of nations. Seen from the global and regional geopolitics (Fourcade and Savelsberg 2006), the existence of men who act like women and allow themselves to be penetrated hampers the creation of a homogenous national identity centered around strong, undiluted masculinity.

As Iran grapples with geopolitical tensions over its regional standing, the perceived crisis of masculinity has a particular resonance with punishing gay men, or any individual involved in same-sex sexual interaction for that matter and increasing the likelihood of those who flee discrimination and violence, gay Iranian asylum seekers. As Puar and Rai (2002) show, the war on terrorism brought to the fore a slew of homophobic and racist images that showed Middle Eastern men as sexual deviants and emasculated terrorists. Their supposed failed masculinity underlies their terrorism, which in turn justifies torturing them by sodomy in places like Abu Ghraib (Puar 2011; Puar and Rai 2002; see also Nusair 2008). Ironically, many Muslim countries, Iran included, are themselves accused of homophobia and criticized by Western countries for violating the rights of LGBT individuals. The politics of the western human rights advocacy, especially regarding LGBT rights, has turned the Middle East into a cultural battleground (Dalacoura, 2014), and has created a sense among political leaders there, and in other parts of the non-western world, that gay rights advocacy is the latest tool of western domination, a threat to their sovereignty, and as a carrier of "cultural perversion" (Long, 2004). West's (2008, 311) study highlights the role of the perceived social threats in instigating the deployment of legal violence and death penalty by Middle Eastern states

A country involved in a hot or cold war is likely to have a political culture that depicts the enemy as an implacable foe and endorses killing as necessary for defense or to achieve other

political goals…The logic by which an enemy is constituted as unredeemably wicked and is targeted for death is easily extended to those considered to be internal enemies… We might anticipate that militaristic countries will be more likely to use capital punishment as part of a "war on crime".

CHAPTERS OUTLINE

In chapter 2, *Intimate Relationship Status, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Navigating Access during Fieldwork among Sexual-Racial Minority Refugees in Canada: An Intersectional Methodology*, I contribute to the literature on intersectional methodology by analyzing my research methods and the ways that various categories of difference simultaneously limited and furthered the research process. In doing so I draw on my six-month fieldwork with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Canada and, amidst other factors, focus on the role of marital status, (homo)sexuality, and ethnicity in, respectively, gaining insider status, interacting with gatekeepers, and obtaining signed consent forms. My understanding of intersectional methodology is based on what McCall (2005) defines as an intracategorical approach in which researcher focuses on specific social groups located at the intersections of several categories to reveal the complexities of their lived experiences. To adapt this definition to a more methodologically-applicable approach, I emphasize the use of intracategorical intersectionality in explaining the complexities of conducting research with specific social groups. I will demonstrate the ways power dynamics between the researcher and the researched shift at the intersections of sexuality, marital status, ethnicity, refugee background, gender, and class; I will also argue that power is not a given property of the researcher because research participants, including refugees, might draw on the very same categories of difference to negotiate the power dynamics and control access to insider information.

In chapter 3, *Sexuality and Integration: A Case of Gay Iranian Refugees' Collective Memories and Integration Practices in Canada*, I join scholars who have called for re-conceptualization of integration, not as a category of analysis, but as a category of practice, by paying attention to the ways immigrants and non-immigrants reconstruct their everyday lives in the urban spatiotemporal registers of North American and European cities. I bring sexuality, as an often overlooked factor, to the center of analysis and contribute to the limited literature on sexuality and migration which, to date, has mainly focused on Asian and Latino immigrants. At a theoretical level, in line with the Durkheimian understanding of integration, I put forward and operationalize Maurice Halbwachs' (1992) "collective memory", the shared social frameworks of individual recollections, to analyze individuals' and collectives' reconstruction of their past experiences that inform their daily lives in Canada. To bridge the methodological challenge of choosing between individual or collective units of analysis, I rely on ethnography and interviews to capture refugees' narratives to explore the "direct dialectic and interconnectedness between the two individual and collective levels" (Olick 1999).

In chapter 4, *Limits of Social Capital for Refugee Integration: The Case of Iranian Gay Refugees' Integration in Canada*, I argue that overreliance on refugees' deployment of social capital for integration has grave shortcomings for refugees' mental health and sense of belonging. I suggest that examining racialized LGBT refugees' social networks and social interactions best reveals the limits of communitarian social capital for integration at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and class. I make two interrelated arguments in a critique of conventional theories of social capital. First, I highlight the heterogeneity of ethnic groups and their disparities in supporting individual members' integration due to differences in gender, class, time of residence in host country, age, and language skills. In this paper, I add sexuality and

gender identity expression to such intersectional analyses. Second, I argue that settlement policies informed by social capital theory minimize the state's responsibility in guaranteeing access to rights (Smyth et al. 2010; Erel 2010). This overreliance on social capital is particularly detrimental to racialized LGBT refugees who arrive with minimal financial and cultural capital, and face marginalization within diasporic groups and white, mainstream LGBT communities (Kahn et al. 2017; Adam and Rangel 2015) that rely on "homonormative" (Duggan 2012) assimilationist equal rights agendas.

In chapter 5, *Transnational Queer Refugees: Gay Iranian Men Navigating Refugee Status and Cross-Border Ties in Canada*, I will demonstrate that refugees are not entirely detached from their border-traversing communities since they participate in various forms, broadly defined, of transnational activities. I argue that being neither full members of their ethnic communities nor the mainstream white LGBT groups, gay Iranian men, as a sexual-racial minority group in Canada, draw on their shared past experiences of life in Iran and Turkey and their resources and networks in Canada to manage their transnational ties with their families and their limited transnational activism. My goal is to connect transnational, forced, and queer migration literature to analyze gay Iranian refugees' transnational practices and connect transnational forced migration studies to the wider body of social theory by drawing on Bourdieusian social theory (Bourdieu 1977; 1984; 1986; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and the concepts of habitus, practice, capital, and field. A thematic outline my findings in this chapter include: individual and structural factors that create transnational perspectives among gay Iranian men while in Iran; ties with families and friends in home and transition countries; the use of the Internet and diasporic media; and the limited lobbying capacity in Canada to accelerate asylum processes in Turkey. I will conclude my discussions by urging for empirical transnational-

refugee studies informed by de-nationalized perspectives that account for the role of structural factors, underline the importance of transnational social relations, and shed light on intra-group diversities at the intersection of sexuality, class, race, migration status and other relevant categories.

CHAPTER 2: MARITAL STATUS, SEXUALITY, AND ETHNICITY IN DOING FIELDWORK AMONG SEXUAL-RACIAL MINORITY REFUGEES IN CANADA: AN INTERSECTIONAL METHODOLOGY

Abstract

Feminist researchers from across disciplines have called for consolidation of intersectionality as a methodology. In this article, I draw on my six-month fieldwork with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Canada to apply intersectional methodology to my analyses of doing research among refugees as representative of vulnerable populations. I focus on relations between marital status and insider status, sexuality and internal gatekeepers, and ethnicity and obtaining signed consent forms. I demonstrate the utility of intracategorical intersectional methodology in enabling researchers to reflect upon the ways that participants' markers of identity intersect with those of the researchers'. In conclusion, I argue that intersectional methodology challenges any static definition of insiderness vs. outsiderness in qualitative research, captures intra-group diversities, and provides researchers with nuanced and non-hegemonic analyses of the research process.

KEYWORDS: intersectionality, methodology, marital status, (homo)sexuality, refugee, ethnicity

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s constructivism and critical research paradigms have given rise to developments in qualitative sociological research that often through feminist methodologies explore the impacts of gender, class, and ethnicity in conducting research, building trust and rapport, and gaining insider access to target populations (Stewart 1972; Oakley 2013[1981]; Phoenix 1994; Beoku-Betts 1994; Creswell 2012[1998]; Naples 2013; Foonow and Cook 2006; Berliner and Falen 2008; Trahan 2011; Berger 2015). More recently feminist scholars have called for the expansion and incorporation of sexuality, nationality, age, and other relevant categories in methodological analyses and research design (Kim-Puri 2005). This ever-expanding inclusion of inter-connected categories of difference complicates the methodological challenges of addressing which factors we should include in our analyses and how we understand the roles these factors play throughout the research process.

To address such difficulties in conducting empirical research, some feminist researchers from across disciplines have called for consolidation of intersectionality not only as a theoretical framework, but also a methodology (Nash 2008; McCall 2005; Yuval-Davis 2006; Hancock 2007; Choo and Ferree 2010; MacKinnon 2010; Cho et al., 2013). Accordingly, intersectionality is defined as understanding race, gender, class, ethnicity, age, and other empirically relevant categories as mutually constitutive of identities and social inequalities (Crenshaw 2018[1989]; Collins 2015). Adopting intersectionality as methodology requires its adaption to various context-specific queries and development of methods that attend to mutuality and the interactive character of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and age among other factors. Yet, the development of intersectionality as methodology, i.e., “the development of research designs and methods that can

capture effectively all of the tenets of intersectionality theory" (Hancok 2007, 74), remain under-researched.

In this article, I contribute to the literature on intersectional methodology by analyzing my research methods and the ways that various categories of difference simultaneously limited and furthered the research process. In doing so I draw on my six-month fieldwork with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Canada and, amidst other factors, focus on the role of marital status[1] (Takeda 2012; Beoku-Betts 1994), (homo) sexuality (Styles, 1979; Plummer 1995; Carrier 1999; Goode 1999; Cupples 2002; La pastina 2006; Irwin 2006; Walby 2010; Diprose et al., 2013), and ethnicity in, respectively, gaining insider status, interacting with gatekeepers, and obtaining signed consent forms. My approach should not be taken as singling out factors for analytical purposes but as an attempt to bring the under-researched impacts of marital status and sexuality to the center of methodological analyses and to underline the relativity of every encounter with participants. My understanding of intersectional methodology is based on what McCall (2005) defines as an intracategorical approach in which researcher focuses on specific social groups located at the intersections of several categories to reveal the complexities of their lived experiences. To adapt this definition to a more methodologically-applicable approach, I emphasize the use of intracategorical intersectionality in explaining the complexities of *conducting* research with specific social groups. I will demonstrate that shared identities as well as categories of difference simultaneously facilitate and complicate, even prevent, access to participants depending on the positionality of researcher at the time of interaction with participants.

[1] I use marital status as an umbrella term to refer to verities of intimate partnership status.

Further, by analyzing the methodological challenges of doing fieldwork among gay Iranian refugees in Canada, I take intersectional methodology beyond intersectionality's traditional application to race and gender in studies of women of color, often in the American context (Hancok 2007). On the one hand, limited studies on women of color have included sexuality in their theoretical analyses of inequalities (see for example Collins 2000; 2004; Moore 2011); on the other hand, numerous studies have explored the difficulties of conducting interviews and ethnography among ethnic majority sexual minorities (Carrier 1999; Bruni 2006; McDonald 2013) as well as refugees as representatives of vulnerable populations (Mackenzie 2007; Hynes 2003; Block et al. 2012). To date, these bodies of research remain disconnected. In this paper, taking insiderness as epistemological () point on a continuum (Merton 1972; see also Labaree 2002), I will demonstrate the ways power dynamics between the researcher and the researched shift at the intersections of sexuality, marital status, ethnicity, refugee background, gender, and class; I will also argue that power is not a given property of the researcher because research participants, including refugees, might draw on the very same categories of difference to negotiate the power dynamics and control access to insider information (Lammers 2007; Kanuha 2000).

I will start my analyses by engaging with the scholarly discussions on intersectionality to shed light on intracategorical intersectionality's usefulness as a methodology in qualitative research. Second, I will discuss my six-month fieldwork with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa and my experiences of conducting ethnography and 35 male-to-male semi-structured interviews. Third, I will connect the intersectional methodology with the scholarly literature on trust and insider-outsider status in qualitative research. Here I argue that the fluidity of the intersections and identities, those of the researched and the researcher

(Christensen and Jensen 2012), challenge embracing a static position of insider or outsider researcher (Adler and Adler 1987). Fourth, I will thematically lay out my discussions on marital status and trust; sexuality and internal gatekeepers; and ethnicity and obtaining signed consent.

INTERSECTIONALITY AS METHODOLOGY

The underlying ontological thread in constructivism and critical research paradigms such as feminism is the understanding that social phenomena are produced and reproduced through social interactions (Bryman 2001). In response to the questions about the modalities of getting to know the knowledge that we assume to exist, these paradigms often take interpretivist epistemological standpoints as a way of grasping the meanings and implications of individuals' lived experiences; thus encouraging researchers to explore the subjective meanings of social phenomena and interactions (Blaikie 2000). This exploration requires certain methods, e.g., interviews, surveys, and observation. It is the methodology that constitutes the research strategy, e.g., qualitative or quantitative, and examines the resources and limitations of the methods and practices used in acquiring the knowledge. It is then sociologists', among other qualitative researchers, duty to recognize and reflect upon the ways that interactions in research contexts along with their actions and worldviews influence their findings and their participants' responses (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Intersectionality presents a unique methodological commitment "to assessing the interplay between human agency and systemic structures, and center[s] the tensions and contradictions of our lived experiences" (Perry 2009, 235) in the assessments of social phenomena and interactions. In other words, an intersectional methodology not only analyses the relations between structures and society but also examines the dynamics and forces that play a role in

producing social phenomena and knowledge (McKinnon 2010). Intersectionality's potential in capturing the interactive dynamics of sexuality, gender, ethnicity, class, age, nationality and other categories of difference, presents researchers with a more comprehensive tool to examine the moments in which knowledge was produced and methods through which knowledge was acquired (Hancock 2007). Intersectional methodology thus attends to a "more nuanced sociological understanding of how social structures and cultural representations interconnect" (Collins 2015, 5) and moves beyond the addition of multiple independent factors "toward a multiplication and thus transformation of their main effects into interactions" (Choo and Ferree 2012, 131). Deploying intersectional methodology is not an easy task due to the inflating numbers of categories of difference that are included in research design and analyses. Thus, researchers need to develop a more rigorous methodological approach (Nash 2008) that responds to research goals and to the contradictions that characterize intersectional knowledge projects (Cho et al., 2013). McCall (2005) and Hancock (2007) have outlined two resolutions as a way forward.

McCall (2005) has categorized intersectionality into three categories of anticategorical, intercategorical, and intracategorical. Depending on the research questions and goals these categories, respectively, address deconstructing categories of difference, comparing relationships of inequality among social groups, and focusing on a particular social group at intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, marital status, age, and other relevant categories of difference. Intracategorical approach to intersectional research is vital in capturing "the distinct and frequently conflicting dynamics that shape[d] the lived experience of" (McCall 2005, 1780) multiply-marginalized groups. This approach often relies on individuals' narratives to draw out power relations and social locations embodied in these individuals' lived experience. A principal

aim in studying social groups at intersections of several master statuses is also to reveal intra-group diversities. I suggest that intracategorical approach best enables researchers to reflect upon the power dynamics within the target social group and lived experiences of individual members, including the researcher, and the knowledge that is produced during fieldwork.

Hancock (2007) takes intersectionality as an approach to conducting holistic empirical research on the cross-cutting effects of the categories of difference in the lives of a particular social group. Hancock underlines that intersectional analysis is not based on an unlimited number of categories but that it is bound to empirical relations between categories within specific contexts. Thus researchers should avoid predetermining a set of categories for analytical purposes and be open to the categories that emerge during interactions and knowledge production. These categories are ambivalent, and their role in limiting or facilitating access to the field is tied to the ways they intersect with other categories. Drawing on McCall (2005) and Hancock (2007), it is thus possible to design research informed by intersectionality, empirically establish the existing categories of difference, and use the intersectional methodology to explore the interactive power dynamics and diversities within a social group inclusive of the researcher.

Traditionally, feminist researchers and refugee studies scholars have emphasized the importance of building trusting relations with research participants and using qualitative methods such as case study, narrative analysis, interviews, life histories, and ethnography (Oakley 2013[1981]; Eastmond 2007) to flesh out the complexities of social life. Connecting these methods with intersectionality, McCall (2005, 1781) argues that "personal narratives and single-group studies derive their strength from the partial crystallization of social relations in the identities of particular social groups". Indeed, it is in these narratives that various categories, their intersections, and their relations with social structures emerge.

STUDY BACKGROUND

I must begin this section by writing myself into the study (Fonow and Cook 2005). As a young researcher of Iranian background, I immigrated to Canada to pursue my Ph.D. studies. While in Iran, I had gay friends who had left Iran to seek asylum in Turkey. I kept in touch with them throughout the years and, once I realized that most Iranian gay refugees are resettled in Canada and the United States, I decided to write my doctoral dissertation on their daily lives in Iran and their experiences of resettlement to Canada. My discussions in this paper are based on a six-month fieldwork with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Canada. These men seek asylum at the closest UN offices to Iran located in Turkey and are then resettled, often, to Canada. In my research, I explored Iranian gay men's experiences of migration, asylum, and resettlement in Canada at the intersections of sexuality, race, gender, class, and nationality. My findings demonstrated that Iranian gay men's interactions with various social groups in Canada are shaped disparately at the intersection of multiple categories of difference. For instance, their struggles in building shared identities with different Canadian gay communities are hindered due to their ethnicity and nationality while gender and sexuality inform their interactions, or lack thereof, with Iranian Diasporas.

Participant recruitment in Canada proved particularly challenging because of the limited number of potential participants residing in Canada, their unwillingness to participate in academic research because of their experiences of asylum seeking, and our shared nationality-ethnicity which signaled possible breach of confidentiality and a possibility of exposing participants' sexual orientation to their families back in Iran. To counter these difficulties, I used

snowball sampling to find participants in Toronto, Vancouver, and Ottawa. I reached out to a community-activist friend who had been resettled to the United States and asked for my contact information and project description to be forwarded to potential participants and upon having their expression of interest, I communicated with them through social media and telephone.

Snowball sampling was my method of participant recruitment since I was working with a social group that was multiply-stigmatized at the intersections of sexuality and gender identities among Iranian diaspora and at intersections of migration status, ethnicity, and nationality in Canada. In the absence of system information and under feelings of fear and distrust, the chain of referrals that depended on participants' network of friends enabled me to gain access to this population in three different localities (Cohen and Arieli 2011; Mackenzie et al., 2007; Jaconbson and Landu 2003). Nevertheless, I recognize the limits of my sampling method which is susceptible to exclude individuals who were not members of my network or were excluded due to gatekeepers' bias. This limitation may have impacted my understanding of intra-group diversities (Hancock 2007). All participants were born and raised in Iran, had a university education, except for one case, and self-identified as gay. Participants' age range was 22 to 37. To collect data, I developed and used an interview guide which included questions such as:

- How were the first days in Canada? (explore: support network, job, housing, language, Canadian social context, etc.)
- How is life now in Canada? (explore: support network, job, housing, language, Iranian diaspora, Canadian LGBT community, family back home, etc.)
- How do you see your future in Canada?

I started my fieldwork during the fall of 2016 and interviewed eight participants in Vancouver. Based on an initial data analysis I realized the need to make changes to my interview guide and reconsider my openness to going to participants' homes for observation and interviews. Although some feminist qualitative researchers encourage adoption of intimate methods of data collection to capture accurate and less exploitive accounts (Irwin 2006; see Carrier 1999 and Goode 1999 for their accounts of sexual involvement with participants), my experience showed that researchers must be cautious with intimate methods of data collection. As I will discuss in the following sections, my presence in participants' homes could miscommunicate our interaction intentions, put either of the researched or myself as the target of sexualization, and derail the research activities (Arendell 1997; Saguy 2002; La Pastina 2006; Walby 2010; Bucerius 2013). After revisiting my research plans, I worked with 11 more participants in Toronto and Ottawa during the winter of 2017 and conducted observations and interviews in public spaces of cafes, parks, malls, and workplaces. I attended one gathering at one of my participants' home in celebration of Persian New Year but did not conduct any interviews.

I chose semi-structured interviews as primary methods to elicit respondents' narratives. Feminist researchers and scholars of refugee studies emphasize that participants' narratives, collected through various methods of narrative inquiry, life history, and semi-structured interviews, expand the scope of possible responses and allow participants to express themselves freely without being obstructed (Creswell 2012 [1998]; McCall 2005; Eastmond 2007; Voutira and Dona 2007). In conducting in-depth interviews, I sought feedback on my interview guide from two community members to formulate community-informed questions that centralized refugees and did not evoke memories of suffering and persecution (Voutira and Dona 2007). In

line with intersectional methodology, I aimed to capture contextualized life stories with a particular focus on how sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and class were referred to during fieldwork and throughout diverse narratives of "refugee experience" (Eastmond 2007). Although personal narratives may not adequately capture and explain all crucial factors impacting social interactions, individuals' understandings of these social interactions are essential for interpreting and analyzing their choices (Evergeti and Zontini 2006). These experiences are always situationally remembered and narrated in light of present and future life. It is noteworthy that except in one interview which was in English, I conducted interviews in participants' native language, i.e., Farsi, to mitigate harmful power dynamics stemming from second-language skills (Edwards 1998; Block et al., 2012; Takeda 2012) even though all participants had a good command of English language.

