

Un/Settling

A critical ethnographic inquiry into settlement

by refugees making claims

based on sexual orientation or gender identity persecution

by

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ABSTRACT

Propelled by fear of violence and flight from stigma, impelled by desire for connection and belonging, the movements of people whose sexualities or genders defy and offend norms cover a complex spatial, social, and psychological terrain. This critical qualitative inquiry was conducted in partnership with Rainbow Refugee Committee, a community group that supports refugees making claims based on persecution of their sexual orientation or gender identity. To investigate how Queer Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender (QLGBT) refugees engage in settlement, I pursued three inquiry strategies. I wrote reflexively about my on-going participation in the support and advocacy work of Rainbow Refugee. I then conducted narrative interviews and collaborative interpretation process with nine people who had made sexuality or gender based claims. Interpretation proceeded through iterative reading/listening processes: a content reading, a dialogical reading, and a critical reading, and a reflexive reading. A systems perspective generated through interviews with community organizers and lawyers as well as reading media and literature informed the critical reading. This process results in accounts of queer refugee settlement that are situated and polyphonous.

QLGBT asylum seekers have lived in defiance of social erasure, stigma, and threatened or actual violence in their countries of origin. Throughout their exit, migration, and application process they are in engagement with neocolonial exclusions based on race, class, gender and sexuality. Participants' accounts of home country experiences, migration trajectories, application, and settlement portray how these

exclusions constrain their efforts to negotiate safety and belonging, and create conditions for (re)traumatization. To settle, QLGBT refugees engage in seeking recognition that confers protection from homophobia/transphobia, and requires enactments of refugeeness and QLGB or Trans identities, while simultaneously resisting stigmas that work against safety and belonging.

PREFACE

This research was conducted by Sharalyn Jordan in collaboration with members of Rainbow Refugee Committee. Collaboration by Rainbow Refugee members occurred through consultation meetings during which the research question, interview protocol, recruitment, informed consent process, and themes in the findings were discussed. Participants contributed their own accounts and gave input into interpretation during interviews and follow-up discussion. An interpreter provided both linguistic and cultural interpretation for one participant. All transcribing, writing, and editing was done by Sharalyn Jordan.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Summer, 2003, on a downtown side-street

“Will people be throwing things at us?” Rodrigo’s question took me by surprise. Until that moment, I had been enjoying easy chatter and lots of laughter with the small group of us who had volunteered for balloon duty. 9 a.m. on an already hot summer Sunday, we were escorting a two-meter heart of rainbow-coloured balloons and dozens of helium filled rainbow bouquets uphill. As per the Centre’s instructions, we were all dressed in white. We were our own little Pride parade, making our way along tree-lined residential streets, on our way to the Centre’s float.

That year, several community groups had joined the local QLGBT Centre for the Pride Parade. That is how I, a volunteer with LEGIT- Canadian Immigration for Same-sex partners, had ended up walking balloons, and talking, with Daniella, Aidia , Carlos, and Luis, all members of Rainbow Refugee Committee. It was a first pride parade for Aidia and Luis, both from Peru. And so Daniella, originally from El Salvador, and I were telling them about past Pride parade’s in our city. At the front end of the balloon heart, Carlos had been quiet, though apparently listening, until he asked his question. His tone was casual. A request for information, unembellished by drama. “Will people be throwing things at us?” A slight hesitancy in his voice was the only hint of fear.

After listening to my reassurances that the crowds would be friendly, Carlos told me that two years before he had traveled from his small home town to Mexico City especially for Pride. It was his experience of violence from both on-lookers and police there that lurked behind his question. I marveled at the apparent ease he showed about participating in Pride today—at his willingness to volunteer without knowing he would be safe, at the realization that he may carry unvoiced fears with him most places he goes.

Summer, 2004, in a park, crowded by display booths and browsing bodies.

“Would you sign a postcard? Queer, gay, lesbian and trans refugees in Canada have no right to appeal a bad decision.” I continued through the confused looks. “We are asking the government to implement the appeal process for refugee claimants. The government promised an appeal process two years ago, and still hasn’t delivered. Will you sign?” I had made this pitch endless times that afternoon, and was beginning to wish we had chosen a campaign that was easier to explain.

For its annual Pride postcard campaign in 2004, LEGIT had teamed up with Rainbow Refugee Committee, and printed a postcard asking the Minister of Immigration to take urgent steps to implement the appeal process promised in the 2002 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). Previous years’ campaigns for recognition of same-sex relationships in immigration law had been popular at Pride. We would send off six hundred signed cards at the end of the day. Ten years of lobbying by LEGIT, EGALÉ and QLGBT lawyers brought equal recognition for same-sex relationships

into the 2002 Immigration act. In 2003 we campaigned to have those provisions fully implemented.

In 2004, the lack of a refugee appeal process seemed most pressing. Through LEGIT's connection with Rainbow Refugee Committee, we knew people with legitimate fears of persecution who had had their claims denied--most recently, a lesbian from Columbia. Although she had carefully documented assaults by paramilitary and police forces on gays and lesbians in her home country, the board member who decided her case stated that he did not believe that she would be in danger in Columbia. In his comments he said that as "an attractive woman" she should be able to fit in well enough to work and live safely.

"Who do you want an appeal for?" the two women were squinting in the sun and holding hands.

"We are concerned that people who make refugee claims because they are persecuted for being gay or lesbian or trans or HIV+ do not have a right to appeal their case. Officials who do not understand what it means to be queer, much less to be queer in other countries, are making decisions that are putting people at risk, and refugees have no right to appeal those decisions. Right now, people with parking tickets have more protection under the law, than do refugees"

"Refugees? We have too many of those already--We can't afford more." They walked away before I had a chance to respond. At the end of the day, the collective efforts of twelve volunteers resulted in fewer than two hundred signed postcards.

Debriefing our efforts, each of us recounted conversations that revealed misconceptions, apathy, and outright racism towards refugees and immigrants.

My research interest in QLGBT migration has grown out of my volunteer work with two community-based organizations that provide information, support and do advocacy work for QLGBT migrants and refugees. During monthly drop-ins members who have completed or who are engaged in the application process share experiences and answer questions for those considering or beginning the application process. I recognized the potential for the accounts of QLGBT refugees to be sources of information, critical reflection, and inspiration. Refugees who have made claims based on sexual orientation or gender identity have lived in daily defiance of social erasure, stigma, and threatened or actual violence. By building lives that deviate from normative life paths, engaging with a matrix of enabling and constraining impacts of oppressions of racism, heterosexism, classism, and neo-colonialism to do so, they have stretched the bounds of the possible. Their accounts tell us how they did it, and what it has meant to them. There is much to be learned from people who have kept on keeping on.

As a therapist and graduate student in counselling psychology, I was reading the discipline's efforts to understand and address the mental health needs of migrants and of QLGBT clients. Both psychological theories of acculturation and theories of LGBT identity formation rest on essentialist notions of a stable, unitary and bound self. Psychology has only begun to grapple with the mutable, multiple identifications all people embody, and the complex interactions of multiple oppressions that many people encounter in their daily lives. There is growing recognition of the need to enhance

understanding of interrelationships among sexualities, genders, race/ethnicities, migration, and mental health. I recognized the potential for an investigation of how the quotidian struggles of settling are navigated by QLGBT migrants to contribute to multicultural psychology research and practice: contributing to efforts to reconceptualize multiple, mutable identifications; broadening the notion of "settlement" to include the social practices of people who live non-normative genders/sexualities; providing examples of the practices of people who live lives in resistance to oppressions. I used a critical ethnography in order to situate the tactics of individual migrants in their social contexts, and began my research with the question: How do QLGBT migrants engage in settlement?

This research holds a part of my own struggle to engage with the academic traditions of a discipline that has harmed and pathologized people like me, and that continues to reify static and dichotomous notions of gender and sexual diversity. Most recently, scholars within my chosen discipline have worked to position counselling psychology as a champion of human diversity, aiming to provide better, more sensitive, services to a broader spectrum of society, including QLGBT communities. In conducting this research, I am in an uneasy alliance with this champion. I believe the intentions are genuine, but question whether the tools, specifically the conceptual tools, research paradigms, and models of practice we have are adequate to the task. I am not alone in raising these questions, and have found scholarship on theory and practice that speaks to my concerns. This study is a small step towards expanding possibilities. The

literature I draw on as well as the language and form I use, hold my struggle with the enabling and constraining forces of the traditions and tools of my discipline.