INSIDER VS. OUTSIDER

Much has been written on building trust and close relations with target populations to gain access to the scientifically valid insider knowledge (Labaree 2002) which is somewhat inaccessible to outsiders and is to be found in the backstage of individuals' interactions (Goffman 2002[1959]). Merton (1972) defines the outsider-insider divide as an epistemological issue due to the differentials in accessing knowledge and the types of knowledge accessed. He writes, "insider truths that counter Outsider untruths and Outsider truths that counter Insider untruths" (Merton 1972, 11). Based on this divide, Adler and Adler (1987) suggest that researchers are either peripheral to the target group or active members who can choose to partially or fully commit to the group's values. Merton (1972, 22), however, emphasizes that "we

are all, of course, both Insiders and Outsiders, members of some groups and, sometimes derivatively, not of others" because it is "the crucial fact of social structure that individuals have not a single status but a status set: a complement of variously interrelated statuses which interact to affect both their behavior and perspectives". Anthropologists and feminists have also underlined that researchers should not assume a totality in their researcher positions given that social boundaries are permeable (Oakley 2013[1981]). Geertz (1973) urges the researchers to simultaneously experience the *near* through belonging to groups and the *distant* by recognizing the categories that make them outsiders.

Present day qualitative researchers from across disciplines recognize that our insider-outsider identities are fluid products of rapport-building and power negotiations that, at any moment during the fieldwork, put us somewhere on a continuum ranging from a stranger to a familiar native (Beoku-Betts 1994; Lammers 2007; Walby 2010; Takeda 2012; Bucerius 2013; McDonald 2013). Intersectional methodology not only confirms that traditional ethnic- or gender-matching strategies are insufficient since they are based on static understandings of identities (Yuval-Davis 1994; Carrington 2008), but it also reminds us that categories of difference act in tandem in marking our insider-outsider status. During early stages of my fieldwork, I was expecting that I will have easy access to insider knowledge because of my shared similarities with my participants regarding ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, class, and age. I was aware that respondents' experiences of asylum-seeking and wait times for refugee applications in Turkey might put a rift between participants and I. However, I soon learned that I could not single out any categories of difference as ultimate marker of insiderness or outsiderness. Similar to Beoku-Betts' (1994) fieldwork experience, I realized that categories of difference operated in combination to both facilitate and complicate, even prevent, access to

participants. For example, shared nationality, ethnicity, language, marital status, and sexuality facilitated my access to participants while shared nationality, ethnicity, and refugee backgrounds often complicated obtaining signed consent forms.

I argue that intersectional methodology must draw our attention to the ways participants' sexuality, gender, ethnicity and other markers of identity intersect with those of the researchers' (Archer 2002) and shape "the nature of researcher-researched relationship, which, in turn, affects the information that participants are willing to share" (Berger 2013, 220). Since researcher, for some time and to some extent, becomes part of the researched group, it is reasonable to account for the tensions and contradictions that result from the researcher-researched interactions (Choo and Ferree 2012; Cho et al., 2013). During my fieldwork it was evident that the intersecting effects of the categories of difference also impacted my strategies, actions, and verbal and physical expressions which in turn would affect participants' responses (Walby 2010), erotic desires (Grenz 2005; De Craene 2017), and their willingness to (dis)continue participation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This multiplication of interactions between categories of difference had two main implications for my research: first, my participants and I were co-producing knowledge and determining interpretations of this knowledge; second, I could not predetermine which factors would play constructive or debilitating roles in rapport building (Bucerius 2014). For instance, I had not thought about the role of marital status which proved decisive in building trust and gaining access to information.

Thus, I refrain from identifying with a fixed research position as outsider or insider or somewhere in between not only because such position is fluid and dynamic but also because it is partly determined by participants with some of whom I was a trusted educated friend asked for

advice on career and personal matters (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994) while with some others I was merely a Ph.D. student-researcher and a potential sexual partner.

MARITAL STATUS AND RAPPORT

I began my research on Iranian gay refugees' resettlement and integration experiences at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, class, and migration background. I adopted questions such as how can discrimination/prejudice against sexual-racial minority refugees be addressed in host communities? Do sexual-racial minority refugees require a unique program that addresses their resettlement needs regarding language and professional training, housing, and health issues? How effective is Canadian-Orientation-Abroad pre-departure training provided by Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in Turkey and what is its impact on settlement outcomes? Initially, I had insufficient knowledge of the high levels of depression and isolation experienced by Iranian gay men. I was under-prepared for exploring such issues and for undertaking the consequences of researching populations that find themselves at the margins (Chaitin 2003; Block et al., 2012) of Canadian society, Iranian diaspora, and mainstream white-majority LGBT groups. I responded to and filed a lengthy ethics form for the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board in preparation for *predicting* and managing possible harms to my informants, however, the form was exclusively concerned with informants' safety and anonymity as well as the type and scope of the collected data (Haggerty 2004) rather than including and providing guidelines on any available mental health support resources for social scientist researchers. To make ethics of writing and responsibilities of publishing more complicated (Jacobs-Huey 2002; Ellis 2007; Taylor 2011; Damianakis and Woodford 2012), two months

after I had finished the first phase of my fieldwork, one of the men who I had expected to participate in the next phase of this study committed suicide in Vancouver.

Ironically, however, my participants' social isolation played a major role in their willingness to share their intimate stories with me after both my participants and I had used various strategies to build trust. This sense of isolation was rooted in being cut from families back in Iran, losing friends throughout the asylum and resettlement process, and discovering that, in contrast to their expectations, their love relationships had become "*none-existing*" as one participant in Toronto said:

I'm confused with [gay] people here. What are all that LGBT movies that they produce about? I have dated a few Canadians, and I am baffled by how individualistic and selfish they are! I am not sure if they understand what family is!

This topic was repeatedly discussed in all interviews and among participants during a gathering at one of participants' apartment in celebration of the Persian New Year. In the latter occasion one of the invitees, who was also one of my participants, said:

I was on Grindr for a while, and you don't know how many times they told me to go back and bomb your own country as soon as they realized I'm Iranian ... on Grindr or in clubs they think they can say whatever!

It seemed to me that in combination with our shared ethnicity, language, gender, and sexuality, marital status (see Takeda 2012 on methodologically-restrictive role of marital status), i.e., being single for long periods at a time and unable to *"have stable relationships with Canadian gay men",* was playing a major unexpected role in ascribing me as an insider who can

understand the difficulties of living in Canada as an Iranian gay man (note the shift in status from Iranian gay refugee to Iranian gay man) (Hancock 2007). Throughout the fieldwork participants asked me various questions about my personal life, e.g., which city in Iran I was from, how I immigrated to Canada, and ties with my parents and siblings and I had to divulge some information about myself to gain their trust (Oakley 2013[1981]; Walby 2010; Berger 2013). I was never asked if I am married or have ever been in a relationship during my life in Canada. From among 19 respondents, all were single at the time of my fieldwork, except one participant who was dating a white Canadian gay man for over two years. There was a consensus among participants that "*It seems that only we [Iranians] understand and want that family-type lifestyle"*. I did not explicitly talk about my marital status with participants because I feared that having been in a long-term relationship with a white man at the time of fieldwork would jeopardize my access to participants' stories (Bruni 2006; McDonald 2013). Being defined by participants as yet another Iranian gay man who is presumably single not by choice, had both facilitating and challenging methodological consequences.

On the one hand, my ascribed status at the intersections of marital status, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity had a "demarginalizing" (MacKinnon 2013) effect in the sense that it transformed my identity from an outsider at the margins of Iranian gay community in Canada to an included insider who not only had similar experiences of life in Canada but also, as a researcher, had the ability to listen, document, and communicate these stories and grievances with the wider public. I had thus become a witness, and our conversations with participants had become moments of raising grievances (Roberts 2014). Qualitative researchers have already demonstrated multiply-marginalized groups' willingness to participate in research to share their stories, sometimes in the form of confessions (Grenz 2005), because they do not have access to enough people in their

circles who are open to listening and documenting their life stories (Patai 1991); listeners who become “the minor historian for people who otherwise would have no history” (Bucerius 2013, 698).

On the other hand, my ascribed status at the intersections of marital status, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity indicated strong similarities and less power inequality between participants and me as a group (McCall 2005). This brought about expectations of reciprocity and friendship which, at times, further complicated the difficulties of data collection. I found myself choosing and moving between an ethical duty to respond to courtesies and warmth, an academic obligation to maintain intellectual distance to collect data (Roberts 2014; Bucerius 2013; Merton 1972), and a personal instinct to protect my integrity without signaling wrong messages. Finding the right response to participants' stories filled with elements of mental distress and physical abuse - torture in one case - was challenging since I had to maintain rapport through a display of compassionate understanding while also keeping a poker face to preclude participants' mental-emotional attachment to me as a result of disclosing their very intimate experiences. During the interviews and gatherings, I could sense that participants' comments on loneliness and isolation were mixed with erotic desires and projections of their needs onto me (Grenz 2005) since they saw me as a compassionate listener who is potentially sexually and erotically available. One participant, for example, brought up some of his sexual encounters in Canada and finished his short monologue saying “*but I never imagined myself being in long-term relations with those types of guys! I always see myself with … some cultural similarities, someone like yourself”.* In the following section, I will discuss how, in several occasions, the cross-cutting influences of categories of difference, gender and sexuality, in particular, forged power dynamics (Choo and Ferree 2010) that put me in a vulnerable position and restricted my

access to certain group members. In particular, I will delineate on one interaction which best represents a moment of ethical complexity with regards to gatekeeping and data collection.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND THE INTERNAL GATEKEEPER

I found participants through a mutual friend and snowball sampling. Coincidently, I had mutual friends from Iran with four of the recruited participants in Canada. My sampling method of using friendship contacts made it futile to evade the questions about my sexuality. Several times, both before and during the meetings with participants, I was asked "*are you, gay, yourself?"* or *"[name removed] told me you are gay too, guys know each other, no?"* In contrast to La Pastina (2006) who hid his sexual orientation during fieldwork, my answer was positive because of several reasons. Previous research shows that shared sexual orientation, in combination with other factors, facilitates rapport and access to community knowledge in working with sexual minorities (Roberts 2014; Homfray 2008; Plummer 1995). Also, from the beginning of the research, I had realized that my participants had traces of distrust towards my project because of their refugee backgrounds and experiences with asylum and judicial systems. This meant any vague answer to their questions would damage the trust relations. Also, I could not use predetermined answers such as "I have slept with all kinds of people" (see Walby 2010) to avoid a direct response because I was aware that, according to participants' and my cultural values, such answers might depict me as promiscuous and not respected. The intersecting effect of sampling method, sexuality, and ethnic culture (Choo and Ferree 2010) limited my options in addressing participants' inquiries on my sexuality and on several occasions put participants at an advantage. One of them used his power to play the role of an internal gatekeeper (Ortiz 2004) to block my access to three of his friends who had previously accepted to participate in the study.

While the primary concern of feminist researchers working with vulnerable populations is to diminish power inequality between the researcher and the researched to preclude any harm to participants (McKenzie et., 2007; Ellis 2007; Irwin 2006; Guillemin and Gillam 2004; Bell 2002), the ways researcher may be harmed or abused are severely under-researched (Diprose et al., 2013; Bucerius 2013; Grenz 2005). During the initial phase of fieldwork in Vancouver, I was invited to participants' homes to conduct the interviews. Although I was aware of the risks of being alone with participants in their homes (Takeda 2012; Irwin 2006), I once I accepted the invitation. This participant was much older than me and had *"lived as a straight married man*" in Iran, as he said. During the interview, I discovered that he was of a lower-middle class and minority Arab ethnic background from south of Iran. His experiences at the intersections of ethnicity, age, and previous marital status were of great importance to my research findings, however, the combination of these factors gave rise to expressions of patriarchal masculinity aimed at domination of the interview and the ensuing inappropriate text messages and sexual requests (Arendell 1997; Archer 2002; Diprose et al., 2013; Pini 2005; Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001).

> Participant: Where are you from? Tehran, no?
>
> Me: Yes, but my grandparent moved there from another…
>
> Participant: [laugh] does not matter, you have a different life in Tehran… life in the south of Iran is very different, tough…
>
> Me: I guess, I have been there though! Your experiences…

> Participant: You have been there for a few days. I lived there. It is tough; I lived in poverty, and did not have access to the internet when I was younger… I followed the traditions and got married like a man; we almost had a kid… one day I realized that that life was not for me and got a divorce. I found gay friends there… but was attacked once by some gang people in a park…

The above excerpt from my interview with this participant shows my attempts to alleviate the tension in the conversation and the participants' drive to validate his power position at the intersections of gender, ethnicity, age, class, and experiences of heterosexual marriage. It seemed that overcoming the burdens of a marginalized life at the intersections of these factors had endowed him with characteristics of Iranian patriarchal hegemonic masculinity while he invoked my age and education, my life in capital city, and my supposedly middle-class background, all of which could be symbols of agreeable life, to ascribe me with status of subordinate masculinity (Connell and Connell 2005). I left the interview feeling intimidated and conflicted. After a few hours, however, he started sending me messages implying sexual requests. I tried to neutralize the intentions behind his texts by replying in nonsexual and indifferent tone because I was afraid that upon facing a cold rejection he might ask his friends to boycott my research. After two days and as the content and tone of his messages became more direct and pressing, I asked him to stop any further contacts with me. In a matter of few hours, three of his friends cancelled their participation in the project. After this incident, I decided not to conduct any interviews while alone with the participant in their homes which resulted in losing a few participants.

As it was mentioned earlier, snowball sampling limits researchers' access to certain individuals due to gatekeepers' bias against the researcher or individual community members. Any tension with participants, who also bring in more participants, exacerbates the magnitudes of such limit regarding access to the field and knowledge production (McKeganey and Bloor 1991; Reeves 2010; Bucerius 2013). In my project, my participant invoked several categories of difference to put himself in the position of power and limit my access to participants. While some qualitative researchers have argued that the gestures and attitudes of sexuality amongst men who have sex with men are not determined by the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity (Dowsett et al. 2008; see also Walby 2010), I underline the insufficiency of analyzing sexuality or gender identities as independent factors and emphasize the importance of intersectional methodology to examine the interactive nature of forces that produce social interactions (MacKinnon 2010).

ETHNICITY AND CONSENT

Indeed, the application of the intersectional methodology to research on multiply-marginalized groups has yet to include refugees and researchers' experiences of doing research among them (Fonow and Cook 2005). Refugee studies scholars have explored numerous intersecting issues in working with refugees including consent, confidentiality, trust and mistrust, harms, and human rights and social justice (Hynes 2003; Mackenzie et al., 2007; Eastmond 2007; Block et al., 2012; Raghallaigh 2013). These studies mostly take refugee as a homogenous category and fall short of discussing the issues mentioned above at the intersection of the researched-researcher's ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and other empirically relevant factors.

As I mentioned earlier, my ascribed status at the intersections of marital status, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity facilitated my access to participants and their stories. However, this process of gaining trust and collecting data had several complications particularly around obtaining signed consent forms and confidentiality. Similar to many other refugee groups, my participants had developed a sense of distrust throughout the asylum and resettlement process towards clinicians, agency workers, and their community representatives. My participants were adamant in inspecting my research project and my intentions, and in refusing to sign any consent forms for their participation in the research. In a sense, they did not want to provide any handwritten documents as evidence of their involvement in my study even though they allowed me to voice-record the interviews. My participants' concerns around how I would (mis)use their signatures, and their stories were also informed by ethnic and national cultures. Primarily, due to the absence of social research at societal or community levels and the absence of liberal-democratic procedures governing citizens' rights in Iran (Karimi 2018), the concept of voluntary and informed consent as defined and required by many ethics boards in academia in the western world was far from familiar to my participants (Ellis et al. 2007; Hugman et al., 2011). I once asked one of my participants to read and sign the consent form, but he responded "*I do not need to read these things! You said this about my life and refugee experiences, and I am here*". There were, however, a few participants who were familiar with the concepts of privacy rights and informed consent after years of living in Canada and handling bureaucratic procedures, yet they refused to sign the consent forms.

Second, because of our shared ethnic and national backgrounds and my ties to Iran, participants were worried about the increased risks of their signatures and stories being leaked to their families back in Iran. The contradiction between refusing to sign consent forms and

allowing me to record the interviews made me ask myself if my participants would have discredited the consent forms had I been of a different racial or national background. The literature on Iranian diaspora and my own experiences of conducting research with Iranian immigrants attest to the fact that because of decades of socio-political instabilities and systematic corruptions Iranians suffer from mutual distrust and socio-political commitment which has resulted in Iranian immigrants' skepticism and distrust, particularly towards other Iranian nationals (Mostofi 2003). In a similar vein, other researchers have also underlined the ways that ethnic matching may indeed present the researcher with more dilemmas ranging from expectations of commitment to target groups' traditional norms (Beoku-Betts 1994) to unwillingness to participate in the study because of prejudice towards co-ethnics or generalized trust towards outsider researchers who have no local links to the target community (Hall 2004; Sin 2007; Torngren and Tgeh 2018).

In sum, shared ethnicity and nationality combined with sexuality, age, and gender facilitated data collection while shared ethnicity and nationality combined with refugee experiences challenged obtaining consent forms and exploration of issues related to political matters. These contradictory effects of the intersecting categories of difference are paramount in intersectional methodology as it requires researchers to be alert to the need for intersectional analysis of interactions of categories of difference instead of approaching ethnicity, gender, refugee backgrounds, and class as independent analytical factors (Choo and Ferree 2010).

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I drew on my six-month fieldwork with gay Iranian refugees in Canada to contribute to feminist studies that have called for the expansion and incorporation of sexuality,

nationality, age, and other relevant categories in intersectional methodological analyses and research design. I specifically focused on marital status, sexuality, and ethnicity to discuss issues of insider-outsider, internal gatekeepers, and trust and obtaining consent forms. Assuming that ethnographers to some extent are or become part of their study group, I pursued to demonstrate the utility of intracategorical intersectional methodology in enabling researchers to reflect upon the ways that participants' markers of identity intersect with those of the researchers', and upon power dynamics and the knowledge that is produced. Intracategorical intersectional methodology challenges any static definition of insiderness vs. outsiderness and adds to a long tradition of scholarly works from across disciplines that have argued for the fluidity of identities and the necessity of accounting for various factors that inform researchers' insider-outsider status.

Further, intersectionality as methodology requires the development of context-specific methods that attend to the mutuality and the interactive character of race, gender, class, ethnicity, refugee backgrounds, and age amidst other factors. Above all intersectional methodology cautions researchers to be mindful of the unexpected categories of difference that may emerge during fieldwork. We thus need more accounts of the ways that categories of difference emerge and the ways the researched and the researcher draw on the intersectional effect of these categories to pursue their goals during research. These accounts enable us to capture the diversities within social groups such as refugees, sexual minorities, and ethnic minorities as well as contributing to our understanding of the effects of categories of difference in developing all tenets of the intersectional theory.

CHAPTER 3: SEXUALITY AND INTEGRATION: A CASE OF GAY IRANIAN REFUGEES' COLLECTIVE MEMORIES AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES IN CANADA

ABSRACT

During the past two decades, Canada has accepted hundreds of LGBT asylum seekers, including gay Iranian men. Sociologists of sexualities and migration have yet to study this group as immigrants whose sexualities play a central role in their social interactions, immigration, and integration practices. Taking integration as a category of practice and relying on Halbwachs's theory of collective memory, I provide an empirical study of integration practices of gay Iranian refugees in Canada. I draw on 32 interviews with gay Iranian refugees to analyse their interactions with Canadian society at large, the Canadian gay community, and Iranian Diaspora. My findings indicate that memories play the role of proxies that inform gay Iranian refugees' interactions in Canada at the intersection of race-ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and nationality.

KEYWORDS: Integration; sexuality; collective memory; refugees; LGBT; Canada

INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades, Canada has welcomed hundreds of LGBT asylum seekers. Gay Iranian men make up a noticeable proportion of this category of refugees in Canada.[2] While the number of LGBT asylum claimants in the West is increasing each year, sociologists of sexualities and migration studies have yet to study this group not solely as refugees, but also as immigrants whose sexualities play a central role in their social interactions, immigration, and integration practices (Kahn and Alessi 2017; Akin 2017). In this paper, I focus on this latter theme. My goal is to deploy sexuality as an analytical lens to shed light on diversities in integration practices, underline the role of power relations around sexuality in regulating integration, and, thus, highlight the insufficiency of the ethnic lens in studying migration and integration.

In writing this article I join scholars who have called for re-conceptualization of integration, not as a category of analysis but as a category of practice, by paying attention to the ways immigrants and non-immigrants reconstruct their everyday lives in the urban spatiotemporal registers of North American and European cities (Korteweg 2017; Dahinden 2016; Oosterlynck et al. 2016; Wieviorka 2014; Brubaker 2013; Lentin 2008). This emergent body of literature invites "a return to studying old-fashioned discrimination" through historicized and rigorous analysis of integration practices within a diverse political, economic, and social matrix rooted in memories and histories of colonialism, capitalism, and oppression in the host and home countries and "based on the intersections between race, ethnicity, class, gender, and religion" (Korteweg 2017, 13).