Problems inherent in interpreting the myriad ways that cultures organize and understand sexualities and genders through Western identity constructs such as homosexual, transsexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer are at the crux of the struggle for queer migrants. Yet to proceed, we need some common language. I use queer to refer to diverse transgressive sexualities and genders produced through the intersectionality of practices, identities, and institutions in all cultures. I also use QLGBT to emphasize some of the heterogeneity that exists within queer. To delineate sexual orientation and gender identity when that is critical, I refer to queer sexualities and trans genders. Moving between queer, a term that accentuates the contested and socially constituted qualities of sexualities and genders, and QLGBT, an acronym that holds both the contesting and the essentializing possibilities inherent in naming, is an imperfect approach to an irresolvable issue. The approach conveys some of my own struggle with and against the traditions of scholarship in my discipline, counselling psychology, and my efforts to be intelligible to a multidisciplinary audience of advocates, practitioners, policy makers, and scholars.

The traditions of my academic audience invite me into authorial positions I have had to work to resist; the detached translator, the ethnographer of exotic peoples, the scientist dissecting life-forms into discrete analyzable parts. I have chosen to research and write in a manner that works against these authorial positions. I do this by making

explicit my social justice aims, by being present in my account of the research process and outcomes, and by working to present human lives in their complexity in a manner that engages and challenges readers.

My multiple relationships with the people and issue I am investigating, as a community member, as an outsider, as an ally, and as a researcher, both challenge and enrich my investigation. Tension between what I knew, in a very embodied way, as a queer person, and what I was reading as a psychologist-in-training moved my research interests towards genders/sexualities. And I experience that tension again as I am writing, because *as a queer person* oversimplifies. The first time I remember feeling desire for another woman I was around 21. I began identifying as lesbian in my early twenties through my relationships with lesbians I met in school and work. Over the past fifteen years I have lived variations on lesbian, dyke, dee, ying-rak-ying, and queer in two Canadian cities, for a year in Seoul, Korea as an exchange student, and for five years in a small city in Thailand while teaching. Connecting with others who live transgressive sexualities and genders in these locations, and awareness of the changes in my own embodiment of my gender/sexuality in these different contexts has made me acutely aware of the inadequacy of psychological stage models of sexualities and binary approaches to gender. This still inadequate account will have to suffice, for now, as an example of how I will use attunement to the tensions, discord, and resonances among the many voices I bring to this research: as researcher, psychologist-in-training, queer, white raised-in-Canada English speaker, community-based ally with queer asylum seekers.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Propelled by fear of violence and flight from insult, impelled by desire for connection and belonging, the movements of people whose sexualities or genders defy and offend norms cover a complex spatial, social, and psychological terrain. Sexualities and migration are intricately intertwined. A growing body of scholarship on queer migration from sociology and queer cultural studies is exploring their interconnections. In this literature review I aim to bring these perspectives into dialogue with the research traditions of psychology, in particular, the fields of multicultural psychology and LGBT psychology.

Ambient harassment, the ever present possibility of threat of verbal or physical aggression (Eribon, 2004), shapes the lives of QLGBT people profoundly and subtly. Ambient harassment makes it unclear whether moving is an escape, or exile. Ambient harassment implicates itself into our gestures, our vigilance to language, and to signs. It mediates our way of being in the world, and in relationships. Stigma and shame mobilize us. The stigma of breaking rules, and thus being marked as someone to avoid (Goffman, 1963), and the consequent shame of not belonging, of feeling out of place, moves us --edging us in the direction of conformity or escape (Probyn, 2005). How many of us are living in s/exile (Manalansan, 2006)?

Erasure, the practiced denial of our existence, musters our assembly. Livable lives for QLGBT people are rendered invisible in public discourses. Erasure produces a horizon of the possible, without possibilities for us—and so we look elsewhere. Efforts

to locate and belong to communities of like others are prominent features in queer life stories (Bryson et al, 2006; Eribon, 2004; Fortier, 2003, Weston, 1998). Often, these efforts have taken people into urban centres. Kath Weston (1998) in "Get thee to a city" traces the "great gay migration," a gathering of gay men and lesbians into urban centres in mid century United States. Eribon notes a similar pattern in 19th and 20th century Europe. Cities held the promise of someplace better, of an escape from scrutiny and constraint, of the possibility of finding others (Eribon, 2004; Goffman, 1963), and the possibility of living as desired. Weston traces how networks of relationships and artifacts -- books, films, events, and stories passed through word of mouth -- shaped the trajectories of gay and lesbian migration. A vague promise of finding a "gay imaginary"(Anderson, 1983 cited in Weston, 1998), a hoped for community of "others like me" constructed through snippets of media representations, provided the impetus for urbanward QLGB migration. Moving to the city became an expected right of passage for gays and lesbians in North America (Weston, 1998).