I argue that integration as a category of practice is, in a way, a turn towards the classic

[2] Since Iranian citizens do not need a visa to enter Turkey, gay Iranian men often make asylum cases to the closest United Nations offices, located in various cities in Turkey, and are then resettled in Canada.

understandings of integration in sociology. Durkheim (2014 [1984]), in the wake of mass social changes at the turn of the twentieth century, argued that integration, a means towards social cohesion, is not merely an issue of objective division of labour but also a matter of moral convictions, shared symbols, and ideas. This emphasis highlights the importance of individuals' social encounters in shaping different forms of national solidarity (Oosterlynck et al. 2016; Loch 2014). Thus, examining pre-migration experiences and memories that refugees and immigrants bring with them (Fokkema and Haas 2015) provides a better understanding of integration practices as these memories and experiences function as proxies for establishing mutual senses of belonging (Harold and Fong 2018; Karimi and Bucerius 2017). I will analyse the integration practices of gay Iranian men at the nexus of asylum-migrants not to eliminate experiences of "refugeeness" (Lacroix 2004), but to emphasize that it is not possible to draw a definitive boundary between refugee and immigrant categories (Castles 2003).

To underline the diversities in integration practices, I bring sexuality – an often overlooked factor – to the centre of analysis. I provide an empirical study of integration practices of gay Iranian refugees in Canada and, consequently, contribute to the limited literature on sexuality and migration which to date has mainly focused on Asian and Latino immigrants (Cantú 2009; Luibheid 2008; Manalansan 2006; Carrillo 2004). At a theoretical level, in line with the Durkheimian understanding of integration, I operationalize Maurice Halbwachs's (1992) "collective memory", the shared social frameworks of individual recollections, to analyse individuals' and collectives' reconstruction of their past experiences that inform their daily lives in Canada. To bridge the methodological challenge of choosing between individual or collective units of analysis, I rely on ethnography and interviews to capture refugees' narratives to explore

the dialectic and interconnectedness between the two individual and collective levels (Olick 1999).

In what follows, I will first review the literature on integration and sexuality in migration studies. Second, I will outline the concept of collective memory and its relevance to migration studies. Third, I will discuss my six-month fieldwork consisting of 32 semi-structured interviews with 19 gay Iranian men in Canada. Fourth, I will discuss gay Iranian men's pre-migration experiences and collective memories, which are profoundly shaped by stigmatization, Iranian family values and gender norms, and misinformed views of the West. I will then thematically present and discuss my findings on gay Iranian men's interactions with Canadian society at large, Canadian gay communities, and Iranian Diaspora.

INTEGRATION, CANADIAN CONTEXT, AND SEXUALITY

Early assimilation theories approached immigration as a challenge to the imagined social cohesion of the host country (Nagel 2002; Alba and Nee 1997) and focused on the ways that migrants practised assimilation, i.e., the unquestioning adoption of the host country's cultural norms (Portes 1969; Gordon 1964). By the end of the twentieth century, however, migration scholars had demonstrated the unrealistic underpinnings of assimilation theory and argued that integration, i.e., the adoption of host cultural norms while retaining home cultural norms, is the more common strategy among immigrants and, thus, a more practical immigration policy. Portes and Rumbaut (2001), for instance, suggested that immigrants' lived experiences as members of ethnic communities and host society inform their integration strategies. Similarly, segmented assimilation theories underline various individual and contextual factors such as education, race, and economic background which inform interactions and inter-group solidarities (Zhou 2014).

Thus, migration researchers emphasize that integration in host societies is neither unidirectional nor objective, nor is it independent of individuals' and groups' experiences (Karimi and Bucerius 2017; Soehl 2017; Anthias 1998). More recently, scholars have further questioned the traditional assimilation and integration theories which, influenced by rational-choice theory and economics, presumed linearity in social processes and measured integration based on national or ethnic groups' performances, often "regardless of national context(s)" of home and host countries (Crul 2016, 63). Accordingly, Wieviorka (2014) argues that commonplace models of integration are not able to account for the growing diversity in intra-group integration practices since former linearities are being replaced by more diversity. We now need more intricate analyses to account for intra-group as well as inter-group integration practices, since a well-integrated society is ultimately a society of individuals *and* groups (Crul 2016; Faist 2009). This is a burgeoning task that should not overlook the role of the state as the most salient route for claim-making.

In this paper I take integration as a matter of collective action and active participation of individuals, immigrant and non-immigrant, in mutual reproduction of social life (Ager and Strager 2008), since "each one of the functions that the members exercise is constantly dependent upon others and constitutes with them a solidly linked system" (Durkheim 2014 [1984], 173). It is in these diversified interactions that senses of belonging and group solidarities are constructed as firmly as those solidarities built on political and economic ties (Schneider and Crul 2010).

Integration in Canadian contexts is a component of Canadian multiculturalism, which, as a model of policy and practice, emphasizes finding ways to integrate differences with the goal of social inclusion and cohesion (Abu-Laban 1998). However, scholars have noted that racial and

gender biases are inherent to the Canadian nation-state and that the official multicultural policies are symbolic strategies of embracing neoliberal economies for the mainstream white, patriarchal, and heterosexual citizens (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002). The wave of re-ethnicization in Canada (Winter 2014), similar to the culturalization of citizenship or civic integration in some Western European countries, places sexuality and gay rights at the forefront of drawing legal, political, and cultural boundaries between non-Western immigrants and native populations (Kahn and Alessi 2017; Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2010).

To refrain from a linear and homogenized understanding of social groups and to address the insufficiency of examining integration through the ethnic lens, I suggest complicating data collection and analysis by accounting for inter- and intra-group differences and commonalities. To this end, I incorporate the recent feminist sociological literature on sexuality, migration, and integration – known as queer migration scholarship – which explores "how sexuality constitutes a 'dense transfer point for relations of power' that structure all aspects of international migration" (Luibheid 2008, 169). In other words, this line of research underlines the intra-group diversities around sexual and gender identities and explores the ways that (attitudes and experiences of) sexuality may also drive immigration, inform group membership, and affect integration in host societies (Epstein and Carrillo 2014; Mai and King 2009; Cantu 2009; Manalansan 2006; Ahmadi 2003; Cruz and Manalansan 2002).

The incorporation of the queer migration literature into the integration-as-practice argument enables me to account for the ways that (homo)sexuality as well as gender, race, and other relevant factors intersect in creating social hierarchies and informing integration practices (Dhoest 2018; Röder and Lubbers 2015; Lewis and Naple 2014). This body of literature, in line with criticisms of traditional integration theories and policies, has questioned the presumption

that sexual minority immigrants experience smooth transition and integration in western host societies. Several scholars have shown that the current social acceptance of homosexuality in the West mainly targets the social inclusion of white, middle-class citizens and marginalizes the voices of queers of colour (Duggan 2012 [2003]; Murray 2014) who strive to "address the complex intersections of sexuality with race, class and gender" (Grundy and Smith 2005, 390) in selecting integration strategies and constructing senses of belonging.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND INTEGRATION

To analyse the individual and intra-group diversities as well as memories and experiences that inform integration practices, I use the sociological theory of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992) since it allows asking who remembers and how remembering happens, and therefore why certain individuals and groups choose certain integration practices in the host countries (Harold and Fong 2018). Also, collective memory theory is effectively applicable to qualitative data and participants' narratives because it is a mid-level theory that theorizes the "limited ranges of data-theories [collected through qualitative interviews] for example of class dynamics, of conflicting group pressures, of the flow of power and *the exercise of interpersonal influence*" (Merton 1968 [1957] cited in Castles 2017, 12, *italics added*).

Following a Durkheimian tradition that emphasizes the role of the past and historical continuities in creating social solidarities, Halbwachs (1992) conceptualized collective memory as shared social frameworks of individual recollections. Halbwachs places his analysis in contrast with individual psychology by underlining that minds work along with each other and are influenced by social structures (Olick and Robinson 1998): "It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize

their memories … the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them" (Halbwachs 1992, 38).

Halbwachs's sociological but individualistic understanding of memory applies the theory of collective representation to the question of group memory to account for the interplay between individual and group memories (Olik 2008), as individual memories are socially mediated because individuals are in constant communication with others "who conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past" (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 127). According to Halbwachs, all remembering occurs through group dynamics, and an individual's interactions with other group members shape how and what the individual remembers from past experiences, indicating that "even though an individual does have a particular perspective on this group reconstruction of the past, he or she does not have an independent memory of the past" (Russell 2006, 796). Collective memory also emphasizes the particular nature of the group and the ways it creates shared memories, such that any individual can be part of several different social groups and can rely on these groups' different collective memories (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995).

Thus, if we take collective memory as informing individuals' actions while being reshaped through the same actions and interactions, we "need to unpack which sources of meaning are mobilized in processes" (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009, 220) of integration at individual and group levels. This is because "social processes of integration are (mostly indirect) consequences of situationally reasonable reactions of the involved actors to the respectively given societal conditions" (Esser 2004, 1127). By using qualitative data and narrative analysis, it is possible to understand the ways any particular social group may draw on shared meanings to make or break social ties with other groups.

Bikmen (2013) has used collective memory to understand group identification and out-group attitudes among Bosnian Serbs and Croats in the United States. Highlighting the similarities in the two ethnic groups' narratives of shared origin, Bikmen analyses the strategies of ethnic co-existence after immigration. A few other studies, including the literature on Iranian Diaspora, have used the concept of collective memory to analyse immigrants' sociocultural organizations, but these studies homogenize ethnic groups and focus on their reconstruction of ethnic and national identities in host countries (see for example Majumdar 2017; Sorek 2011; Moghadam 2007; Salaita 2005). These studies fail to account for the role of sexuality in their analyses of refugees' intra-group differences and ethnic minorities' experiences. In contrast to this previous work, I will explore the ways that past experiences and histories of socialization inform integration in Canada beyond the limits of ethnicity and at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and religion (Harold and Fong 2018; Maghbouleh 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in Canada throughout the fall of 2016 and the winter of 2017 with 19 gay Iranian men who had come to Canada as refugees. I had already worked with the Iranian gay community in several research projects and established close ties with them. I contacted a participant from my earlier fieldwork and relied on his contacts and snowball sampling to find participants in Canada. I forwarded my contact information and a brief project description to potential participants, and with their consent we communicated via Facebook Messenger and telephone. In 2016 I interviewed eight participants in Vancouver. I then interviewed 11 more participants in Toronto and Ottawa in 2017. Interviews lasted for about two hours each and were complemented by detailed field notes taken during and after interviews.

Next, and following data analysis, I conducted 13 follow-up one-hour interviews via telephone and Skype (*N* = 32 interviews in total). All interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the informant. I conducted observations and interviews in participants' homes as well as public spaces such as cafes, parks, malls, and workplaces. I attended a gathering at the home of one participant in celebration of Persian New Year but did not conduct any interviews at this gathering.

In each interview I explored participants' daily lives in Iran, the development of their sexual identities, their experiences of seeking asylum and resettlement in Canada, and their feelings about their current situations, among other topics. Interviews were semi-structured to secure narratives that are based on the personal experiences of the subject, because individuals' understandings of their social interactions are essential for interpreting and analysing their choices. Narratives and personal stories that draw on collective memories reveal how each participant experiences and makes sense of his world (Gemignani 2011).

I used an inductive approach to analyse my findings. I started with open coding and attached comments to quotes and excerpts from the data. Once the thematic categorization of data was established (as presented in the following sections), I undertook a more rigorous analysis to explain the emergence of these typologies by a deductively derived theoretical argument (Esser 2004). The collective memory theory proved most capable of making sense of this set of data.

All participants were born and raised in Iran. With one exception, they all had a university education. All self-identified as gay. They ranged in age from 22 to 37, and their length of stay in Canada at the time of the interview ranged from 2 to 7 years. They identified themselves as middle class in Iran but working class in Canada. None expressed strong religious beliefs. The

interviews were conducted in Persian,[3] except for one which was conducted in English. The interviews were transcribed verbatim.

PRE-MIGRATION EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS

Sexuality in Iran is regulated through religious and governmental heterosexist discourses where femininity is depreciated against masculinity and men and women are expected to follow strict codes of masculinity and femininity. These patriarchal discourses inform and shape a variety of micro-level and macro-level events such as daily experiences of rejection due to the perceived violation of gender identities, denial of the existence of homosexuals by the state's leaders, and implementation of the death penalty for same-sex acts. These events shape intense feelings of shame, fear, and guilt among gay Iranian men – emotions that have an essential role in any recollection (Durkheim 2014 [1984]). One respondent said:

> There is so much hatred and ignorance about homosexuality in Iran. Every day I was reminded to act like a man, and I was expected to get married of course … moreover, on top of all of this, there is government aggression, you know that they can easily hang you if you're caught having sex with a man!

I asked participants about their imaginations of life in the West while still struggling with social and legal vulnerabilities in Iran; one participant said, "I thought people are more accepting of gay people! I read tons of news and blogs … and of course movies, there are so many romance gay movies, so I used to think it is not a big deal for them". Indeed, one important factor impacting gay Iranian men's integration practices in Canada is family values. While in Iran family is the central point of negotiating memberships and identities, the new discourse of

[3] All quotations translated by the author.

equal rights to marriage for LGBTs in the West, disseminated through Hollywood movies and the Internet, has gained increasing popularity among gay Iranian men (Karimi 2018). This is particularly tangible in online spaces where many gay Iranian men's Facebook profiles are marked with statuses such as 'engaged' and 'married' to another male. One participant said, "I am a human and have rights. Why in other countries can gay and straight people get married and have children, but we cannot in Iran?"

It was evident throughout the interviews that gay Iranian men's pre-migration memories entailed contradictory experiences of precarious life in Iran versus expectations of access to security and equality in the West. Gay Iranian men's collective memories depicted the West "as modern, rich, high quality, and power and Iran as traditional, backward, and powerless" (Khosravi 2009, 607). Above all, and as emphasized by all participants, pre-migration expectations and imageries of life in the West lacked insights on integration barriers such as marginalization from Iranian diaspora, broader social inequalities, and racism.

INTERACTIONS WITH CANADIAN SOCIETY

An initial analysis of gay Iranian men's collective memories, which divide Iran and the West into two opposites of oppression and freedom, would indicate gay Iranian men's willingness to build social ties and participate in various community activities once they live in Canada. However, more in-depth analyses of participants' daily experiences in Canada revealed a sharp alteration in gay Iranian men's views on ethnicity and belonging. For example:

> We all thought of Canada as a place to have freedom and happiness … I am free to wear what I want, but I know that I am stereotyped right away, anywhere I go, and I do not know what to do with it.

Another participant said: "It does not make a difference to try because you like it or not they look at you and you are an Arab or East Indian to them, now go figure how to explain it otherwise!" In the post-9/11 era the contrast between the Orient and the Occident has further solidified and has led to ethnicity, nationality, culture, and skin colour being negatively associated with Islam, forced marriages, honour killings, etc., through the homogenizing lens of Islamophobia (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009). More in-depth scrutiny revealed that sexuality, as an invisible marker of identity, has been replaced by a more visible marker: gay Iranian men have come to understand themselves as racialized men mainly defined through their skin colour which is taken as a sign of religiosity. Most of the participants were not *out* with their friends and colleagues, not because they feared homophobia, but because they no longer saw sexuality as an important factor in shaping their interactions:

> Sexual orientation does not have any role in me feeling included here. We thought it would be important, but no one can see that I am gay! I mean it is not written on my forehead! People see me and my colour …

Although the participants' imaginations were not informed by first-hand memories and experiences of daily life in Canada before their arrival in their host country, they have been able to reshape their perceptions of life in Canada and develop strategies that promote their integration and belonging. For instance, three participants expressed their unwillingness to share their stories of asylum and experiences of discrimination with others, as they had learned that sharing their stories results not in common understanding but in expressions of pity and superiority, with the white Canadians as 'heroes' who have saved the Oriental (Posniak 2009; Ahmed 2000). All participants preferred not to talk about their country of origin. Some, however, mentioned that they would identify as *Persian*, not Iranian, in negotiating racial boundaries and

seeking proximity with white citizens (Maghbouleh 2017). Regarding this latter strategy, which is a common integration strategy among Iranian Diasporas, one participant said:

> I learned about being 'Persian' when I arrived here … even in Turkey, we were Iranian. In our history books and media [in Iran] we already learn that Iranians are different, better, from Arabs or most of our neighbouring countries, but it was here [that] … I saw that Iranians, gay and straight, talk about themselves as Persian because it is not as negative as Iranian to Canadians.

The development of these new strategies through individual initiatives and their later adoption by group members attest to the flexibility of collective memories, individuals' agency in responding to new conditions, and the importance of social interactions in informing groups' integration strategies. Accordingly, and despite the experiences of exclusion along racial lines, more than half of the participants stated they felt they belong in Canada, and described Canadians as "accepting of gay people" and Canada as "truly multicultural". They mentioned that in their experience "open-minded Canadians" were more likely to join gay Iranian men in social gatherings and friendship groups. Open-mindedness was associated with upper-class, well-travelled, educated, and, at times, liberal identities. Therefore, in addition to ethnicity and nationality, upper-class identity and education are factors impacting the attainment of social belonging. Further, these findings show that integration is not a mere responsibility of newcomers or a social problem (Dahinden 2016), but a multidimensional process of (re)building universal ties, shared meanings and memories, and trust between members of social groups (Durkheim 2014 [1984]; Olick and Robinson 1998).

INTERACTIONS WITH CANADIAN GAY COMMUNITIES

Gay Iranian men's pre-emigration perceptions of similarities between their own experiences and desires and those of sexual minorities in Canada had set up expectations of building strong social ties with Canadian LGBT communities. However, data collected in Canada show that the reality is quite the opposite: gay Iranian men are generally sexualized, racialized, and marginalized in Canadian gay communities. One participant said: "I feel like they [Canadians] want me, sorry, but only for a one-night stand because I'm darker, I know they say I'm exotic". He continued, "I feel wanted, for sex, but not for anything more. They have their own friends and communities, and I do not think I have any place there". Another participant who had worked at gay clubs recounted several stories about how he was "hit on" by white Canadian gay men only to be later insulted by them through racial slurs such as "camel rider" and "terrorist". This was echoed in the narratives of several other participants. One stated:

> I was on Grindr for a while, and you do not know how many times they told me to go back and bomb your own country as soon as they realized I am Iranian! During the day no one says these things, but on Grindr or in clubs they think they can say whatever!

It seemed that defining insider status through sexuality and membership in the imagined gay community has come to facilitate social exclusion: sexuality overrides the political correctness that is witnessed in interactions with wider Canadian society and allows white Canadian gay men (assuming that their online profiles are authentic) to express racist slurs. Participants' narratives revealed that their collective memories, which were heavily formed by "movies like *A Single Man* or *Queer as Folk* and many other YouTube videos of gay prides in Canada", did not contain signs of "exclusion if a gay person is not from Canada and is not well-off white".

The above quotes resonate with Said's (2004 [1979], 1) argument that the Orient has become "one [of the West's] deepest and most recurring images of the Other", replete with

excessive sexuality available for exploitation and manipulation by the rational and superior West. In the current globalized world, the Oriental male is depicted through the axiom of fear-desire. On the one hand, Oriental man is "stateless, dark, perverse, pedophilic, disowned by family" (Puar 2006, 71). On the other hand, the Oriental man – in this case, the Oriental gay man – embodies the white man's colonial desire (Cantú 2002); he "becomes an allegory of the white men's repressed fantasies, the mainstay of his preoccupations and his desires" (Khosravi 2009, 599; see also Fanon 2008 [1952]).

As mentioned above, the current dominant political rhetoric on equal rights is assimilationist and is founded on a new and precarious homonormativity, i.e., a white middle-class neoliberal sexual politics that "does not contest the dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay constituency" (Duggan 2012 [2003], 179). One participant said, "during all these years, I have been to a few LGBT community meetings … I went there to make friends, but it seems their connections are already built, and there is no place for others". Later he clarified that he could not remember seeing any other immigrant gay men in those meetings, and continued:

> You know they talk about things that seem so trivial to me like book clubs or stuff when some [immigrant] gay men have a hard time making ends meet! … Maybe there are some more active groups out there, but I do not know about them.

Homonormative sexual politics require adherence to normativity for sociopolitical belonging to safeguard the national and moral national boundaries (Murray 2014; Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2010). Therefore, similar to the situation where most established immigrant groups show low support for increasing immigration in Canada in fear of losing their status (Reitz

2012), the newly accepted mainstream LGBT groups show unwillingness towards the incorporation of queers of colour (El-Tayeb 2012).

Although currently there are a few queer Muslim groups in major Canadian cities who embrace sexual minorities from Middle-Eastern backgrounds, none of the participants had experience of or desire for membership in such communities. Several participants tied religion, Islam in particular, to their experiences of rejection and fear. For instance, one participant commented on how the news of the alleged homosexuality of two teenagers and their execution in Iran in 2005 had become a traumatic component of gay Iranian men's collective memories:

> I was a teenager when they killed them. You can still find the photos of their public execution on the Internet …. Every single gay guy in Iran has seen the photos. We have all experienced the fear. The government killed them, and many other gays, because they say being gay is against the religion.

Further, four participants drew on generalized cultural norms to hold up Persian identity, irreligiosity, and proximity with the Caucasian race against Muslim and Arab identities. One participant in Vancouver specifically mentioned:

> I know a few Middle-Eastern gay guys, Syrian I guess … I have added them on Facebook; I see they post things about Islam in Arabic … but I do not get them! They have run away from their Muslim people, but still follow [religion] …

Another factor in regulating gay Iranian men's daily interactions is holding family values that, according to the participants, are different from the popular trends in Canada. One participant contrasted the Iranian and Canadian cultures in general and specified that:

> I am confused with [gay] people here. What are all the LGBT movies that they produce about? You would think relationship and family are important for them too, but I feel like

> it is all a bubble. I have dated a few Canadians, and I am baffled by how individualistic and selfish they are! I am not sure if they understand what a family is!

Participants' narratives reveal that their memories, and therefore their social expectations, are based on images spread by the Internet and media and different from the reality of the post-migration context. One immediate consequence of this mismatch between pre-migration memories and post-migration daily life was gay Iranian refugees' apathy towards inter-racial dating, i.e. the "intermarriage" which is celebrated as an important facilitator of integration by migration scholars (Alba and Nee 1997; Gordon 1964). My findings underline their inclinations to only date other gay Iranian men; as one participant said: "It seems that only we [Iranians] understand and want that family-type lifestyle". I also discuss, however, the intra-group heterogeneities that were revealed.

Three participants, who either were in or had had long-term partnerships with white Canadian gay men, mentioned that they share the common viewpoint of the Iranian gay community in Canada. However, they emphasized that their experiences and memories that were shaped in Iran were not merely bound to their media-based imageries or memories of fear; rather, they highlighted that other experiences such as their particular family norms from Iran had enabled them to build better, albeit limited, ties with Canadian-born gay men. One participant said:

> I was raised to be independent … I was seen as an individualist, maybe aloof, in Iran! Who knew it, now it has helped me a lot … to survive here. There are many things involved though; my partner is also from an educated family and willing to accept our cultural differences …

Further, five participants mentioned that their interactions with the older generation of Canadian gay men and those with immigration backgrounds were less conflictual. After coming to Canada, participants came to believe that what they had seen in movies and romanticized images of LGBT movements and families was closer to what the older Canadian-born gay men had experienced and aspired to in their youth than the indifference and individualist tendencies of younger Canadian gay men. Also, participants talked about the stories of social and economic marginalization that they had heard from other racial minorities, of Asian and Latino backgrounds. In both cases, perceived similarities with older Canadian gay men's and immigrant gay men's experiences had resulted in a sense of proximity with these groups: "Maybe because they have similar experiences, the older guys were also marginalized, they did not have everything easy".

The quotations in this section testify to intra- and inter-group diversities and to Halbwachs's theory that collective memory reflects the particular nature of group experiences such that any individual can be part of several groups and draw on disparate but overlapping memories and ideas in social encounters to shape social solidarities (Oosterlynck et al. 2016).

INTERACTIONS WITH IRANIAN DIASPORA

Gay Iranian men's experiences of exclusion, fear, and guilt from Iran directly inform their interactions with Iranian communities in Canada. This is mostly in the form of avoidance of other, non-homosexual Iranians or in the form of selective interactions conducted without revealing their sexual orientation. Reproduction of home-culture attitudes towards homosexuality among heterosexual Iranians, as perceived by the research participants, has become a barrier in creating feelings of belonging to Iranian diaspora, a source that could otherwise facilitate

feelings of belonging in Canada. When I asked whether participants had had any negative experiences in interacting with the Iranian diaspora, I realized that, except for a few cases, they had no willingness to build social ties with Iranian communities and that this out-group attitude also informed interactions with other visible minorities, Middle-Easterners in particular. In addition to the traumatic memories of executions, participants' memories were replete with fears of being "forced into heterosexual marriage" or being "physically punished after being caught having sex" with another man. One participant had lost his left ring finger when his older brother, who had learned about his sexual relations with another boy, had broken his fingers by jamming his hand in a heavy door to punish him. The combination of such memories led to a disconnection from the Iranian Diasporas and from participation in diasporic exilic lives. One participant described his interactions with heterosexual Iranians as intrusive: "they ask so many questions … why are you single, or, where is your girlfriend … I guess finally they will put it together … I am gay and then I am sure the harm is more than the benefit".

Only two participants had taken up jobs within the Iranian community (in Toronto); one of them said: "I have to hide so much from my co-workers and customers, who are mostly rich Iranians or the Lebanese … sometimes I think about leaving. But I do not know how". Another participant said: "they [Iranians] reproduce their life here with the same culture. I know so many straight couples who live as if they are in Iran, man is the boss, and the girl powerless no matter how educated". Although the literature on Iranian communities shows that there have been progressive changes in gender relations among heterosexual Iranian immigrants in the West (Farahani 2012; Dallalfar 1994), I argue that researchers have failed to explicate that these changes are only accepted as long as they prioritize patriarchy and men's hegemonic masculinities, both of which bolster heterosexism and preclude inclusive intra-community

interactions and mutual alteration of collective memories replete with homophobia, exclusion, and fear.

Research on the reproduction of home cultures and changes in immigrants' attitudes indicates that any alteration in attitudes towards gender and sexuality in post-migration contexts is not a straightforward process since immigrants negotiate gender and sexuality based on the available resources (Röder 2014). A variety of factors including racialization and marginalization specifically in the post 9/11 era (Sadeghi 2016), connection with home cultures (Soehl 2017), and fear of losing class and social status among sexually conservative families in Iran and in exile have resulted in fixation of origin-culture attitudes towards homosexuality among heterosexual Iranian immigrants, contrary to Iranian Diasporas' successful structural assimilation (Gordon 1964). One participant said:

> Yes, Iranians are well educated, and most of them are financially successful, well-off people. But when you talk to them about this stuff [gender and sexuality], they don't even want to hear it. It is like you question their whole identity! Just have a look at Iranians' Facebook page. There are a couple of psychologists who leave some random but educational posts about sexuality but no one comments on those posts, it is like they do not want to see it!

For years, "self-identified homosexual Iranians [have been] compelled to distance themselves from the community to avoid being ostracized. They, therefore, find themselves in a double migrancy/exile – once with respect to the homeland, the second with respect to the Iranian community in Canada" (Shahidian 1999, 195; see also Abdi 2014). Some exceptions can be highlighted, however, to this long-standing marginalization of the Iranian sexual minorities. First, some participants noted that they find Iranians who have participated in the educational

system in Canada more tolerant and accepting of homosexuality: "My neighbour is a retired professor. After a while, I felt I could trust him and his family and I came out to them … they were quite accepting. I think it was because they are very well-educated".

Second, two respondents mentioned that their best friends are Baha'i and that they find most Baha'i community members to be "tolerant people because I think their religion is more pro-equality … I have learned there is more emphasis on gender and family equality … but I know that they are still hesitant because their mentality is part of Iranian culture". Third, participants mentioned that younger Iranians in Canada, particularly those born in Canada, were less biased and more accepting of sexual minorities. However, further inquiries showed that this latter claim was not based on first-hand experience, as none of the participants knew any second-generation Iranians in Canada. Indeed, participants' collective memories from Iran, where they had built limited friendships with non-gay individuals of their age and younger generations, had resulted in perceptions and expectations of building social ties with younger Iranians in Canada. One participant said: "[second-generation Iranians in Canada] should be similar to young people in Iran, or even more open-minded about gays and lesbians because they grow up here, no? I do not know anyone in person, but I expect it to be so". These intra-group disparities of membership in Iranian Diasporic groups indicate the growing diversity in intra-group integration practices and the inadequacy of integration models that assume immigrants automatically form diasporas (Wieviorka 2014).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is a gap in research on integration practices of racialized sexual minority refugees who simultaneously resemble and differ from the native-born sexual minorities with regards to social

belonging and social inequalities. Faced with this paucity of knowledge about racialized sexual minority refugees' lives after resettlement, one is left to wonder about their experiences, needs, and agencies with regards to their social relations and identity transformations. Luckily, more recently scholars across multiple disciplines have started to explore and account for the ways that sexuality informs various kinds of social interactions that affect groups' and individuals' practices and constitute sociopolitical systems of inclusion and exclusion. In this paper, I relied on Halbwachs's theory of collective memory to present a sociological study of gay Iranian men's integration practices in Canada at the intersection of sexuality, gender, race, and nationality. My goal was to underline the importance of sexuality for understanding intra- and inter-group diversities and to argue for the insufficiency of the ethnic lens in studying migration and integration.

Traditionally, mainstream assimilation and integration theories have strongly suggested that immigrants' lived experiences as an ethnic group or as members of a particular cultural community inform post-migration interactions and integration practices. However, I argue that sexuality also plays a significant role in regulating social relations, along with gender, nationality, religion, race, and ethnicity. Sexuality, as an analytical lens, can be used to explore the pre-migration experiences that inform social gaps and junctures in post-migration contexts vis-à-vis membership in various social groups. For instance, my findings demonstrate on the one hand that in post-migration contexts sexuality might supersede the unifying effects of ethnicity, mark intra-group differences along the lines of sexual orientation, and inhibit access to community resources that could facilitate integration. On the other hand, we saw that, at times, the hegemonic effects of ethnicity and nationality might nullify the importance of sexual orientation which, on the part of gay refugees, was expected to positively inform social relations

in the host society. The incorporation of sexuality in our analyses of social integration enables us to address the analytical limits of race and ethnicity by magnifying the role of patriarchy as well as hetero- and homonormativity as social forces that regulate inclusion, exclusion, and belonging. It is evident that power relations around sexuality not only impact racialized sexual minorities' lives in their home countries, but also intersect with race, ethnicity, gender, and religion in regulating integration in host countries.

Thus, I invite future researchers to revisit predetermined categorizations such as immutable ethnic or LGBT communities, and to prioritize an understanding of social phenomena based on specific kinds of social relations and the interplay of these relations in informing integration practices. To this end, an incorporation of critical literature such as queer studies as well as feminist and critical race scholarship into migration studies will facilitate drawing a more nuanced, but also comprehensive, picture of integration practices.

CHAPTER 4: LIMITS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION: THE CASE OF GAY IRANIAN MALE REFUGEES' INTEGRATION IN CANADA

Abstract

Each year thousands of refugees, including ethnic minority lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (racialized LGBT) refugees, are resettled in Canada. Currently, economic independence is the foremost policy goal in integrating refugees in Canada. This policy often relies on social capital as a non-economic solution to integration. I draw on 35 interviews with gay Iranian men in Canada to argue that overreliance on refugees' deployment of social capital for integration has grave shortcomings for refugees' senses of belonging. I suggest that examining racialized LGBT refugees' integration strategies best reveals social capital's flaws at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and class. I draw on Bourdieu's writings on social capital to highlight internal group differences, social inequalities, and the vital convertibility between financial, social, and cultural capital in building transferrable resources for refugee integration. I conclude by urging policy-oriented studies of social capital and for states' intervention in facilitating integration.

Key Words:

Social Capital, LGBT Refugees, Integration, Sexuality, Canada

1. INTRODUCTION

Two months after I had finished the first phase of my fieldwork with gay Iranian refugees in Canada in 2017, one of the men who I had expected to participate in the next phase of this study committed suicide in Vancouver. As explained by my participants, this heart-wrenching deed was driven by experiences of social exclusion, poverty, separation from family, and the consequent severe but unaddressed depression. Nevertheless, currently, refugees' economic independence, rather than their all-encompassing social, cultural, and economic integration, is the foremost priority for governments of the Western countries (Ives 2007). Various policy and resettlement reports released by Canadian Federal and Provincial governments underscore a focus on individual income support, for a maximum of one year, with regards to food, shelter, and basic household items. Although both levels of government allocate budgets for local service providers who assist with basic knowledge of everyday life, social and cultural aspects of integration are strikingly absent in governments' policies and practice models.

Under Canadian multiculturalism which recognizes the rights of cultural groups, policymakers often presume a straightforward ethnic assimilation story in which ethnic communities play a major role in supporting newcomers' integration by providing information on housing, employment, and healthcare as well as access to ethnic businesses. Such presumptions rely on a simplified and community-based (i.e., communitarian) definition of social capital that assumes ethnic communities' automatic support for individual members' integration needs (Bauder 2005; Edwards, Franklin and Holland 2003; see Canada's (2005) Policy Research Initiative on social capital). Also, these presumptions and the resultant policies are informed by and perpetuate neoliberal understandings of social belonging which push the role of the state as the guarantor of social citizenship rights to the margins and present integration as a responsibility of individuals (Brodie 1997; Somers 2008).

In this paper, my goal is to empirically demonstrate and argue that overreliance on refugees' deployment of social capital for integration has grave shortcomings for refugees' integration and sense of belonging. To this end, I will first review the body of literature that underscores the importance of social capital, i.e., access to durable networks (Bourdieu 1986), and, then, present a critique that shows the insufficiency of access to community networks for integration purposes as well as the integration policy shortcomings that result from policymakers' ill-advised expectations from ethnic communities in supporting integration. I will draw on Bourdieusian (1986; 1977) understanding of social capital to address these critiques and present a path forward. The Bourdieusian approach emphasizes the interdependence between various forms of capital and addresses the limits of conventional theories on social capital regarding individual agency, power relations within ethnic groups, and social inequalities. In findings section, I will draw on 35 interviews with gay Iranian refugees[4] to empirically substantiate my critique of reliance on various forms of community support in times of ever-increasing diversity, emphasize the interwovenness of government services with community support accroding to the Bourdieusian appraoch to capital, and highlight the policy shortcomings and necessities of improving institutional intervention to equip individual refugees against social adversities and facilitate their access to social rights (Cheong et al. 2007; Woolcock 1998).

I follow Ager and Strang's (2008; 2010) categorization of social capital into social bonds with insiders, bridges with other groups, and links with government services. I believe that the case of gay Iranian refugees' integration, as members of racialized and sexualized refugee groups, will best demonstrate the analytical utility of categorizing social capital. Their integration experiences expose different drawbacks of social capital as they arrive with minimal

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[4] They make asylum claims to the UN offices in Turkey (which are closest to Iran) and are then resettled to Canada after a two-to- three-year-long process.

individual financial and cultural capital, face marginalization within diasporic groups and white mainstream LGBT communities that rely on “homonormative” (Duggan 2012) assimilationist equal rights agendas, and confront job-market deskilling and the growing wage gap between immigrant and white native-born incomes (Creese and Wiebe 2012; Frank 2013; Reitz 2007; Jackson and Bauder 2013).

In what follows, I will first review the literature on integration and social capital and outline a critique of this body of research in relation to ethnic ties and host communities. Second, I will explicate Bourdieu’s approach to social capital. Third, I will discuss the six-month fieldwork consisting of 35 semi-structured interviews with gay Iranian men in Canada. Next, I will discuss the findings in three thematic sections on bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and the role of social links in responding to housing, employment, education and cultural training, and mental-health issues. I will conclude by urging policy-oriented empirical studies of forming social capital based on bottom-up analyses at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and class and for states’ intervention in facilitating integration.

2. INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Recent sociological studies on migration and integration have challenged traditional one-dimensional economic approaches by defining integration as a multi-dimensional two-way process that starts before emigration and is informed by a desire for social acceptance and belonging (Lomba 2010; Karimi and Bucerius 2017). In examining social integration, scholars initially relied on various forms of network theory to analyze the role of ethnic ties’ entrepreneurship opportunities in immigrants’ integration (Waldinger 1997; Boyd 1989; Palmgren 2017). On the one hand, several scholars maintained that close-knit strong ties provide ethnic groups with entrepreneurship opportunities, mainly outside the states’ purview, and also

provide support for the integration of the second-generations (Bankston, Caldas and Zhou 1997; Zhou 2005). These scholars argue that family and community members' internal bonds allow "enforceable trust to function as an economic *modus vivendi*" (Waldinger 1997, 4; see also Coleman 1998). The majority of such research views ethnic ties as equal to social capital, e.g., Zhou's (2005) "ethnic social capital" or Bankston, Caldas and Zhou's (1997) "ethnicity as social capital."

On the other hand, some scholars reason that building inter-group weak ties (social bridges) is more important for immigrants in establishing support networks that lead to finding jobs and participating in social activities (Lin 2000; Waldinger 1997; Granovetter 1973). Expanding the definition of community and, thus, social capital, Putnam (1993) defines social capital as a public good, as "features of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit" while claiming that family and community ties may be less valuable than weak ties found in larger social organizations (Putnam 2000; also see Fukuyama 2002). Both lines of argument about social capital neglect individual agency, power relations within ethnic groups, and the embeddedness of structures and the role of a host society (Palmgren 2017).

2.1. Critique: Ethnic and LGBT Community Dynamics

Most of the recent critiques of social capital are based on the earlier criticisms of social capital (Portes and Landolt 2000; Portes 1998) as well as the limited studies on gender and ethnic networks (Boyd 1989; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjivar 1995) both of which have highlighted the inter-group inequalities resulting from unequal access to resources. These recent studies reveal that newcomers' limited social capital, in the absence of financial and cultural capitals, does not translate into fruitful social participation, channels newcomers into the margins of the

job market, and hampers integration (Evergeti and Zontini 2006; Molyneux 2002). More specifically, scholars claim that intra-group diversities create systems of inclusion and exclusion that regulate individuals' access to social capital through the interplay of gender, class, religion, and age (Anthias 2007; Woolcock 1998; Shah, Dwyer and Modood 2010; Shah 2007). Zontini (2010) argues that communitarian social capital is a double-edged sword: family and community networks enable individual members' access to the social capital necessary for building social networks and successful integration while simultaneously obligating the recipients, young adults, and women, in particular, to follow patriarchal-religious norms that restrict their opportunities in the host society. Indeed, it is evident from research on gender-sexuality and migration that close-knit ethnic groups' sexual politics often draw on traditional gender, class, and religious values to regulate access to social capital and define internal and external boundaries (Röder and Lubbers 2015).

Additionally, racialized LGBT refugees face marginalization in Canadian LGBT communities (Kahn and Alessi 2017; Adam and Rangel 2015; Murray 2014; Lee and Brotman 2011; O'Neil 2010). The sexual politics of these communities are based on assimilationist equal rights agendas, defined as "homonormativity" (Duggan 2012), and require assimilation into the dominant heteronormative institutions and the creation of a consumerist-privatized gay subculture (Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2010). Such neoliberal politics inform western LGBTs' conception of non-Western LGBT refugees through "homonationalism" (Murray 2014) as a form of "self-creation and regulation of individuals through nationalist discourses and state policies and relations with other states" (Grewal 2005, 17) in the post 9/11 global context. Homonormativity cuts both ways: the creation of community ties is permitted, but conditional on

assimilation with white, middle-class, and consumerist values, thus limiting racialized working-class members' access to social capital.

2.2. Critique: Role of Host Society and Integration in the Canadian Context

Similar to a few other countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia, the Canadian government has explored and utilized the potential of social capital in contributing to social policies on refugee integration (Tanasescu and Smart 2010). Policy Research Initiative (PRI), which contributes to the Government of Canada's policy planning by conducting research projects, produced a report (PRI 2005) that relied mainly on the works of Putnam (2000; 1993) and Coleman (1988) and takes a network-based approach to social capital. "Social capital refers to the networks of social relations that may provide individuals and groups with access to resources and supports" (PRI 2005). PRI report prioritizes three areas of social policy where a focus on social capital is needed: addressing the needs of those at risk of social exclusion; support life transition; and community development. With regards to policy implications, the report (PRI 2005) accurately emphasizes that:

> Inadequate income cannot entirely explain situations of poverty…. The level of education and training as well as shortages in affordable housing may also be important factors. Social isolation (or at least a lack of diversity of social ties) is yet another determinant…. For those in difficult circumstances, having only social ties to others in the same circumstance may not be useful to finding a way out…. A social capital perspective also points to the negative influences of social ties on the behviour of individuals and groups at risk.