These journeys, and these migrants' experiences formed the basis of "the coming out experience." Movement towards a community of like-others, and movement towards self-acceptance were consolidated into the cultural meta-narrative of *coming out*. In *Coming home: Multiple evocations of home*, an analysis of published narrative texts Fortier (2003), both elaborates and problematizes notions of urban migration as "coming home" for queers. In these narratives, moving to a city with a visible QLGBT community was constructed as a "coming home" to self. The reiteration of the coming out discourse through media representations, activist organizations, and

social science research has constructed an expected identity trajectory from naiveté and isolation, through discovery and contact, and eventually belonging and acceptance. The coming out discourse and its construction of same-sex desire as a basis for both identity and community have spread through media and the movements of travellers, activists, and scholars.

Through internetworked spaces and online interactions “the way of talking about the everyday experiences of same-sex desire has been caught up in the transnational interchange of material and intellectual commodities” (Boellstorff & Leap, 2004, p. 16). The concentration of queer media production and gay ghettos in urban centres in the west has constructed dominant notions of a QLGBT community, a queer imaginary, as urban, western, and white (Weston, 1998). However, the transnational picture that emerges is not a simple one of western dominance. Queer social science researchers working in wide range of cultural contexts, have identified new possibilities for sexual subjectivities that emerge under conditions of transnationalism (Bryson et al. 2006; Jackson, 1999; Jackson, 2004; Sullivan, 2001; Patton & Sanchez-Eppler, 2000; Yue, 1999). They explicate the tensions, accommodations, and resistance among co-existing local and global sexualities and call for attention to the interimbrication of global and local practices (Patton, 2000).

“Sexualities transmogrify in and of place” (Patton, 2000). Dislocation and relocation creates both opportunity and obligation for self-revision. Migration presents a profound break in a person’s life-story, in which virtually every aspect of a person’s way of being is subject or open to renegotiation.

When a practitioner of “homosexual acts,” or a body that carries any of many queering marks moves between officially designated spaces—nation, region, metropole, neighborhood, or even culture, gender religion or disease—intricate realignments of identity, politics, and desire take place. (Sanchez-Eppler & Patton, 2000, p. 3)

Mobility gives rise to new practices, communities, and thus possibilities for identification. “Sexuality is indeed on the move” Michael Warner argues, not just because people are more on the move now than ever, but because non-normative sexualities may be enabled by the displacement of culture.” (Warner in Patton and Sanchez-Eppler, 2000: back cover). In offering new possibilities for identification, migration opens or undoes some identity boundaries, while potentially reinforcing others (Fortier, 2003).

Scholars of queer migration scholars are drawing on a range of disciplines to articulating a place for queer migrants: their work poses questions, builds theory, and produces knowledge exploring the complex interrelationships of queer sexualities and genders with migration(Luibheid, 2008a; Manalansan, 2006). Two questions crystallize and mutually complicate queer migration research. Loosely, how is migration shaped by queer sexualities and genders; and how are queer sexualities and genders shaped by mobility and migration?

Queer migration scholars have begun to theorize how sexualities and genders become foci for asymmetrical power relations that constrain and enable mobility (Luibheid and Cantu, 2005; Luibheid, 2008b). Through the legacy of colonialism and the

current practices of global capitalism, mobility has become highly skewed by a proliferation of policies, practices, and technologies that enhance the mobility of some, while exacerbating the immobility of others (Sheller and Urry, 2006) . In this context, how is the mobility of queer migrants co-constituted by the intersections of racialization, sexuality, gender, geopolitics, and class, among other factors? Among the many forms that queer migrations can take, understanding queer survival migration and asylum is both necessary and fraught in its implications for social justice (Luibheid and Cantu, 2005; Luibheid, 2008a; Puar,2007).

I began with the fear of violence, the shame of stigma, the invalidation of erasure as points of departure for QLGBT migrants, and for my inquiry. I have struggled with how to write about the continuum of violence and exclusion QLGBT people face in a manner that recognizes their common roots, that includes the everyday traumas of harassment and exclusion, while also acknowledging the difference in what is at stake for QLGBT refugees. International refugee policies and practices have been developed to respond to violations of human rights—torture, unlawful detainment, state sponsored violence, that occur, typically, in the context of war or political conflicts. In1993 the Supreme Court of Canada extended refugee protection to people who fear persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Neither sexual orientation nor gender identity is specifically named, as religion or ethnicity are, in the Geneva Convention or Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act of 2002. QLGBT refugees apply as “members of a particular social group”(LaViolette, 1994; Rehaag, 2008). The occlusion

of persecution based on gender or sexual orientation in refugee policies contributes to practices that fail to adequately protect QLGBT people.