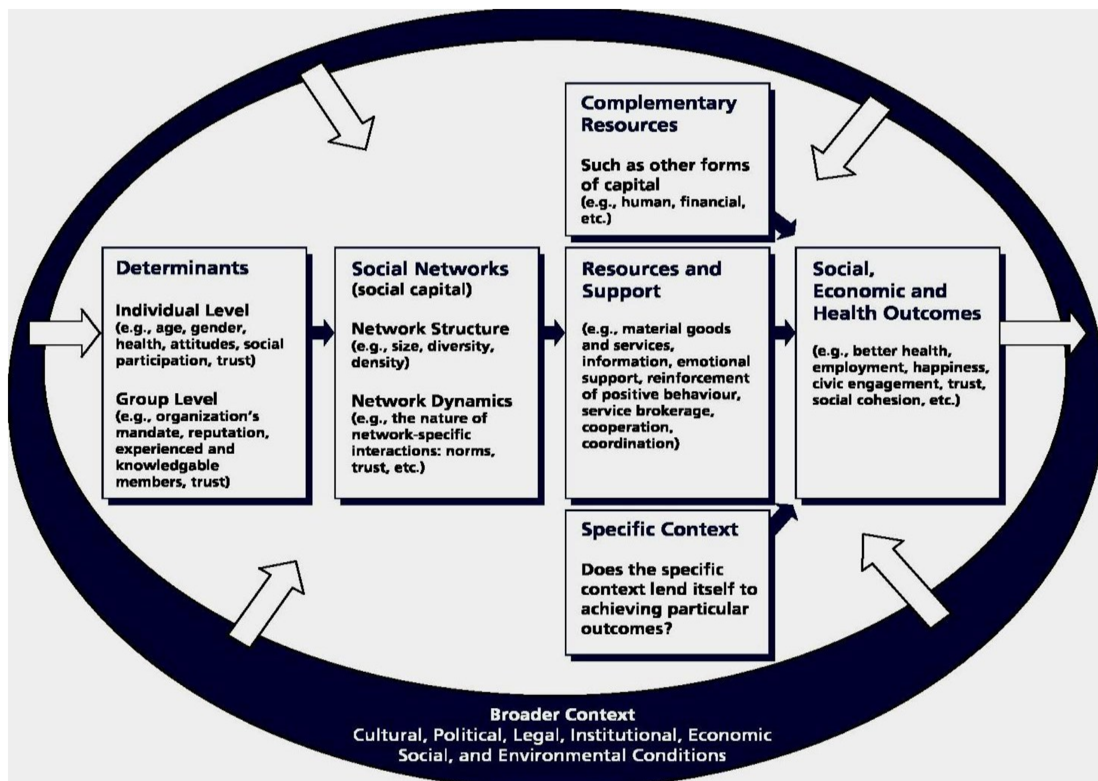

Figure 1 Government of Canada report (2005): Social Capital as a Public Policy Tool

In Canada, the recognized Convention Refugees and Protected Persons enjoy supports that often last up to a maximum of one year and include providing temporary accommodation, the cost of food, rent, and household utilities and helping in the search for employment. Refugees in Canada are also eligible for Immigrant Loan Program and the Interim Federal Health Care as well as permanent residency status and Canadian citizenship and its ensuing rights. Despite recognizing the interwovenness of various factors and forms of social capital, financial support, albeit meager, and economic independence are still the main medium and goals of the Canadian government when it comes to refugee integration. Indeed, the Canadian Council for Refugees' (CCR) report (2011) shows that access to employment and housing, credential recognition, mental health issues, community building, and language skills are still refugees' top resettlement

concerns.

Scholars have asserted that official multicultural and integration policies, informed by neoliberal ideologies that reduce state membership to access to legal status and overlook social inequalities (Brodie 1997), are symbolic strategies for embracing those who can afford social rights such as education, social recognition, and housing in the privatized market, i.e., the mainstream white, patriarchal, and heterosexual citizens (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002). This disconnect between the state's goal of accelerating refugees' integration and the services provided for such purposes results from failing to implement practice models that mobilize the circular-convertible relationship between state-provided social rights, economic success, and social capital accumulation among refugees (Palmgren 2017; Cheong et al. 2007; Nee and Sanders 2001).

3. BOURDIEU ON SOCIAL CAPITAL AND RELEVANCE FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Bourdieu (1986, 8) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group." Forming or renewing of social ties is a time-consuming process that requires individuals' continuous (re)investment of time and capital (Portes and Landolt 2000) since membership in a social group does not automatically translate into access to social capital. Thus, without assuming that "immigrants have both the proclivity and ability to form bridging ties to others" (Cheong et al. 2007, 38), Bourdieusian approach to social capital emphasizes individuals' agencies and their differences in accessing various capital resources through their ethnic and host communities (Edwards et al. 2003).

Bourdieu (1986, 9) emphasizes that the "volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected." Here, Bourdieu underlines the role of families and ethnic communities and their internal dynamics in regulating access to various forms of capital. This regulatory role can be restrictive or supportive of individuals' integration practices. Bourdieu also emphasizes the convertibility between economic, social, and cultural capital, the latter of which he defines as long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body, cultural goods, and institutionalized educational qualifications. This interwovenness and convertibility of various forms of capital indicate that social policies on social capital must account for providing for economic *and* cultural capital over extended periods to coordinate newcomers' integration.

Bourdieusian theory of capital brings together and makes senses of the seemingly disconnected lines of critique on communitarian social and neoliberal-economic policy approaches to the social capital. To respond to these limits and design successful integration policies it is important to account for individuals' reservoir of capital and their ability to build ties to access other resources, inter- and intra-group dynamics that regulate access to capital, and the fact that various forms of capital are ultimately converted into the forms that, depending on the contexts, will best support individuals' integration and belonging. Bourdieu (1977) reminds us that individuals' navigation of the complex web of social relations and structures is informed by societal rules and norms, individuals' reservoir of capital, and their knowledge of rules. Essentially, capital and knowledge accumulation occurs at the intersections of sexuality, ethnicity, gender, and nationality that, in turn, re-generate practice and access to capital (Shah et al. 2010; Kelly and Luis 2006).

4. METHODOLOGY

This paper is part of a larger graduate-level five-year study that explored identity formation, social exclusion, and daily survival strategies of 63 gay Iranian men in Iran (*N=44*) and Canada (*N=19*). My discussions here are based on six months of fieldwork with 19 gay Iranian refugees who had left Iran and had been resettled to Canada. I found participants in Canada through one of my contacts from previous phases of fieldwork and further snowball sampling. I asked this contact to forward my contact information and project description to potential participants. After they consented, I communicated with them through social media and by telephone. In 2016 I interviewed eight participants in Vancouver. I interviewed 11 more participants in Toronto and Ottawa during the winter of 2017. Interviews lasted for about two hours each and were complemented by detailed field notes taken during and after interviews. Next, and upon initial data analysis, I conducted 13 follow-up one-hour interviews via phone and Skype. After outlining the first draft of this article, I conducted three two-hour follow-up interviews in Vancouver during the fall of 2017 to discuss any changes in employment and housing conditions and access to services (*total interviews N=35*).

The interviews were conducted in Persian,[5] except for one which was conducted in English. All participants were born and raised in Iran and with one exception, they all had a university education. All self-identified as gay and as middle-class in Iran but working-class in Canada. None expressed strong religious beliefs. They ranged in age from 22 to 37 and their length of stay in Canada ranged from 2 to 7 years. My background as a young Iranian man who had immigrated to Canada for educational purposes facilitated my communication and

[5] I have translated the quotations used in this paper from Persian to English.

interactions with my informants as we shared the same language, culture, and class status. In contrast, the difference between my immigration background and the immigration experiences and status of my informants added layers of complexity because of my limited knowledge of asylum wait times and life experiences in Turkey as well as the hardships of the resettlement process. I emphasize that considering the sample size, participants' length of stay in Canada, and their class backgrounds any generalizations must be made with all due caution.

In designing the interview guide, I focused on the participants' social trajectories, the social construction of relationships, and the meanings of these contacts for them (Erel 2010). I explored the participants' experiences of seeking asylum and resettlement to Canada, their feelings about their current situations in Canada, and their future aspirations and expectations. I conducted semi-structured interviews to collect narratives based on each participant's personal experiences. Although personal narratives may not fully capture and explain all of the important factors impacting social interactions, the individuals' understandings of these social interactions are essential for interpreting and analyzing their choices (Evergetti and Zontini 2006). All interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of each informant. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. I used an inductive approach to thematically analyze the data and identify the main categories that emerged throughout the interviews.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1. Bonding Social Capital

My work with gay Iranian men revealed that the top-down approach of predefining social bonds at family or group levels and analyzing refugees' participation in such groups is dubious "because there is always a problematic relating to what and who is the group and who belongs or doesn't belong to it" (Anthias 2007, 791). Despite the commonplace importance given to family

and ethnic ties in supporting integration (Waldinger 1997; Bankston, Caldas and Zhou 1997; Zhou 2005) I found that gay Iranian men tend to make strong bonds with other gay Iranian men – note the importance of sexuality besides ethnicity - while distancing themselves from their families in Iran and co-ethnics in Canada. My findings challenge the assumptions that bonding social capital, i.e., community networks, is the best form of generating social capital (Strang and Ager 2010). To better understand the formation of social ties, I suggest a bottom-up approach that considers individuals' social-historical trajectories at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and class.

For my participants, sexuality intersects with ethnicity in forming *primary* strong social bonds embodied in friendship groups with four to five gay Iranian men with refugee backgrounds. One participant mentioned that "*being gay has been my most important point of identification… other [Iranian] gay men… best understand me and that is the best mental support that I can have now.*"

It was evident in several interviews that gay Iranian men had formed transitory communities in Turkey while awaiting the results of their asylum claims and relied on their connections to find other gay men residing in their vicinities in Canada. My participants, similar to refugees who spend years in refugee camps, had exhausted their financial resources during their wait-times (Stevens 2016) in Turkey and were not able to support each other through loans, temporary housing, or transportation. Their strong ties provided "*mental-emotional support*," but were not successful in reproducing social, cultural, and financial capital. One participant said:

> *I spent all my savings in two years in Turkey…I got here* [Canada] *with no money but found out that guys who were relocated before me were not doing great either… you can't have expectations! There is nothing to offer except friendship.*

Going beyond the co-ethnic gay friends, sexuality, again, plays a critical role in forming *secondary* strong ties. My participants were highly inclined to make bonds with gay men from different racial backgrounds, resulting in "feelings of camaraderie, identity and acceptance" (Deuchar 2011, 679). I discovered two divergent tendencies: some participants were more inclined to make friends with native-born white, gay Canadian men, while some were more open to bonding with racialized gay men. The former bonding was slightly more likely to result in higher social capital compared to the latter form because of the various forms of capital that were possessed, or lack thereof, by the white and racialized gay men, respectively. Common points were that these friendships were not as close-knit as friendships with co-ethnic gay men, thus they were considered to be *secondary*; and that class boundaries were barely crossed. One participant said "*I have friends from other countries and from Canada, but it doesn't feel the same… not comfortable as it is with my Iranian [gay] friends."* Another participant said *"…maybe it is because of where I work or the place that I live… I don't get to know rich people! I'm always among my coworkers or gay guys from around here."* When I asked about the possibilities of making friends in the long run and beyond class boundaries, he said *"networking would need money because then I have to go to expensive clubs and restaurants… own an apartment in decent neighborhoods because a decent guy, friend or whatever, will not come to my dingy studio."* In section 5.3.1. I will further discuss the ways that limited access to proper housing, in turn, adversely impacts capital accumulation.

Further, despite the heterogeneity of the LGBT communities and the existence of several Canadian LGBT-oriented organizations such as Rainbow Railroad and Access Alliance that advocate for LGBT refugees' rights, none of my participants had reached out to them for support, except for two participants who had had short-lived ties with these communities in Toronto. This lack of participation in community activities, which ultimately limit capital and knowledge accumulation, has several overlapping reasons: mainstream LGBT communities' implicit homonormative agendas which prioritize the demands of white middle-class members and marginalize the voices of racialized members (Duggan 2012; Grundy and Smith 2005); advocacy groups' limits resources and outreach; and my participants' cultural background that hinders social commitments and involvement with local communities (Karimi and Bucerius 2017). One participant said:

> *During all these years, I have been to a few LGBT community meetings…I went there to make friends, but it seems their connections are already built, and there is no place for others... they talk about things that seem so trivial to me like book clubs or stuff when some* [immigrant] *gay men have a hard time making ends meet.*

Accordingly, my participants' primary bonding social capital along with bonds with racialized gay men were insufficient in overcoming lower earnings, unemployment, social marginalization, and prevalent depression, all of which challenge their social integration and trust in social institutions (Ager and Strang 2008; Cattell 2001). In line with the critique of community social capital presented earlier in the paper, my findings confirm that, first, bonding social capital in form of close-knit ties with families and ethnic community must not be taken for granted since different social groups define systems of membership, whether self- or other-

ascribed, through disparate factors and not merely through ethnicity (Röder and Lubbers 2015). Second, strong ties with individuals who possess similar and limited amounts of capital render bonding social capital as media of pigeonholing immigrants into the margins of society rather than facilitating their integration. Similar to the sojourn-single-male labor migrants' situation (Nee and Sanders 2001), bonding social capital with less-resourced individuals puts my participants at a disadvantage (Bourdieu 1986) relative to immigrants who might have easier access to community and family establishments (Granovetter 1983).

5.2. Bridging Social Capital

For my participants, as a minority within an ethnic group, weak ties or social bridges were embodied in ties with heterosexual co-ethnics and non-co-ethnics. Despite the presence of well-established Iranian communities in Canada, my participants were unwilling to reach out to community resources, and social opportunities since their non-confirming sexuality and histories of rejection inhibited the development of ethnic ties. Except for two individuals, none of my participants had accessed any information on the job market, health services, or housing options through Iranian or other Middle Eastern communities. One participant said *"they ask so many questions…why are you single, or, where is your girlfriend... I guess finally they will put it together…I'm gay and then I am sure the harm is more than the benefit."*

Two participants in Toronto had relied on their friendship ties to find jobs with Iranian businesses including a restaurant and real estate agency. Both participants had hidden their sexuality from coworkers and did not express any motivation for changing jobs even though they were overqualified for their low-paying jobs. One of them said:

> *I got this job through Iranian friends… started working as a dishwasher and now assistant chef. The money is not bad, but I know that I'm stuck here for now… they have come here 20 years ago and can't see me overtake them.*

The other participant said:

> *I have to hide so much from my coworkers and customers, who are mostly rich Iranians or the Lebanese… sometimes I think about leaving. But I don't know how because didn't get a degree* [from Canada]*… this job has taken all my time, and now I don't have chances of getting a better job.*

These quotations confirm the research on the restrictive role of social capital and reveal that the volume and efficiency of bridging social capital made available to individuals is highly regulated by ethnic communities' patriarchal-religious cultural values (Zontini 2010). In the case of sexual minority members, bridging capital plays a restrictive role in their integration since it comes with reciprocal obligations and expectations of following cultural norms that limit my participants' capital accumulation outside the community (Lancee 2012). This, in turn, negatively influences the accumulation and conversion between economic, cultural, or symbolic forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). Gay Iranian men's lack of access to social capital is similar to that of black adolescents in American black inner city areas, who suffer from "extremely high levels of unemployment and welfare dependency" because the separation from "industrial employment and middle-class families" has left black adolescents on their own (Portes 1998, 14). It is important to note that the pandemic absence of family and co-ethnics has eliminated community constraints that can be disruptive and conflictual (Zontini 2010; Anthias 2007) in sexual minorities' social participation in Canada. One participant said *"I miss my mom and*

siblings… they don't know I am gay… so I am happy to be here because I can be myself. In a sense, I feel at home in Vancouver."

Despite bridging capital's limiting effects, during interviews I found that bridging social capital with, often white, non-co-ethnics had led participants to find jobs and learn about educational and training opportunities without having to confront the stigmas surrounding sexuality. One participant who was working as a trainer said "*I was dating a Canadian guy and his friend helped me with finding and getting this job… I learn about many work opportunities and workshops on fitness training through my team members*." Interviews confirmed that non-co-ethnic social capital, similar to the above mentioned secondary bonds with white gay men, were linked to financial and cultural capital accumulation despite the latent race and class stereotypes that serve to marginalize racialized minorities (Shah 2007). These forms and amounts of capital are, however, minimal and negligible in the face of the widespread discriminations that channel newcomers into the margins of the job market and society. One participant said "*…they look at you and you are an Arab or East Indian to them. Now go figure how to explain it otherwise!"* He linked racial stereotypes with finding jobs, making social ties, and crossing class boundaries:

> *I have learned a lot from my coworkers…I have found jobs in retail stores but all in the same positions. All my managers have been Canadian, born here… maybe it's language or color issue, actually it might be a religion thing, because I am brown so I am Muslim! Anyways, I think so because it is not easy to connect with managers and higher-up people; our lives are separate!*

During my fieldwork, I also discovered that certain individuals and groups in Canada represented the most productive form of weak ties and bridging social capital for some

participants: Canadian private sponsors. In Canada, the Private Sponsorship for Refugees program and Blended Visa Office Referred program, the latter of which is a cost-sharing program between government and private sponsors, sponsor refugees' resettlement and integration. In addition to financial support, private sponsors are responsible for reception upon arrival, initial housing, assistance with language courses and educational-vocational training, and mental-emotional support. Private sponsors' support system for refugees represents an all-encompassing system that targets social, cultural, and economic integration. Four participants, who had been relocated via private sponsors, mentioned that their ties with sponsors, all of whom were non-LGBT individuals, had helped them in "*every way without any prejudice or expectations*." One participant came for the interview with one of his sponsors and told me:

> *I was not sure if I wanted to come today… because of my past experiences and trust issues… my sponsor's presence makes me feel safe… My sponsors do not have to support me after the first year, but they are very kind and still support me in some ways…I go see them from time to time. Some of them still email or call me and invite me over. They are all retirees… have helped me a lot with housing or going to college and applying for jobs.*

Research into Canadian context shows that sponsors, who must fulfill certain financial and legal qualifications, are invaluable vertical weak ties that "provide refugees with household and other material goods, access to language training, and employment opportunities" and bring "refugees into mainstream public spaces such as workplaces or schools … [and] help refugees become familiar with daily routines and cultural values in their new home" (Lamba and Krahn 2003, 339). According to Bourdieusian (1986; 1977) theory of capital, my fieldwork findings revealed that ties with sponsors, albeit limited, embodied a support network that best facilitated

refugees' access to community resources, enhanced individuals' capital accumulation over time, and boosted the deployment of various forms of capital for successful integration. More recent research on social capital and refugee integration has identified social relations that are most productive regarding capital accumulation as vertical ties, i.e., social relations with the most resourceful individuals and groups that promote capital accumulation and upward mobility (Ryan et al. 2008). I must, however, point out that the locality of resettlement is of particular importance for racialized-LGBT refugees.

Supported by and relocated to communities in smaller cities such as Halifax and Gatineau, my participants had experienced social isolation because of language barriers, lack of visible demographic diversity, and the difficulty of connecting with other gay men. Indeed, my sponsored participants had left or were planning to leave their first destinations. One participant said:

> *Yes, my sponsors made my life easy in Halifax by finding an apartment and a part-time job for me… but the city is small compared to other major cities and it is not really multicultural… as a Middle-Easterner, I could feel that immigrants are still struggling to be accepted as part of the city but I felt even more surprised to see so many people with homophobic attitudes… there is only one bar for LGBTs and [during my stay in Halifax] I did not meet a single gay guy who was originally from Halifax, it was like everyone has left and the only ones are the students who come from other cities and then leave.*

According to Simich and colleagues (2002, 604) "the [resettlement] site selected also must have the capacity to meet both immediate and long-term needs": otherwise, seeking ethnic community and friends who have been resettled in other major cities becomes "a reason to move

away in the absence of other social supports and incentives to stay in a first destination." One participant said:

> *I was in Halifax for a year, very nice people… but there was nothing for me to do there, not many jobs… it felt very lonely. All my* [Iranian] *friends were in Toronto and Vancouver so I decided to move to Vancouver... my sponsors helped me with everything!*

In sum, it is evident that access to bridging capital might be restricted by immigrant groups' patriarchal cultural norms and host communities' implicit racial prejudices. However, sponsor communities' willingness to share their knowledge of the society and community resources with refugees reveals the potentials of bridging capital in facilitating individuals' navigation of the complex web of social relations and structures in host society (Bourdieu 1977). Nonetheless, capital and knowledge accumulation occur within social relations and structures, and at the intersections of sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality all of which, in turn, generate new practices for capital and knowledge accumulation; relocation to another locality is a prime example of such practices.

5.3. Linking Social Capital or the Government Services

In the above sections, I have demonstrated the limiting effects of the lack of bonding and bridging social capital for refugee integration, with the exception of briding capital accessed through ties with private sponsors. As Bourdeiusian (1986; 1977) social theory and the research on refugee integration (Strang and Ager 2010) underline the convertibility an interwovenness of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital and the importance of government services as buffer against social adversities, in what follows, I will examine the integration services offered by Canadian governments and their strengths and weaknesses in providing access to accommodation, employment, cultural and language training, and mental-health support.

Although the vast majority of refugees tackle such issues, here I will explicate the details of how gay Iranian men experience homophobia and racism while also being influenced by the extent of their access, or lack thereof, to governmental services.

5.3.1. Accommodation

Several participants mentioned that the policies and staff in welcome centers fail to consider the concerns of LGBT refugees. One participant said:

> *I was in [a] refugee center for two weeks but I tried to find a place and get out as soon as possible... I left Iran because I was worried about my safety. I was threatened by homophobia in people… here they put me in a dorm with ten other homophobic refugees from North African countries! When I asked if I could go to another room, the supervisor told me all the spots were taken… because I was in a rush to get out and did not know much about the housing market in Vancouver, I moved to the wrong place, and I had so much trouble moving out*.