A parallel exists in research on trauma. Growing out of the military investigations of veterans, trauma studies has in its focus on war and mass disaster given less attention to the traumas that the poor, members of ethnic or racial minorities, and QLGBT people face (Brown, 2004; Cvetkovich, 2003). The division of public and private spheres underpins this critical oversight (Herman, 1992; Cvetkovich, 2003). Feminist (Brown, 1996; Herman, 1992) and QLGBT scholars of trauma, have critiqued psychiatric approaches to trauma for medicalizing and individualizing wider social problems of violence and oppression (Cvetkovich, 2003). To overcome these limitations, it is important to broaden the scope of study and attend to quotidian traumas that occur out of the public eye. For QLGBT refugees these include: traumas associated with exile, dislocation from their home country; the threat of rejection and expulsion in the application process; feared persecution in their home countries, recounted and retriggered during the application process; and stigma, rejection, and harassment as they settle.

Migration and Im/mobilites

Much of the psychological research and policy on immigrant mental health draws on a model of acculturation and acculturation stress developed by Berry and colleagues (Berry 1980, 1985, 1990, 1997, 2001; Nerry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987; Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989; Berry & Sam, 1997). The underlying assumptions of the model limit its relevance to current migration context, and in particular to the

experience of QLGBT refugees. First, acculturation theory treats cultures as though they were unitary, self-contained entities, and migration as a one-time movement from one self-contained culture into another. Second, the model rests on a modernist notion of self and identity as stable and unitary. I argue, as have others (Bhatia, 2001; 2004) that positing a progression towards stability of identity as optimal and necessary for mental health overlooks, and potentially pathologizes, the on-going negotiation of identities migrants engage in. Further the unitary notion of identity that underlies acculturation theory overlooks the interrelationships among identifications around race/ethnicity, sexualities, gender. Reliance on this model has constrained research on these interrelationships in the psychology of migration literature.

The reality of transnational migration, and globalized networks among diasporic cultures, is not reflected in current psychological research based on acculturation and acculturation stress models. Berry and colleagues' model (2001) posits an "intercultural space" where members of "both" groups, meaning the country of settlement and migrant communities, develop cultural boundaries and social relationships. This emphasis on the mutual dynamics of change is an improvement over earlier theories that focused exclusively on the attitudes of migrants, and failed to consider the social context. However, a model based on intercultural contact between two groups proves inadequate to the task of understanding migrant experiences in culturally heterogeneous contexts. Cultures, in this model, are viewed as singular self-contained entities with clear boundaries to negotiate. Migration is treated as one-time movement from A to B. In the current context of globally networked travel and communication,

movement and mobility must be more complexly conceptualized (Bhatia, 2001, 2002; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Shelly & Urry, 2006).

Psychological research on migration would be enhanced by incorporating the perspectives and conceptual tools used by transnational, diaspora and post colonial scholars of migration and mobility (Ahmed, 2003; Massey, 2001; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Through the legacy of colonialism and the current practices of global capitalism, mobility has become highly skewed by a proliferation of policies, places, and technologies that enhance the mobility of some, while exacerbating the immobility of others (Bhatia, 2001; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Understanding mobility, migration, and settlement as occurring through transnational networks of a "hybrid geography"- comprising artifacts, technologies, places, and people challenges encapsulated notions of place and culture. Investigations of the complex mobilities of diasporas and transnational migrants show that rather than a single trajectory, migration, is better understood as occurring through multiple interacting mobilities among networked places. Recognizing the possibilities of imaginal, virtual, and the physical mobilities creates a more complex view of migration and settlement experiences.

Theorizing the relationality of people and places, and co-constitution of spaces and social practices (Massey, 2001, Sheller & Urry, 2004) draws attention to important aspects of migration experiences overlooked by models that conceptualize cultures abstractly, and treat places as static, empty containers where psychosocial processes occur. Feminist and queer transnational scholars have drawn attention to the practices migrants engage in to make their new locale livable (Fortier, 2003; Patton & Sanchez-

Eppler, 2001; Probyn, 1996): acts of "homing" (Brah, 1996 and Fortier, 2003, 2000), reconstituting belongings (Fortier, 2000, 2003; Probyn, 1996), and regrounding (Ahmed, 2003). By investigating how spaces are constituted through activities, how spatiality mediates activities, and how activities enact connections to places and others, these scholars have enabled a more complex understanding of migrants' tactical negotiation (Patton & Sanchez-Eppler, 2001) of settling into a new locale.

The reliance of acculturation theory and research on Western modernist concepts of bound self and stable identity limits our understanding of migrant experiences. Berry's model classifies strategies used by migrants in their acculturation process as moving towards integration, separation, marginalization, or assimilation. Integration strategies are those that aim to maintain contact with the culture of origin, while also pursuing involvement in the culture of settlement. The other strategies involve disconnection with either the home or settlement cultures, or both. Because integration strategies are predictive of more positive mental health outcomes (Berry & Sam, 1997); integration is an explicit goal or implicit standard against which migrants are measured. The expectation of progress towards a stable cultural identity, optimally one that is integrated, underlies acculturation theory.

Looking for unilinear progressions towards a fixed ideal results in overlooking, or problematizing, the complexity and dynamism of migrants' experiences. Although Berry and colleagues acknowledge that attitudes, policies and practices of the receiving country may act as "constraints" on migrants' "choice" of strategy (Berry, 2001), the role of unequal power relationships is undertheorized and under researched. Research

has tended to measure acculturation strategies in a decontextualized and static manner. Both the theoretical constructs, and research approaches, that guide psychological research on migrant mental health need to be rethought in a manner that recognizes the dynamic processes entailed in migration. To contribute to this reconceptualization, I have chosen to investigate the broader migration and settlement process, the social and spatial relocation, of queer migrants in a manner that will inform understandings of social integration and psychological acculturation.

Conceptualizing Multiple Identifications

Acculturation theory rests on a unitary notion of ethnocultural identity, in which ethnocultural identification is treated in isolation of identifications around gender, sexualities, or class. Similarly, foundational theories of sexual orientation conceptualize the formation of sexualities independent of other identifications, in particular genders, race and ethnicities. These provide an inadequate understanding of the experiences of women and people of colour who identify as QLGBT. As researchers in multicultural and QLGBT psychology are turning their attention to the intersectionality of race/ethnicity, genders and sexualities, they are finding the conceptual tools of the discipline inadequate to the task.

Foundational theories of sexual orientation identity development consisted of stage models conceptualizing movement from non-awareness through assumption of a homosexual identity (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1988). These models posited identical identity formation processes for gay men and lesbian women and have been assumed to apply to all QLGBT persons.

While models of sexual orientation formation may provide a glimpse of some of the challenges of constructing a healthy LGBTQ identity in a heterosexist society, the sequencing of unilinear stage models of identity formation have not been empirically supported (Kahn, 1991; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Peplau & Garnets, 1999, 2000; Rust; 1993). They have been critiqued for their limited application for women (Chapman & Brannock; 1987; Diamond, 1998; Peplau & Garnets, 1999; Rust; 1993) and for people of colour (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Fukayama & Ferguson, 2000) on both empirical and theoretical grounds.

In hypothesizing a common coming out experience for both gay men and lesbians, early research on sexual orientation identity obscured differences between men's and women's experiences thereby neglecting key elements of women's sexual identity formation process. Research focused specifically on women's sexual identity development (Chapman & Brannock, 1987; Diamond; 1998; Kahn, 1991; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Peplau & Garnets, 1999, 2000; Rust; 1993; Sophie, 1986) has identified key elements of LGBTQ women's sexualities that have been overlooked because gay male experiences were assumed to apply to women as well. First, the fluidity of sexualities has not been given adequate attention. There is ample evidence that many women experience their sexualities as mutable, and some evidence suggests that women's sexuality is characterized by greater fluidity than men's (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Peplau & Garnets, 2000). Relational aspects of women's sexualities have not been incorporated adequately into current research or theory. Models have tended to focus on coming out as an independent process of realizing and acting on

sexual desire (Fassinger & Morrow, 1995) rather than as a relational process of constructing self in relation to others. In doing so they may be missing important aspects of the process both for women and men.