With regards to housing policies, my informant's experience highlights the necessity of considering LGBT refugees' experiences of trauma and years spent in a third country (Carter et al. 2009) to develop stronger ties with temporary housing staff in providing information about the housing market and long-term legal support. Lack of information about housing services is amplified by refugees' limited financial resources that constrain their access to acceptable housing (Murdie 2008) both of which negatively affect social relations and capital accumulation. The majority of my participants in Toronto were living in social-housing buildings in St. James Town and Cabbagetown under destitute conditions while all of the participants in Vancouver were living with at least two roommates to share the housing costs. One participant said:

> *I have been in Canada for six years now…but I am not sure if I can be independent any time soon. I am almost 40 years old and I have to live with two*

roommates… (they) are my friends but I feel that at this age I need more privacy but cannot do anything about it.

Another participant said *"living in social housing limits my networking chances to others who live under similar conditions here because the neighborhood is a tag…that tells other people how much I earn or if I went to school…"*

Currently, federal and provincial policy-makers do not prioritize refugees' housing concerns since they believe that newcomers will rely on families and ethnic networks, i.e., their social capital, to find housing (Tanasescu and Smart 2010). These policies neglect the social processes of inclusion and exclusion and the inaccessibility of rights for the marginalized minorities (Grace et al. 2017; Carter et al. 2009). Improvements in housing services will help refugees to expand their social relations and accumulate cultural and social capital beyond their immediate surroundings (Waldinger 1997; Reitz 2007). Consequently, with the purposeful "expenditure of time and energy and so, directly or indirectly, of economic capital" (Bourdieu 1986, 10) proper housing conditions will lead to developing feelings of safety and belonging.

5.3.2. Employment and Financial Resources

Participants confirmed that limited networking and financial resources, in addition to meager governmental income support drive them to invest their time and energy in applying for and, as one participant said, "*getting any entrance jobs" and "hoping to get something better one day*." Throughout my fieldwork, I discovered that gay Iranian men, similar to other racialized immigrants in Canada, find themselves trapped in low-paying jobs that do not provide them with sufficient social or economic capital (Tanasescu and Smart 2010; Creese and Wiebe 2012; Frank 2013).

Table 3-10: Social assistance income, CIC RAP income support vs. low income cut-off (LICO) levels 2009 - Single employable

Single person	Social assistance (including applicable allowances)			CIC RAP			LICO	% of LICO	
	Basic social assistance	Other benefits*	Total	Basic support**	Other benefits (Non-RAP)*	Total		Social assistance	CIC RAP
Sample cities									
Toronto, ON	6,877	624	7,501	7,620	624	8,244	18,421	41%	45%
Vancouver, BC	7,320	458	7,778	8,220	458	8,678	18,421	42%	47%
Calgary, AB	6,996	245	7,241	7,584	245	7,829	18,421	39%	43%

Figure 2 CIC (2011) report on the gap in annual income between recipients of the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) and the Low Income Cut-Offs

The negative impacts of inadequate income supports— regarding amount and duration of payments—are amplified by the absence of co-occurring non-financial supports that could promote networking opportunities and cultural capital resources that would, in turn, maximize the benefits of financial support. According to my participants, a coherent but targeted employment program including elements of language training, legal assistance, and workplace skills training would be beneficial, as they now must confront insufficient and overcrowded language courses, inconsistencies between different settlement service providers, and complicated bureaucracies and referral procedures. One participant said that "*when I started looking for jobs I realized that I would never find anything through them* [agencies] *or I will get some basic job, which I did without their help*." In response to why he did not follow up with the agencies, he said:

> *It's so complicated that takes a long time to… register for some information sessions, wait for a referral to a settlement or social worker, and then they say, oh you need this and that document or this level of English competency and language certificate… then there is someone else to help you with a resume, and after all of this you will be applying for some basic jobs…*

Another participant said:

> *While I was waiting for the paperwork and running from this office to that center, they could sit me down and give me some roadmap or specific training so I could get a Canadian certificate or experience!*

Studies have looked at what happens to refugees when the emphasis is placed on their immediate economic independence when they are not equipped with sufficient cultural and social capital (Nee and Sanders 2001; Carter et al. 2009; Cattell 2001). In support of these findings, Valenta and Bunar's (2010) research about Scandinavian countries shows that the simultaneous combination of long-term (up to two years) financial support, family care, and mandatory cultural and language courses results in more successful job placements and refugee integration in the long run. Valenta and Bunar rightly point out that a combination of the Scandinavian integration model and North American affirmative action policies could best address current policy drawbacks to refugee integration.

5.3.3. Education and Cultural Training

In the absence of family and community social capital that regulates cultural capital transmission and access to community social capital (Bourdieu 1986), racialized LGBT refugees mostly rely on government services to compensate for their socioeconomic disadvantages. One participant said:

> *We received a few sessions of cultural training before leaving Turkey. I was expecting to hear things about Canada as my new home… there were a few other gay men and a family in those sessions. The mentor talked about such unimportant stuff ... actually said when you go to Canada you should not stare at women in bikinis on the beach or in the pool!*

In contrast to service providers' beliefs "that the Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) pre-departure information sessions adequately prepared" (CIC 2011) refugees for their arrival in Canada, my participants confirmed that the cultural training that they had received was mostly "*meager in content*" and "*random points*" that did not contribute to their knowledge of life in Canada. One participant said:

> *Training inside and outside Canada cover the very basic needs and skills… not very helpful in knowing the culture or family and friendship norms… I wanted to learn about society, about how to go to school here… I took the occupation-specific language courses which helped with finding a job but everyday communication in English is different! I never had the time or the money to improve my English.*

Another participant said:

> *I wish there was a way for me to go school… it's mostly about getting a degree, but also learning the culture, making friends and connections, and going through the path that almost every young person goes… feeling the same as other people of my age…*

Since various types of capital, cultural practices and educational credentials, in particular, are institutionalized, protected, and evaluated differently by institutions and employers (Bourdieu 1986; Kelly and Lusis 2006; Erel 2010), it is necessary for service providers to rethink the content of social-cultural training workshops to consider the target audience and focus on elements that will help the newcomers to accumulate the necessary knowledge to successfully interact with the host society and become well-integrated citizens. Indeed, the majority of services currently provided in Canada focus on creating targeted resumes and cover letters, and

on interview preparation and answering common interview questions in the tertiary job-market, workplace skills training, and basic computer skills. Although vital, these offerings, informed by neoliberal-multicultural policies, do not necessarily augment individuals' long-term reservoir of capital and capacities to construct social relations to respond to social prejudices against sexual and racial minorities.

5.3.4. Mental Health

During the initial resettlement years, refugees are often unable to afford therapy sessions. They have limited coping resources due to working-class and minority-status backgrounds (Cattell 2001). These factors, coupled with experiences of discrimination and long-term deskilling (Correa-Valez et al. 2012; Creese and Wiebe 2012), become sources of stress and barriers to integration. My interviews revealed that the combination of several factors including separation from family, ongoing social marginalization, dissatisfaction with employment status and earnings, and inability to plan for and decide on the future, has resulted in prevalent feelings of depression, isolation, and hopelessness among gay Iranian refugees. One participant said:

> *Things change when you arrive here. You have to face the reality that you don't belong here and then you have to see if you can find a way to belong! And as long as I know there is no one to tell you how to do it. The friendships that we had from home or in Turkey fall apart. Everyone goes his way.*

Another participant talked specifically about his friend's suicide, mentioned in the opening of this paper, and insisted that most gay Iranian men in his friendship circle are struggling with feelings of loneliness and isolation:

> *It's a strange feeling being here but being depressed because when… I was in Iran I was worried about my life and future and thought being here would change*

things for better. Life here is good in general, but we are suffering from a new kind of pain.

As discussed earlier and in support of refugees' attempts to belong and integrate, policy-makers should consider that bonding and bridging social capital often hinder racialized LGBT refugees' opportunities to communicate their experiences of exclusion and trauma, access unbiased care, and construct feelings of belonging (Phillimore and Goodson 2008; Cattell 2001; Ager and Strang 2010). Although family and community social ties play a vital role in helping refugees with experiences of trauma, such social capital is often characterized by patriarchal-religious intolerance for "deviant behavior," including homosexuality (Mckenzie et al. 2002). This inaccessibility of family and community social capital necessitates the implementation of extensive counseling services for refugees. Currently, all refugees in Canada have access to the Interim Federal Health program (IFH), which merely addresses basic and emergency health needs in addition to providing limited mental health services. Although the literature on refugees' access to mental health services has emphasized the importance of culturally sensitive services in providing specialized mental health services within increasingly multicultural societies to help with navigating social relations and structures in the new host society (Patil et al. 2015), racialized LGBT refugees' needs remain mostly absent in such research and services (O'Neil 2010).

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I discussed the flaws of mainstream social capital theories and suggested that an analysis informed by Bourdieu's theoretical framework can best address the limitations of social capital both as a theory and social policy with regards to refugee integration. Bottom-up analyses at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and class challenge the traditional taken-for-granted ethnic assimilation narrative and reveal that activating social capital depends on the fungibility of other forms of capital and on individuals' sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and class status. My goal was to highlight the limits of bonding and bridging social capital for racialized LGBT refugees' integration in Canada, underline the connection between governmental services or social links and bonding and bridging capital, and argue for the necessity of institutional intervention to equip individual refugees against social adversities and facilitate their access to social rights.

This latter point is crucial because, currently, integration policies, in line with neoliberal understandings of social belonging (Brodie 1997), render state membership dependent on individuals' financial resources and overlook social inequalities at the intersections of sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and immigration backgrounds (Edwards et al. 2003; Somers 2008). The Bourdieusian theoretical framework and the analytical discussions in this paper confirm that newcomers' navigation of the complex web of social relations and structures is informed by societal rules and norms, individuals' reservoir of capital, and their knowledge of rules. To respond to the disconnect between state's agenda on refugees' economic-independence and refugees desire for social belonging, we must acknowledge the circular-convertible relation between state-provided social rights, economic success, and the process of social capital accumulation for refugees who arrive with non-existing financial resources, community support, and cultural proficiencies.

To contribute to the recognition of the connection between various forms capital and the need for implementation of practice models that enable regeneration of practice and capital accumulation, and based on my fieldwork findings, I recommend subsidizing the LGBT-oriented organizations to fight racial prejudice and promote their capacities to serve more LGBT refugees. I also recommend that these organizations build closer ties with state immigration bodies that handle LGBT's asylum cases to both boost their advocacy roles and develop ties with refugees who may not know about the existence of these organizations. I recommend the immediate creation of safe spaces in refugee welcome centers as well as the development of pre- and post-arrival workshops about life in Canada for racialized LGBT refugees. The features and contents of these spaces and workshops should be developed in consultation with community members and delivered by mentors who are familiar with racialized LGBT refugees' lived experiences. Further, I underline the need for including therapy services for racialized-LGBT refugees, particularly through the recruitment of specialists who are familiar with the culture, language, and experiences of exclusion and trauma in both the home and host countries. Such services would address the depression and sense of isolation that threatens the refugees' sense of belonging and make it difficult to form sustainable communities. Lastly, I emphasize the role of private sponsors in refugee resettlement and integration and invite future research to explore the possibilities of drawing on sponsors' capacities for the resettlement of racialized LGBT refugees.

CHAPTER 5: TRANSNATIONAL QUEER REFUGEES: GAY IRANIAN MEN NAVIGATING REFUGEE STATUS AND CROSS-BORDER TIES IN CANADA

Abstract

Despite the rise in displaced population numbers, refugees' transnational lives, and those of sexual minority refugees in particular, have remained at the margins of transnational migration studies. In this paper, I focus on the case of gay Iranian refugees in Canada and analyze their pre-migration transnational lives and understandings of the asylum process, their post-migration transnational ties, and their activism practices. I underline refugees' agencies and argue against the rhetoric that represents refugees as passive and inherently welfare dependent. Further, based on my field work findings, I recommend analytical and methodological shifts to simultaneously explore refugees' pre-migration and en-route lives in addition to their post-migration lives in order to secure a comprehensive vision of transnational practices among refugees. At a theoretical level, I connect transnational, forced, and queer migration literature to the broader body of social theory by drawing on Bourdieusian social theory and argue that it is necessary to deploy de-nationalized methods of inquiry to account for intra-group diversities as well as border-crossing social ties in addition to economic ties.

Keywords: transnational migration, forced migration, queer migration, sexual minority, Canada

INTRODUCTION

During the past few years Canadian media have, once again, resurrected the rhetoric of refugee crisis and the images of asylum seekers in Canada as welfare parasites, passive, risks to security, and free-rider migrants. Similarly, the resurgence in nationalism, anti-immigrant attitudes, and right-wing populism has fueled the Trump administration's tightening of border controls, the Italian government's rejection of migrant rescue boats, and the Hungarian Parliament's approval of detaining all asylum seekers. Such perspectives and policies on refugees, currently predominantly from North African and Middle Eastern countries and of Muslim backgrounds, have roots in the late 1980s surge in the numbers of asylum seekers and the consequent spread of anti-immigrant and Islamophobic rhetoric (Lucassen 2018). More precisely, however, these representations originate from the negative Orientalist cultural constructs of Eastern passivity (Kyriakides et al. 2018), of Oriental man as "stateless, dark, perverse, pedophilic, disowned by family" (Puar and Rai 2002). It is in this context that I analyze the case of gay Iranian refugees in Canada to achieve the primary goal of this paper, which is to underline refugees' agency in building and sustaining transnational lives in order to refute the rhetoric that represents refugees as passive, inherently welfare dependent, and a menace to their host nation-states.

To date, refugees' transnational lives, sexual minority refugees in particular, have remained at the margins of transnational migration studies (Lindley 2009; Al-Ali et al. 2001a, 2001b). Forced migration studies have also lagged behind in incorporating contemporary transnational perspectives (Wahlbeck 2002; Castles 2003; for exceptions see Grace 2018; Lee 2018). This disconnect between transnational and refugee studies results because the social sciences understand refugees' movements as involuntary, reactive, and mostly devoid of agency (Fitzgerald and Arar 2018). The image of the passive refugee is part of the "rescue and

liberation" (Espiritu 2006) narrative that overlooks structural inequalities and assumes that once saved from the developing world, refugees' journeys end in disconnection from their homelands and assimilation into ethnic communities in host countries (Tang 2015). A similar narrative frames the internal migration of sexual minorities as a unidirectional move from rural patriarchy to urban freedom which, mainly, awaits the white middle-class LGBTs (Duggan 2012[2003]; Gorman-Murray 2007). Although some (and growing) attention is given to racialized sexual minority *immigrants*' ties with their home countries (Carrillo 2018), the nascent body of literature on queer migration has neglected sexual-racial minority *refugees*' transnational lives.

In this paper, I will rely on empirical data I collected from 35 interviews during six months of field work in Canada with gay Iranian refugees to demonstrate the complexities of transnationalism among sexual-racial minority refugees, by discussing several aspects of their transnational lives including their ties with families back in Iran, ties with the Iranian LGBT community awaiting the results of asylum claims in Turkey, and limited activism in Canada. A corollary of my findings and analytical approach is that transnational connections are not phenomena initiated post-migration between immigrants and their social networks in home countries. As my field work findings show, transnational ties span home, transition, and host countries and play a major role in shaping emigration paths. Thus, I argue for analytical and methodological shifts to simultaneously explore refugees' pre-migration and en-route lives in addition to their post-migration/resettlement lives in order to secure a comprehensive vision of transnational lives of refugees (see Huttunen and Juntunen 2018; Faist 1998).

Further, and to fulfill a secondary goal of going beyond producing an empirical report, I will connect my findings and discussions with the wider body of social theory. This objective is a response to appeals by migration and refugee studies scholars who have emphasized the

importance of conducting empirically and theoretically informed sociological research that produces cumulative knowledge without resorting to grand theories of migration (Portes 1997). These scholars call for mid-level theories "that can help explain specific empirical findings by linking them to appropriate bodies of historical and contemporary research" (Castles 2003). Building on Lacroix's (2014) comprehensive critique of social theories relevant to transnationalism, structure, and agency, I draw on Bourdieu's social theory (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) because it outlines a balanced schema of structure-individual relations that allows for foregrounding various aspects of refugees' agency in their transitional lives.

In what follows, I will first review the literature on transnational and forced migration studies while incorporating the relevant queer migration literature. Second, I will discuss Bourdieusian social theory in relation to transnational and forced migration studies. Third, I will delineate my six months of field work with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Canada which resulted in 35 semi-structured interviews. I will then thematically outline and discuss my findings, in terms of (1) pre-migration transnational lives and understandings of the asylum process, (2) post-migration transnational ties, and (3) activism with transnational outreach. In the conclusion I argue that to better understand transnational practices it is important to examine transnational *social* ties in addition to *economic* ties; acknowledge diversities in practice at the intersections of migration status, sexuality, gender, race, and ethnicity, among other social factors; and understand transnational practices within socio-historically shaped fields and structures.

TRANSNATIONAL, FORCED, AND QUEER MIGRATION

Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc (1994) defined transnationalism as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement." Their goal was to go beyond the traditional economic and assimilationist understandings of immigrants' lives and highlight the importance of the "many different racial, ethnic, or national identities which shape people's actions and consciousness" across borders (Basch et al. 1994). Other scholars have refined transnationalism by narrowing the content of transnational activities to core activities that are an "inherent part of the habitual lives" of non-state actors (Guarnizo et al. 1999; see also Portes et al. 1999). More recent studies, however, have embraced more inclusive understandings of transnationalism to account for various monetary and symbolic resources exchanged in occasional transnational "practices covering a wide array of spheres" (Dahinden 2017). Yet all of these focus exclusively on post-migration contexts without accounting for the individual and structural factors that inform refugees' pre-migration transnational lives.

Transnational migration studies have correctly questioned the validity of taking ethnic groups located within one nation-state as a given starting point (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002; Glick-Schiller 2008), and have called for adopting and applying de-nationalized epistemologies and methodologies in analyzing transnational practices "embedded in multi-layered structures (political, economic, social) at simultaneously local, national and supranational scales" (Dahinden 2017). Disconnected from this line of research, and up until the mid-1990s, refugees were mostly depicted as a collective whose members suffer from trauma and await liberation by Western countries, while experiencing loss of identity and detachment from their home countries after resettlement (Espiritu 2006; Malkki 1995; Faist 1998).

With the rise in asylum and refugee numbers, however, the ensuing research demonstrated that refugees are far from being detached from their communities in home and transition countries. These findings resulted in rethinking forced migration studies from a transnational perspective (Shami 1996; Wahlbeck 2002; Castles 2003). Several studies (Al-Ali et al. 2001, 2001; Miller 2011) have shown that refugees are particularly involved in "transnationalism from below" (i.e., practices of non-state actors), in their home and host countries' political, economic, and cultural activities. Other studies have underlined the similarity with which refugees and labor migrants transnationally deploy social networks (Fitzgerald and Arar 2018), social remittances (Grace 2018), and information and communication technologies (Vertovec 2004; Panagakos and Horst 2006; Ghorashi and Boersma 2009; Van-den-Bos and Nell 2006; Baldassar et al. 2016).

Overall, including the examination of refugee populations' daily lives in transnational migration studies has made two major analytical contributions to the field: underscoring the role of pre- and post-migration structural and individual factors that critically shape refugees' migratory paths (Faist 1998; Lacroix 2014; Lee 2018); and accounting for intra-group diversities that designate certain populations as *refugees* due to their religious beliefs or sexual orientation, and set such populations apart from their co-ethnic or co-national *immigrant* groups (Glick-Schiller 2008; Faist 2006; Vertovec 2007). The latter theme—accounting for diversities—is particularly central to queer migration literature which highlights the interplay between sexuality, as an often overlooked factor, and migration and integration.

Initially, queer migration researchers were occupied with the emancipatory rural-to-urban migration of sexual minorities (Binnie 2007; Weston 1995) as well as the hegemonic exportation of western sexual identities to the rest of the world (Povinelli and Chuancy 1999; Grewal and

Kaplan 2001). The more recent queer migration scholarship has explored the ways sexuality constitutes social relations, shapes collectivities, and structures sexual minority migrants' lives in host countries (Manalansan 2003; Grundy and Smith 2005; Cantu 2009; Carrillo 2018). In other words, and in line with the critique of ethnic assimilation narratives put forward by transnational migration studies, queer migration research "underlines the intra-group diversities around sexual and gender identities and explores the ways that sexuality may also drive immigration, inform group membership" (AUTHOR 2018), and shape cross-border ties. Indeed, building on queer migration literature allows for analyzing "the ways that (homo)sexuality as well as gender, race, and other relevant factors intersect in creating social hierarchies" and inform transnational belongings (AUTHOR 2018; see also Lewis and Naple 2014).

However, despite queer migration scholars' interest in examining the daily lives of sexual minority refugees, in addition to the typical research on LGBT immigrants, the former's transnational ties and experiences have remained within the bounds of theorization in the absence of empirical research. Such limitation is a result of methodological as well as analytical focus on the ways that LGBT refugees navigate national asylum apparatus (Akin 2017; Kahn and Alessi 2017), and the ways that these refugees seek to integrate and build new lives in their host countries (Murray 2016; Lee and Brotman 2011; see Gorman-Murray 2007 on diversities of queer relocations).

BOURDIEU'S SOCIAL THEORY AND TRANSNATIONALISM

Bourdieu's social theory revolves around the concepts of habitus, practice, capital, and fields. Habitus, formed under the influence of objective structures, is the subconscious system of lasting dispositions and the "embodied history, internalized as a second nature," capable of reproducing and reshaping the objective structures (Bourdieu 1977). Habitus is reshaped—albeit

not easily, due to its subconscious nature—as a result of encounters with new social fields and other actors' habitus. Habitus, which is shared by people of similar backgrounds, simultaneously generates and limits practice. Bourdieu (1984) understands practice as the outcome of the interaction between actors' dispositions embodied through their habitus, actors' diverse forms of capital, and power relations within each social field.

Bourdieu presents four convertible categories of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital defined, respectively, as financial profit, educational and intellectual qualities, a network of durable social relations, and the prestige and recognition of these forms of capital in each social field (Bourdieu 1986). Capital is the power gained and exerted by each individual within social fields. Each social field is comprised of certain social structures and individuals' and groups' multiple forms of capital, which condition actors' positions within the social fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). For instance, education, economy, sports, and human rights activism (Keck and Sikkink 1998) have their specific, but interdependent, rules and structures and can be conceptualized as social fields. Inevitably, individuals are unceasingly but disparately located in and interact with various structures of social fields. The rules of the field are implicit, and actors internalize these structures over time into their inter-subjective habitus.

Accordingly, any discord between the habitus and its respective social fields may provoke transformations in habitus and fields. For instance, the circulation of the western discourses of sexuality around the world or the undertaking of migration to other locales challenges actors' habitus in the face of new sets of rules and fields, while actors' actions are also reflected on those fields. Accordingly, individuals—refugees in particular—will have to adapt their practices to their new environment and act according to the rules of new social fields

to re-evaluate and accumulate capital while, in turn, impacting the structures of these fields (Thieme 2008; Bauder 2008).

Thus, if we are to understand the social meanings of actors' practices in society, we must acknowledge and examine the intersections of fields and their respective structures which encompass individuals and institutions (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). Traditionally, the nation-state was the entity on which the boundaries of social fields were modeled. This meant that social scientists would contextualize, investigate, and analyze social phenomena within distinct national contexts as if actors and their practices were impervious to global and transnational trends. For instance, the nation-state container would not allow for exploring gay Iranian refugees' daily lives that reach beyond their host country's borders; neither would it allow for understanding how gay Iranian refugees' ties with their families in Iran regulate their choice of communication tool. To account for such border-traversing phenomena, it is important to develop and adopt a definition of "social field" that perceives individuals and institutions as linked across borders.

Go and Krause (2016) and Buchholz (2016) underline that Bourdieu did not set fixed boundaries for habitus and social fields. This fluid and relational nature of social fields, they argue, means that the analytical starting points are not predetermined, and that units of analysis can span nation-state borders. Mirroring Dahinden's (2017) stance on de-nationalized migration research, Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) build on Bourdieu's understanding of fields and society to define transnational social fields as "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are exchanged, organized, and transformed…through direct and indirect relations across [national] borders." Actors within transnational fields bring together "social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and

organizations…found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places" (Faist 1998). This means that the newcomers, including refugees, can utilize cross-border sources of capital to build new social relations in the host country while sustaining cross-border ties with communities in home and transition countries (Nowicka 2013; Miller 2011). Consequently, it is possible to theorize that asylum seekers and refugees are continually located in and interact with power structures of transnational social fields, and that they have or will develop habitus and various forms of capital that enable successful navigation of the structures of transnational social fields.

METHODOLOGY

It is important to note here that the de-nationalization of the research process does not equate to de-territorialization of the researcher and research participants, since individuals and communities are located within national spaces, and their activities are informed by various national and international structures (Waldinger 2013; Boccagni 2012). A transnational approach to social fields requires an examination of the social and symbolic ties between refugees and their friends and families in home, transition, and host countries as well as the forms of capital exchanged through these ties. A multi-sited and longitudinal approach would be ideal, as it would enable us to examine transnational relations and practices. I previously conducted two phases of ethnographic field work with gay Iranian men in Iran and in Canada (with different participants). I documented the processes of pre-migration identity (re)construction (AUTHOR 2016, 2018) as well as the deployment of collective memories for post-resettlement integration purposes (AUTHOR 2018).

Building upon my previous research projects with gay Iranian men, my discussions in this paper are based on six months of field work with 19 gay Iranian refugees in Canada. They left Iran for Turkey to seek asylum at the offices of the United Nations because, as these are neighboring countries, they have geographical access and the financial means to undertake this relatively short journey. The most important factor, however, is that Iranian citizens do not need a visa to enter Turkey for stays of up to 90 days.

I used snowball sampling for participant recruitment in Canada and found participants in Toronto, Vancouver, and Ottawa. I reached out to a community activist friend who had been resettled to the United States, asking him to forward my contact information and project description to potential participants. Upon receiving potential participants' expression of interest, I communicated with them through social media and by telephone. In 2016 I conducted eight semi-structured interviews in Vancouver. I interviewed 11 more participants in Toronto and Ottawa during the winter of 2017. Interviews lasted for about two hours each and were complemented by detailed field notes taken during and after interviews. Next, and following initial data analysis, I conducted 13 one-hour follow-up interviews via telephone or Skype. I also conducted three two-hour interviews in Vancouver during the fall of 2017 (total interviews N = 35; total audio recorded from interviews ≈ 60 hours).

All participants were born and raised in Iran and identified as gay. With one exception, they all had a university education, and they ranged in age from 22 to 37. All self-identified as middle class in Iran but working class in Canada. Participants' length of stay in Canada (up to the time the interviews took place) ranged from 2 to 7 years. None expressed strong religious beliefs.

I conducted observations and interviews in participants' homes as well as public spaces such as cafes, parks, malls, and workplaces. I attended a gathering at the home of one of my participants in celebration of Persian New Year but did not conduct any interviews there. The interviews were conducted in Persian (except for one conducted in English). In designing my interview guide, I focused on the participants' social trajectories, the social construction of relationships, and the meanings of these contacts for them (Erel 2010). Ethnography and semi-structured interviews allowed me to record my participants' cross-border connections with their networks in home and transition countries as well as their endeavors to maintain and exploit such networks to interact with new realities and power struggles.

All interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the informant. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. I used an inductive approach to analyze my findings. I started with open coding and attached comments to quotes and excerpts from the data. Once the thematic categorization of data was established (as presented in the following sections), I undertook a more rigorous analysis to explain the emergence of these typologies by a deductively derived theoretical argument (Esser 2004). A refined Bourdieusian approach to transnational social fields, as discussed above, proved most capable of making sense of this set of data.

FINDINGS

Pre-Migration Transnational Lives and Understandings of Asylum Process

We can account for individuals' capacity and motivation to deploy border-traversing relations and the knowledge made available through such relations (i.e., social and cultural capital) once we locate their habitus as well as strategies of capital accumulation within

transnational social fields. My interviews with gay Iranian refugees revealed that when they were in Iran, consumption of the images and information dispersed through the media (read: western media) had added to their cultural capital and knowledge of the West, and had altered their habitus by, symbolically, creating imageries based on freedom for sexual minorities in western countries. For the most part, however, it was not the interplay between their habitus and volumes of capital, located within Iranian as well as global social fields, that resulted in their leaving Iran. One participant remembered:

> Yes, I have watched many movies made about gay people. Everyone has watched them because we used to exchange our DVDs or hard drives among [gay] friends. Closer to my departure from Iran we also had easier access to high-speed Internet at home which made it much easier to download movies or even follow the news or the gay models and celebrities on Facebook and Instagram.

In response to whether consuming these types of media and information was a motivating factor to leave and apply for asylum, one participant said, "personally, I remember when I was in Iran I did fantasize about the life that I would have in Europe or Canada, but I never seriously considered leaving so I could have such [a] life."

When I probed the factors behind emigration and seeking asylum, I discovered that several national and international social, political, and economic structural factors had vastly contributed to my informants' decisions to act according to their dispositions of habitus, as well as their access to various forms of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984; see Massad 2007 for a similar discussion on sexuality in Egypt). These structural factors consisted of the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for asylum in 2007, which consolidated certain migratory routes; the recent visibility and force given to Iran's penal code on same-sex sexual acts; and the ongoing deterioration of the Iranian economy as a consequence of Western sanctions against the Iranian government (AUTHOR 2018). One participant mentioned:

> I left Iran for Turkey twice. The first time it was because my neighbor found out that there was something going on between their son and me and they threatened to go to the police. They told my parents, and for a while, I did not dare go home…. I went to Turkey and applied for asylum but after two weeks realized that I might still be able to return and make a living [in Iran]. I really tried to have a life there, but after two years I left again…. During those two years I changed my job and moved to my own place and asked my boyfriend to live with me. Again the neighbors [caused problems], but it was more difficult this time because neither of us had the support network or the money to guarantee our safety…and I realized that I would lose my boyfriend, my future, and my sanity if I would stay…

Another participant told me about his living conditions in Iran, similar to those expressed in the quotation above, and that he had contemplated suicide until he came across a few weblogs written by gay Iranians who had been resettled or were in Turkey awaiting their claim results.

> I had no other way and did not know what to do before I got to know that if I can prove my homosexuality and that my life and future was at risk in Iran, I would [be] eligible to apply for asylum and leave Iran.…when I left in 2009 there were weblogs about this, and they were writing about their experiences, so I contacted one of the bloggers…. I am not sure if I would still be alive if it were not for this asylum option. The [Iranian] government and the police have become very wary of gay and transsexuals recently…

The early waves of gay Iranian asylum seekers actively took part in writing blogs in Farsi, forming connections throughout the asylum process, and sharing online their experiences of living in Turkey and resettlement in Canada or the United States. During the past decade, such blogs have decreased in numbers and have given way to several websites and online magazines that cover a wider range of social issues, collaborate with activists, and publish news and scientific articles translated into Farsi. There is now a chain of connections, or what sociologists of migration call an ethnic network (Portes and Böröcz 1989) between gay Iranian men who have sought asylum and have been resettled, those awaiting the results of their cases in Turkey, and those gay men who remain in Iran and are considering seeking asylum as an option should their situation there worsen. These blogs and the blog writers accelerate capital accumulation and

embody social capital by sustaining cross-border social ties throughout the asylum process. Put simply, transnational ties "in themselves may become a strategy of survival and betterment" (Faist 1998).

Ethnic networks are often seen as intermediate factors that facilitate chain migration (Castles and Loughna 2005) by providing financial means and ethnic businesses in the host country. In doing so, I argue, these networks first bring about changes in habitus by making available new forms of knowledge. These changes in the habitus, which is shared by people of similar backgrounds (Bourdieu 1977), might generate unprecedented practices including seeking asylum. These habitus- and structural-level changes among gay Iranians are tied to national and international enterprises, and challenge the narratives that merely demonize marginalized states and depict refugees as escaping the cruelties of a single state in the Global South (Espiritu 2006).

Post-Migration Transnational Ties

After resettlement in Canada, refugees find themselves linked with both the old (i.e., home and transition countries) and the new (i.e., host country) social fields and structures which constitute refugees' daily lives and experiences. In this section I will examine the ways that gay Iranians manage their ties with family and friends back in Iran and Turkey as well as their interactions with their host society.

Defining social fields as transnational implies that the lives of individual actors are not merely bound to the host nation-state's rules and regulations, but that they are simultaneously influenced by social and cultural norms as well as laws and politics of the home and transition countries (Dahinden 2017; Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). Throughout my field work it was evident that my informants' dispositions and experiences that were shaped in Iran, and their endeavors to sustain and further accumulate social capital through their home-country ties, had

informed their decision to conceal their sexual orientation from their social network even after resettlement in Canada. One participant said:

> Living in Canada means that I can be myself here, but it definitely does not mean that I can call my dad one day and tell him hey I am gay. I still have to follow the norms of my homeland because my family and friends live in that society which unfortunately does not accept my sexual orientation and even severely punishes it. A couple of my Canadian friends were surprised to know that I am still in closet with my family because they think that I am safe in Canada and that I should [not] fear anything…I have not told my parents about myself not because I am afraid of persecution or harassment, but because I know that they may not understand me or that they might ostracize me from family connections.

Rather than coming out and risking their social ties and capital, my participants preferred to keep a balance between family ties and life in Canada, and to keep their parent–child relationships intact. Except for three, my participants were not out to their parents or siblings. Interestingly, my informants had justified their emigration to their families as a search for jobs or education in Turkey and the West. One participant said:

> The truth is that I have moved here, but I am still part of my family so from time to time I have to hide who I am and say I immigrated because of work reasons…. One of my classmates from Iran got in touch with me asking about universities here in Canada, and now he lives here [Vancouver], and I have to deal with him and the risk of him knowing that I am gay because I do not want him find out and tell others back in Iran.

Looking at the quality and methods of managing their social relations across borders, I found that my participants stay connected with their kin through phone calls, social media, and (infrequent) travel. As a result of emigration and resettlement, my participants had learned about and could afford to make Internet calls on their cellphones, because this method required the least effort in terms of their sexual identity and lifestyle management. One participant said,

> My life is now in Iran, in Turkey, and here in Canada because I have my parents and my siblings in Iran and many friends in Turkey who are still waiting for their cases…. I have got friends in Iran too, but they have decided to stay there because they somehow manage their life. I am in touch with them mostly through Internet phone calls and texting on

> Skype, Telegram, and WhatsApp…it's cheap and my mom or others cannot know much about my life here.

The literature on transnational migrants' lives underlines the role of communication technologies and the accessibility of travel means (Ghorashi and Boersma 2009; Vertovec 2004) in managing and developing transnational ties. Several studies involving refugees have shown that families' access to communication technology in their home countries has become a means of burdening refugees with financial requests (Lindley 2009). Likewise, families' and friends' easy access to Internet phone calls and connections through social media have increased the risks of exposing gay refugees' sexual identities (Dhoest 2016). This latter consequence testifies to the fact that social fields and their respective structures stretch beyond national borders to influence refugees' lives in their host country (see Portes 1998 and Zontini 2010 for their discussions of how social capital may restrict immigrants' opportunities in the host society).

In contrast to most refugee groups, none of my particpants was involved in sending monetary remittances to their families in Iran, because (as was revealed in the interviews) the majority of my informants' families held middle-class status in Iran and had access to various forms of capital. Indeed, a series of combinations and conversions between informants' social and financial capital as well as their access to the above-mentioned blogs and blog writers as transnational sources of cultural and social capital had strongly shaped their habitus and decisions to leave their home country. One participant said, "no, I do not send money to my parents or siblings. They do not need money from me or anyone because they are doing fine financially!" He continued, "I did not leave because there was a war…my family is not at risk, I was actually the only one at risk because of my sexuality and because the government could easily pick on me as an individual target." Another participant, expressing similar thoughts, said:

> I have never sent money to my family, they do not need it and, honestly, I am not making that much money here…but I was among the luck[y] ones in Iran, my family had enough money which meant I had enough money and had access to the Internet and some ways of affording emigration and asylum wait-times in Turkey, I know at least two friends from Iran who could not leave because they did not have the money and access to right people.

This participant and several others emphasized that they had, for the most part, sustained their transitional social ties with their gay friends in home, transition, and host countries through social media and phone calls as a way of communicating their experiences of seeking asylum and life in Canada. In addition to contributing cultural capital, two participants mentioned that they had on one occasion sent money to a friend or a former roommate in Turkey to support them through the asylum process. One participant said:

> We did not have access to legal jobs in Turkey and could not afford renting a proper place; I did not have access to hot water so many months! A couple of years ago, when I had found a job here [Toronto], I decided to send some dollars to my ex-roommate in Turkey because I knew he was not in a good place.

Besides their border-traversing ties and practices, gay Iranian refugees must navigate the challenges of adapting to the host society's economic, political, and education fields as well as the challenges of belonging to social groups, including the Iranian diaspora and the mainstream LGBT groups in Canada. The former group's patriarchal gender and sexual structures have served as barriers against the full inclusion of gay Iranian men (Shakhsari 2012), while the latter group's homonationalism (Duggan 2012[2003])—the rights-based politics that consolidate around white middle-class gay men's values without challenging heteronormative institutions—marginalizes racialized gay Iranian men (Steele et a. 2018; Ocampo 2014; Manalansan 2006). One informant's comments reflect his social relations in Canada:

> Yes, Iranians are well educated, and most of them are financially successful, well-off people. But when you talk to them about this stuff [gender and sexuality], they do not even want to hear it. It's like you question their whole identity! Just have a look at Iranians' Facebook page. There are a couple of psychologists who leave some random

> but educational posts about sexuality but no one comments on those posts, it's like they do not want to see it!

In sum, all social groups experience gradual changes in their habitus, volumes of capital, and modes of practice as a result of encounters with new social structures and other actors' habitus within overlapping social fields. Bourdieu's social theory presents a relational understanding of individuals' agency and social structures (Castles 2003; Lacroix 2014), underlines various power relations, and allows for understanding individuals' practices which are informed by national and transnational experiences, structures, and sources of capital. These gradual changes and transnational processes are some of the social integration mechanisms that impact and are impacted by immigrants and non-immigrants alike (Dahinden 2017; Wieviorka 2014).

Activism with Transnational Outreach

During my field work, I found that gay Iranian men, mainly those with greater cultural capital (i.e., higher educational attainments and previous activism experiences; Guarnizo et al. 2003), had become agents of social change by using the Iranian diasporas' networks and media channels to promote discussions around the acceptance of LGBTs among Iranian communities inside and outside Iran. The Iranian diasporic communities have established themselves as ethnic communities in several cities in the United States and Western Europe. These communities have founded broadcasting companies and channels to produce entertainment programs and TV shows that Iranians in and outside Iran consume via satellite dishes.

Until recently, any discussion about sexualities and gender roles had been absent from diasporic communities and politics; however, during the past decade some factions of the anti-Iranian-government diaspora, otherwise replete with patriarchy and homophobia, have

strategically started to include LGBT rights in their media channels as part of their conflict with the Iranian government (Shakhsari 2012). The visibility that was initially given to LGBT issues has laid the ground for more discussion about homosexuality while including gay and lesbian activists in programs that are broadcasted via satellite channels. One of my informants, who was a regular guest on various TV talk shows, said:

> There are some gays and lesbians working for the VOA Persian or the BBC Farsi, and in ManotoTV [a TV broadcasting channel], some of them are news spokespersons…but none of them is out to the public, and their audience does not necessarily know about their sexuality. If they come out, they will lose their jobs! Look at the whole controversy about the ManotoTV's song contest host who was accused of being gay and the way people from inside and outside Iran attacked him on social media.

He continued, "I am trying to establish myself but not depend on my income from the Persian TV companies so that I can, one day, be out and still be on TV." In total, three of my participants were working with Iranian diasporic media as guests in talk shows. One of them, who had cut ties with his family in Iran, had already used his fame and popularity to initiate conversations about LGBT issues on his Instagram page:

> After a few months that I was working with ManotoTV people started to follow me on Twitter and Instagram. Of course, none of them knew that I am gay until last year I posted one picture from Toronto's Pride. I was wearing a white dress with tonnes of make-up with this long beard…hundreds of people unfollowed me after that picture, but so many more stayed and kept insulting me and homosexuals [in general]. But I noticed that some of my followers started to defend me and my sexuality by replying to the offensive comments. The best thing was a mother who contacted me from Iran to ask why I was in a dress and what does it mean to be gay, because she had seen some similar behaviors in her teenage son and wanted to be supportive of him in case he was gay!

Previous research has shown that any discord between the habitus and its respective social fields may result in or provoke transformations in that habitus or those fields. For instance, the undertaking of migration to other locales challenges actors as they face new sets of rules and fields. Consequently, individuals—and refugees in particular—will have to adapt their practices to their new environment and act according to the rules of new social fields to re-evaluate and

accumulate capital (Thieme 2008; Bourdieu 1986). The forms and amounts of capital and the sets of dispositions and expectations that migrants bring with them might be insufficient for or in discord with the new environment (Killian and Manohar 2016; Bauder 2008; Kelly and Lusis 2006). Notwithstanding this, and perhaps more importantly, various forms of social and cultural capital that are accumulated by refugees become mediums of power that (Cameron and Cabaniss 2018), as in the case of gay Iranian refugees, enable individual members to engage with other community members to challenge cultural constructs and, ultimately, reinterpret the rules of social structures.

In addition to collaborating with diasporic media, four of my participants were working with other members of Iranian LGBT groups, some of whom had left Iran over a decade ago, to build ties with Canadian activists and municipal and provincial politicians. Indeed, residence in Canada and access to the host country's institutions and structures (Van-den-Bos and Nell 2006) have increased gay Iranian men's social and cultural capital and have reshaped their activism skills and the relevant aspects of their habitus. During my field work, for example, I was invited by my participants to be a forum member of an Iranian LGBT group, the Iranian Queer Organization (IRQO), whose members were living in Canada, the United States, and Turkey. The organization was using Google groups and file-sharing tools to share information, formulate strategies, and guide lobbying meetings and community politics, most of which were targeted at increasing awareness about gay Iranian asylum seekers' situations in Turkey and the necessity of expediting their case processing. The participant who invited me to join the online group said,

> The primary goal is to increase awareness…. The Canadian government has put a halt on resettling LGBT refugees from Turkey, but most Canadian activists do know about this so we have been trying to arrange meetings with our MPs in different cities and with LGBT activist groups to talk about this issue and find ways to restart the program.