Not only are differences between men and women obscured by these coming out models, variability within women's experience is also lost. Research focusing specifically on women's experiences suggests there is greater variability among women's experiences than current models can accommodate. When women are asked to report their experience, rather than to identify their location in a model, multiple paths emerge (Diamond, 1998; Eliason, 1996; Rust, 1993; Sophie, 1986). Rust studied 346 lesbian and 60 bisexual women who were surveyed about the ages when they experienced certain key milestones or psychological events such as first recognizing same-sex desire or first same-sex sexual experience. When average ages of each milestone were compared a picture of a linear process emerged. However, when women's individual experiences were examined a great deal of variability became apparent. With the exception of "questioning my sexual orientation" (Rust, 1993, p.59) there was no event that all of the women had experienced. The order and elapsed time between milestones also varied. Although stage models make allowances for some individual variation by stating that individuals might return to or skip steps, an underlying linear pattern with a single end-point is assumed and variations from this are seen as deviations. More recent research on lesbians and bisexual women suggest that variability is the norm (Diamond, 1998; Rust, 1993). To accommodate multiple paths and multiple

configurations, efforts to conceptualize women's sexualities must give greater attention to the on-going process whereby women construct their sexuality.

Much of the existing research on sexual orientation identity within psychology drawn participants largely from urban, Euro-American backgrounds. This research has constructed a culturally encapsulated view of LGBTQ sexualities (Bowman, 2003; Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000). In this literature, failure to examine Whiteness as an ethnicity has allowed the experience of White lesbians and gay men to be presented as the model or norm for all LGBTQ people. This narrow perspective is inadequate for understanding ways in which sexualities and race/ethnicities mutually constitute each other.

All models to date posit a beginning point of "non-awareness" of both personal sexual orientation and of existence of lesbian or bisexuals as a group. A uniform notion of non-awareness belies the wide range of possible values, beliefs, and practices that shape sexual identity formation (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Constructs of gender and sexual orientation vary widely across cultures (Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000; Jackson & Cook, 1999), shaping the construction of sexual orientation identity formation. The specific cultural, historical, and geographic communities in which people live will shape how they embody and enact their sexualities.

Research driven by conceptualizations of sexual orientation that fail to incorporate ethnicity or consider multiple identities has limited our understanding of the experience of belonging to both sexual and racial or ethnic minorities in North America. Much of the research in North America on sexual orientation identity has focused on

disclosure and openness about sexual orientation as a sign of a mature sexual identity (Cass 1979; Troiden, 1988). Coming out, initially promoted as a strategy for pushing the visibility, rights, and social acceptance of QLGB people, has been reinterpreted and invested with mental health implications by psychological research. Psychological models of sexual orientation have used coming out to others as an indicator of a mature identity, conflating verbal disclosure with self-acceptance.

However, research in Asian countries (Jackson & Cook, 1999) and accounts from QLGB people who are members of racial/ethnic minorities in North America (Chan, 1997; Espin, 1996; Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000) call this emphasis into question. QLGB people of colour suggest that their choices to disclose are influenced by the need to maintain a social support network within their racial or ethnic communities (Chan, 1997; Espin, 1996; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Having limited contexts where both racial/ethnic identity and lesbian/bisexual identity are validated significantly shapes the identity formation process (Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000).

Research reliance on “Coming out” needs to be critiqued. “Coming out” both to self and others is a narrative of QLGB identification based in Euro-American practices that has been presumed to apply unproblematically across cultures, yet, key features of the narrative do not apply well outside of Euro-American cultural contexts: viewing sexual behaviors as a sign of a being a particular kind of person, making an autonomous claim to an individual identity, and emphasizing individual desires over family well-being.

In an effort to address this problem Fassinger and colleagues have proposed (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996), tested (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) and used (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003) a model that did not treat openness and activism as components of self-acceptance. Instead, they recommended viewing sexual orientation identity formation as two separate but mutually catalytic identification processes: individual identification and group membership identification. Results of their work indicate that disclosure is not necessarily related to self-acceptance. Researchers must rethink culturally encapsulated views of self, identity, and sexual orientation and recognize the importance of cultural contexts to understand the identity formation process of QLGB people of colour.

Beals and Peplau (2005, 2006) are working to create a more complex understanding of practices of "coming out" by investigating disclosure patterns among lesbians and gay men using a social network approach. Their research suggests that the relationships among indirect and direct disclosure practices, identity support and well-being are complex. Identity specific support seems to enhance well-being. Direct disclosure was related to enhanced well-being. The role of indirect disclosure, defined as having others disclose, was generally negative. Although I see potential in investigating specific practices rather than operationalizing 'outness' in globalized levels as has been the practice, work in this area still remains entirely focused on practices of verbal disclosure. A conceptual shift from "disclosure" practices to enactment practices, and from verbal to an understanding of non-verbal practices would enhance research on QLGBT identification practices.