During my six months of field work I discovered two characteristics of Iranian LGBT groups and their activities. First, throughout the years and as a result of gaining experience with Canadian methods of activism, Iranian LGBTs have adopted western activists' language of universal human rights and politics in making symbolic ties and navigating politics. As mentioned by one participant, "[Iranian] activists have managed to secure some funding from various resources and have succeeded in making progress by placing gay Iranian asylum seekers on the agenda for policymakers in Canada." Currently, there are two diasporic activist groups that exclusively work on human rights and asylum cases of Iranian LGBTs: IRQO and Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees (IRQR). Both groups are located and registered in Canada. Although I observed the activists' occasional attempts to avoid the vilification of Iran in order to underline Iranian queers' need for support, the majority of IRQO's forum discussions as well as IRQR's news reports and biographies on refugees have been framed in a language that vilifies the totality of Iranian society, "an outdoor prison named Iran" (IRQR 2018). Their rhetoric directly builds on post-9/11 transnational politics and discourses which, now more than before, denigrate the Middle Eastern nation-states and their cultures, and depict Middle Eastern LGBT refugees as passive victims of Oriental cultures and states (Kyriakides et al. 2018; AUTHOR 2018; Puar and Rai 2002).

Second, building groups and engaging with activists and politicians are intensely pursued activities at times, but are more often short-lived and disorganized in bringing members together even for online meetings, or for establishing group consensus to plan for long-term goals. Similar to Colombian immigrants in Canada (Landolt and Goldring 2010), gay Iranian refugees' lack of organization and their inability to build and sustain non-personal networks with Canadian activists is rooted in their habitus that contains pre-migration mentalities. Elsewhere (AUTHOR

2018) I have argued that the absence of community organization and social commitment among Iranian diaspora is due to their distrust of (extra)territorial and transnational politics of their now globally isolated government. In addition to this diasporic mentality, gay Iranian refugees' families still live in Iran, and they fear that any involvement in human rights and sexual politics, both of which are interpreted as treacherous by the Iranian regime, might jeopardize the safety of their family members back home.

CONCLUSION

My findings confirm refugees' engagement in various forms of transnational activities, and highlight the role of several micro- and macro-structures in regulating the forms and frequencies of transnational practices (Castels 2003; Koser 2007). My findings challenge the narrow scholarly focus on migrants' ethnicity and their financial cross-border activities as factors that define the quality and quantity of transnational practices. I argue that for refugees who arrive with limited financial and cultural capital, symbolic and social ties are of higher priority and viability. Further, I underline two major contributions of my research findings.

First, I argue that it is necessary to account for the social relations and symbolic ties that stretch beyond national borders because these ties are as important as economic or political activities in bringing social groups together (Al-Ali et al. 2001; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). Gay Iranian refugees, in contrast to most migrant groups, are not directly involved in cross-border financial activities, nor are they involved in home-country politics through voting or political party formation (Horst 2008; Koser 2007). In the absence of extensive financial and cultural capital, gay Iranian refugees in Canada draw on their social ties and their transnational habitus (Kelly and Lusis 2006)—that is, their shared sexual identities, past experiences from

home and transition countries, and their friendship ties in Iran, Turkey, and Canada—to evaluate their sources of capital and navigate transnational social fields. With regards to social relations and remittances, Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) emphasize that "taken together and over time, their combined efforts add up and can alter the economies, values, and practices" of communities across borders.

Second, I argue that de-nationalized analyses of transnational practices must also account for diversities in practice at the intersections of migration status, sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, and other relevant social factors (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003; Anthias 1998). This analytical goal is attainable through a Bourdieusian theoretical approach that accounts for power inequalities (i.e., differences in capital and habitus in overlapping social fields), which inform migration decisions and transnational practices. This approach discards any predetermined categorization such as ethnic niche or a fixed LGBT community and prioritizes an understanding of social phenomena based on "the relation of specific kinds of capital and of the interplay of social fields and habitus" (Thieme 2008). For gay Iranian refugees, for instance, it is the combination of sexuality, nationality, race, class, migration regimes, gender structures, and previous experiences that regulates their transnational connections (Guarnizo et al. 2003). Gay Iranians' transnational activities underline the importance of pre-migration contexts and the fluidity of refugees' attachments to and movements between home, host, and transition countries (Gorma-Murray 2007; Manasanlan 2006; Keene et al. 2017).

In sum, it is crucial to understand transnational practices as existing within socio-historical fields and structures and as being impacted by intersecting micro- and macro-level factors (Lacroix 2014). Transnationalism then becomes "one form of economic, political, and cultural adaptation that co-exists with other, more traditional forms" (Portes 2001). This

conclusion not only questions the interpretation of refugees' flight from their home country as a unidirectional and final move, but also supports an understanding of individuals' transnational social practices as connected through the interplay of social fields and habitus (Waldinger 2013). I invite future research to contextualize and empirically examine refugees' pre-migration, en-route, and post-migration transnational practices to bring to light the individual and structural factors that intersect in informing their daily lives.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In this study I discussed gay Iranian men's integration practices in Canada at the intersection of sexuality, gender, race, nationality, and class, to highlight the importance of accounting for historical continuities of exclusions and oppression and to emphasize the necessity to avoid linear and homogenized understanding of immigrants' experiences and demands in post-migration contexts. My findings indicate that gay Iranian men find themselves in an 'in-betweenness', meaning that they do not perceive themselves as either totally socially excluded or as belonging to any certain group due to different factors that impede or facilitate the creation of shared meanings between gay Iranian men and other social groups.

Although my participants underlined sexuality as a pivotal factor in regulating their access to social resources and belonging through relations with other individuals and social groups, they also talked about several structural barriers that constrain their integration practices, in finding their place in Canada. Since loss and devaluation of social, cultural, financial capitals are common among refugee populations, Ager and Strang (2008) have developed a conceptual framework on refugee integration to set an agenda for the way forward with regards to improving the current integration and resettlement services. The framework brings together various factors at social and structural levels:

Figure 3 Domains of Integration

Ager and Strang (2008), limiting their analyses and the construction of the conceptual framework to several semi-independent categories, initially failed to connect these categories and their components and highlight the convertibility and accumulative effects between each of these categories. They summarize the framework as including:

> Ten core domains that shape understandings of the concept of integration. The domains cover achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups in the community; and barriers to such connection, particularly stemming from lack of linguistic and cultural competences and from fear and instability (Ager and Strang 2008, 184).

The authors (Strang and Ager 2010) revisit their framework by drawing on Hobfoll's (1998) work on 'resource acquisition spirals' to emphasize that the any of the domains included in the framework is indeed a "resource from which refugees may draw and invest in securing other resources. Such resource investments - when sufficient fluidity of action and linkage is enabled - establish resource acquisition spirals which lead to social, economic and political progression" (Strang and Ager 2010, 604). Yet, they do not connect their framework to the larger body of sociological theory and the literature on forced migration to facilitate "the engagement of refugee studies with theories of migration … [and] to investigate empirically how variations in economic conditions and violence, as well as their interaction, affect out-migration" (Fitzgerald and Arar 2018, 393) and integration practices. In response, I discussed the flaws of mainstream social capital theories and suggested that an analysis informed by Bourdieu's theoretical framework can best address the limitations of social capital both as a theory and social policy regarding refugee integration.

Bottom-up analyses at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and class reveal that activating social capital depends on the fungibility of other forms of capital and individuals' sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and class status. My study highlights the limits of bonding and bridging social capital for racialized LGBT refugees in Canada and recommends that policy-makers consider these refugees' needs when designing policies and services and bring sexuality to the center of migration and refugee studies. Accordingly, Easton-Calabria and Omata (2018, 6) accurately argue that "the promotion of self-reliance based on neoliberal tenets such as minimal state intervention, unregulated markets and individualism as a viable solution for refugees deserves scrutiny". Adam and Rangel (2015, 693) also remind us that:

> Whether through taxation, education, health, and social services, or immigration, the consequences of state-sanctioned systems can be profound for the well-being of people differentiated by race, social class, gender, ethnicity, and place of origin. As citizenship has come to be extended beyond its initial conceptualization as a set of legal or political rights in liberal democratic societies, it has become a barometer of the enfranchisement of people in the various spheres of their lives, most notably the workplace, family, sexuality and cultural representation.

Based on my fieldwork findings, I recommend the immediate creation of safe spaces in refugee welcome centers. I also recommend developing pre-arrival workshops about life in Canada for racialized LGBT refugees. These workshops should be delivered by mentors who are familiar with those refugees' lived experiences. Further, I highlight the necessity of implementing culturally sensitive therapy and mental health medical services for racialized LGBT refugees. Such services would address the depression and sense of isolation that threaten the refugees' sense of belonging and make it difficult to form sustainable communities. I presented the findings of this chapter, i.e., chapter 3, as well as these policy recommendations at the 2018 annual meeting of the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. My findings and recommendations were well-received by the audience who were members of the organization "Rainbow Refugee" which is working with the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in addressing LGBT refugees' resettlement needs in Canada.

Lastly, I point out that it is important to understand transnational practices as occurring in socio-historical contexts and being impacted by intersecting micro- and macro-level factors (Lacroix 2014). Transnationalism then becomes '*one* form of economic, political, and cultural adaptation that co-exists with other, more traditional forms' (Portes 2001). This conclusion not

only questions the finality of refugees' flight from home countries, but it also supports an understanding of individuals and their social practices, including transnationalism, as connected (Waldinger 2013) and 'a result of the relation of specific kinds of capital and of the interplay of social fields and habitus' (Thieme 2008). I invite future research to contextualize and empirically examine refugees' transnational practices to shed light on the individual and structural factors that intersect in informing their daily lives. Such research will advance our understandings of diversities within social groups and their practices, traverse geographically-bound analyses of social relations, and promote social and economic policies that consider social groups' values and experiences in supporting their objectives. Such research must explore refugees and refugee integration as topics that "make visible a transgression of the social contract between a state and its citizen" (Espiritu 2006, 423) and the non-citizen newcomers at the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, nationality, class, and histories of colonialism-imperialism.

LIMITATIONS

I have identified two main limitations of this study both of which concern the question of generalizability. The first limitation concerns the number of the recruited participants and the collected data. The second limitation is the question of whether my findings are generalizable to the Iranian LGBT groups in the diaspora given that I worked with gay Iranian men only. Both limitations gestate from the study's methods of data collection, i.e., ethnography and interviews.

Similar to many other methodologies of qualitative research, ethnography, which is committed to the in-depth study of a particular group, trades large-scale quantitative data for generalization purposes with a smaller fragment of data for logical inferences based on the case at hand. Mitchell (1983, 193), focusing on the utility of a case study as an example of qualitative research, argues against the relevance of statistical representativeness and emphasize that

"extrapolation is in fact based on the validity of the analysis rather than the representativeness of the events". Such analysis investigates "the larger forces shaping conditions in the case" with the goal of making logical inferences through dis/uncovering mechanisms and tracing processes that are "necessarily linked to one another through time" (ibid).

I carried out this study with 19 gay Iranian men who had come to Canada as resettled refugees. I carried out one main course ethnographic research that resulted in 19 interviews in addition to extensive field notes taken during and after each interview and gathering. In a next stage, I conducted 13 follow-up interviews via Skype and telephone. For the last phase of data collection, I traveled to Vancouver and met with and interviewed three key informants for the third time (total interviews: 35). At this point of the fieldwork, perhaps long before that, I had attained data saturation as my interviews had begun to generate and confirm the findings from the previous interview(s) rather than producing new information. This was not surprising considering the limited scope of this study which concerns gay Iranian refugees' life in Canada as well as the nature of this study which involves a hard-to-reach-and-recruit population and, in this case, a relatively small community of no more than 400 individuals according to Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees' (IRQR) unofficial reports. Accordingly, and with due consideration given to the time and limited financial resources, I concluded that the collected data are sufficient for, as stated in the introduction chapter, making logical inferences about the gay Iranian refugees' daily integration practices, as an example of racialized sexual minorities in Canada.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

I understand the presented research in this study as the building block of a more extended project that not only looks at gay Iranians' lives as refugees in Canada but also as Iranian citizens

while in Iran and as asylum seekers in Turkey. This project seeks to present a comprehensive exploration of the migration cycle of gay Iranians from Iran to Canada with the goal of delineating on the complex micro- and macro-level historical and sociopolitical power relations that draw on the heritages of colonialism, imperialism, and Orientalism to simultaneously generate and limit knowledge and practice for the purposes of identity construction, utilitarian deployment of refugees and refugee apparatus, and projects of nation building. After all gay Iranian men's lives throughout their exilic journey are impacted by a world system in which the Iranian nation and society is marginalized and, in a way, subordinate to the Western nations that enjoy hegemonic position within global power hierarchies (Wallerstein 1976). To this end, I have previously completed two phases of fieldwork with gay Iranians who live in Iran. In my publications (Karimi 2016; 2018) based on these phases of fieldwork, I argue that:

> Identification with various discourses of sexuality is not always complete; at times it becomes partial or even contrary to a certain discourse. In case of Iranian gay men, they are hailed by and have access to several disparate discourses: current homophobic Iranian culture, emerging youth culture, Iranian diaspora's viewpoints, and Western emancipatory discourses that carry racist-orientalist components…. Therefore, avoiding the categorically homogenizing effects of the recent 'universal' gay identity in the age of globalization, any analyses of sexual identities should not 'presuppose that such identifying will necessarily result in the internal sameness' (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Therefore, any future exploration of sexual identity formation at intersection of race/ethnicity … should pay precise attention to the more complicated effects of multiple, changing sociocultural contexts (Karimi 2018, 3).

Conducting and establishing the research presented in this dissertation based on the above mentioned fieldwork findings and publications renders the section concerning gay Iranian asylum seekers' lives in Turkey as the missing piece of the puzzle. Fortunately, there are a few scholars around the world who are working on Iranian asylum seekers lives and social networks in Turkey. For instance, Professor Akcapar of Georgetown University draws on her ethnographic fieldwork among Iranian asylum seekers to make arguments that overlap with and mirror parts of my findings and discussions in previous chapters of this dissertation:

> Migrant networks and social capital are equally important in transit countries. These networks, however, do not always generate positive social capital for Iranian migrants as there are scarce resources and there is no enforceable trust. Iranian migrant networks reorganized in a transit country like Turkey are not static structures and they are largely affected by macro-variables such as current immigration and asylum policies of Turkey and Europe, transnationalism and globalization, and other place-specific features like Turkey's location bridging East and West, the existence of human smuggling networks, and its proximity to Iran. But Iranian migrant networks in Turkey are also affected by micro-variables, such as gender, religion, and ethnicity of individual migrants (Akcapar 2009, 161).

In addition to relying on this body of research as well as the growing literature on asylum seekers' lives in countries of transit (Palmgren 2013), I intend to go beyond merely taking Turkey and asylum seekers as sources of inquiry about legal asylum structure or temporary migrant networks organized in a transit country. I will embed this piece of the puzzle within my extended project, but I will also branch out my research to address the ongoing shortcomings of

theoretical and analytical discussions on the "refugee crisis": these discussions, informed by willed forgetfulness of the European and Anglo-Saxon imageries, primarily explore issues of welfare states, religious practices, and employment. Thus, I aim to deconstruct the "refugee crisis" rhetoric by examining the relations between modern refugee and asylum apparatus as well as the historical, political, and socio-cultural legacies of old modes of *othering* rooted in European conquests against Muslims and Jews, and indigenous populations in Americas and Africa.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Question guide: If and how sexuality has influenced life in Tehran, emigration, transition time in Turkey, and integration in Canada:

Section 1)
For participants in Tehran

1- Could you please give me a brief introduction about yourself?. (explore: age, job, education, housing, support network, etc.)
2- Tell me about your sexuality and what it means to you or to those around you. (explore: sexuality, homosexuality, gender, feedback from family members or friends, etc.)
3- Have you experienced any kind of discrimination? (explore: family, friends, community, work environment, political issues, etc.)
4- Have experienced any form of bullying at school or at work? (explore: nature of bullying, femininity, masculinity, school structure, work environment, etc.)
5- What does it mean to live in Iran as a gay person? (explore: coming out, stay in closet, dating scene, sexual acts, risk factors, etc.)
6- What are the mechanisms that make life easier/harder in Iran for gay people? (explore: family, support network, politics, economy, education, stigma, etc.)
7- What are the strategies to go around the barriers that cause problems for living in Iran?
8- Could you tell me about the time you realized you are gay? (explore: stage in life, context, resources/discourses, etc.)
9- Did you feel/decide you had to hide your sexuality? (explore: fear factors, consequences of hiding, links to survival strategies, etc.)
10- How do you see your future in Iran? (explore: job, dating, family, immigration, refugee, etc.)

Section 2)
For participants in Turkey:

Questions 1-9 from section 1 and:

1- When did you start thinking about leaving Iran? (explore: factors, timing, stage in life, etc.)
2- How did you leave Iran? (explore: legal/illegal way, process of border crossing, etc.)
3- How were the first days in Turkey? (explore: support network, job, housing, language, Turkish social context, etc.)
4- What/how was the starting point of applying for asylum in Turkey?

5- Could you please describe the process of asylum that you have been going through? (explore: asylum structure, expenses, legal support, socio-psychological support, time, required evidences, language of process, etc.)
6- How is life now after spending all this time in Turkey? (explore: support network, job, housing, language, Turkish social context, etc.)
7- How do you see your future after your case is accepted? (explore: job, dating, family, immigration, life in Canada, language, family back in Iran, etc.)
   Alternatively: How do you see your future if your case is rejected?

Section 3)
For participants in Canada:
Questions 1-9 from section 1 and question 1-5 from section 2, and:

1- How were the first days in Canada? (explore: support network, job, housing, language, Canadian social context, etc.)
2- How is life now in Canada? (explore: support network, job, housing, language, Iranian diaspora, Canadian LGBT community, family back home, etc.)
3- How do you see your future in Canada?

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Consent form of participating in:
Social Study:
Iranian gays' transnational identity: Life in Tehran and transitions as asylum seekers in Turkey and Canada

Responsible Investigator: Aryan Karimi, Department of Sociology, 4-15 HM Tory Building University of Alberta, Edmonton, akarimi1@ualberta.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Bucerius, Department of Sociology, 5-21 Tory Building University of Alberta, Edmonton, akaler@ualberta.ca

Purpose of Study: This project explores the meanings of same-sex sexual attraction in narratives of Iranian men who self-identify as homosexual and apply for asylum in Turkey based on sexual orientation. In this project I aim to identify specific meanings of gender display and sexual orientation at intersection of race, gender, class, and nationality through narrative analyses of Iranian gay men who live in Iran, those awaiting asylum processes in Turkey, and those who have been relocated to Canada. I then aim to use this research to provide Canadian asylum officers and judges with concrete, factual reference information regarding culturally specific attributes of homosexuality among Iranian men. This will help to ensure fair decisions on asylum cases and, in line with recent Bill C-31, expedite attendance to asylum procedures. Also, this project gives voice to young gay men to improve sociopolitical understandings of gay men's situation in Iran, expedite asylum processes in Turkey, and clarify their socio-cultural needs after relocation to Canada, including language and job training.

1-This interview is done as a part of my PhD thesis, supervised by Dr. Sandra Bucerius. In addition I am using this collected information (summed up with other data) to write papers which may be published. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

2-The research that you are participating in (at this stage) is in interview and conversation format. Interviews will be around two hour while I may contact you, if you are still willing to participate, for follow-up questions. I will record audio interviews upon your permission for the purpose of transcribing the interviews. All identifying information associated with you will be coded anonymously and kept by the researcher. This information will be read by me only. No other individual or party will have access to the information.

3- This research is attempting to study the Iranian homosexuals' social identity through their own understandings and definitions. As such there will be no right or wrong answers. I am listening to you as a neutral person to understand your experiences and embrace your memories, so I want you to feel free to say anything you like in answering the questions.

3- Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time with no retribution or punishment to you. Researcher should be informed within three weeks after the interview about the withdrawal. You can also resume your participation if the study is still ongoing.

4- There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to any individual participant.

5- Participants are not provided with recompense for their participation in this study.

6- If you have any question do not hesitate to contact me by email : akarimi1@ualberta.ca

7- Any further questions concerning the rights of participants, validity of research and the rules governing the study may be forwarded to Dr. Sandra Bucerius at University of Alberta by email: bucerius@ualberta.ca

By indicating agreement below the subject agrees that he/she has been fully informed of his or her rights, and is willing to participate in the study. In case of Skype interviews with participants in Iran, your oral consent would suffice for participation in this study.

Participant	Researcher
Name and date	Name and date

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