The foundation and flux in identity theories is most apparent within psychology in the scholarship on transsexual and transgender identities. The foundation descends from clinical sexology studies of transexualism that rest on a naturalized understanding of binary gender, and classify gender variability as a pathological trait resting in the individual. This tradition has consolidated a narrative of transsexuality as mental illness. Trans activist scholarship (Bornstein;1994; Feinberg; Namaste, 1996, 2000) has countered the erasure of transgender lives, and marginalization of transgender perspectives. This literature has challenged the pathologization of gender variability, and brought attention to the range and mutability of gender possibilities that people embody.

The diagnostic system used by North American clinicians, the DSM IV, retains Gender Identity Disorder (GID) as a mental illness. Unlike previous editions, The DSM IV names the role of stigmatization in creating emotional distress. The foundation and flux in identity narratives holds flesh and blood implications for transpeople. The diagnosis is typically required for access to and insurance coverage of some of the medical procedures ---hormones, surgery— that reshape bodies to reflect people’s felt gender. Community organizing and decentralization of transgender care are creating alternative approaches to care that do not rely on a diagnosis. Recent counselling and psychotherapy literature has drawn on the scholarship of trans activists to explore transgender affirming therapeutic approaches (Denny, 2004). Transgender scholars are researching and creating trans affirming policies, practices and research (Devor, 2007; Munoz, 2008). Alternatives to the current GID classification are being explored for the

DSM V, but the disciplinary power of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association reinforce the status quo and the process is slow. I will not venture into an exploration and critique of these alternatives here, but raise this work as a very clear example of how conceptualization of identities matter in the everyday lives of people.

Living gender variance in North America entails negotiating narratives of transexuality as disorder and transgender counter narratives. Post-colonial trans perspectives call attention to the cultural-specificity of these narratives (Roen, 2001; Munoz, 2008). Culturally-grounded accounts of how people are living gender variance or gender liminance in globalized, local contexts point to the importance of attending how cultural narratives of genders are embodied and enacted (Roen, 2001; Sinnott, 2004).

Multiple oppressions

Oppressions are not experienced separately. Racism is gendered and sexualized, and sexism and heterosexism are racialized (Lee, 1995; Glick, 2003; Yue, 1999). The racism experienced by a heterosexual Asian man –stereotyped as asexual or immasculine-- is qualitatively different than the racism experienced by a gay Asian man exoticized as a “boy-toy” for “rice queens”. One stereotype denies a sexual aspect of the self while the other exaggerates and distorts the sexual. Both are clearly prejudiced, but the impact on identity of these two stereotypes is different. Just as sexual orientation and ethnic identity formation cannot be viewed as two separate and layered processes, concepts of layered oppressions like “double jeopardy” or “triple jeopardy”

are not adequate for understanding the experience of oppression for QLGB women QLGB or people of colour (Takagi, 1997).

Scholars in multicultural psychology have acknowledged that an “additive” approach to identity and oppression is inadequate but psychological research exploring how oppressions are interrelated is limited (Greene, 1996; Fassinger, 2000 ; Pope et al, 2004). The two psychological researchers who have dealt specifically with the experiences of immigrant women who have relationships with women or identify as QLGB (Alquijay, 1997; Espin, 1996; 1998; 1999) have both highlighted the need for better understanding of the relationships of ethnicity, gender, and sexualities for clinicians to draw on. To contribute to this effort, researchers in psychology can turn to the groundwork laid by black feminists in outlining an intersectional analysis of oppressions (Collins, 2000) and to scholarship in critical gender/sexuality studies exploring the co-constitution or intersectionalities of sexualities, trans/genders, race/ethnicities, class, and nation (Ng, 1993; Pratt, 1990; Roen, 2001; Manalansan, 2000; Yue, 1999).

A view of identity that rests on Western individualist notions of the bound self lies at the root of the inadequacies in psychology’s handling of sexual and transgender identities and the intersectionality of multiple identities and oppressions. Treating individuals as autonomous and bound contributes to reifying culturally specific practices of identity formation, sexuality or gender as natural or universal. To counter this, I work with a relational understanding of human-beings, self and identities that I will elaborate more fully in the next chapter.

Queer Migration and Mental Health

Core mental health constructs like trauma, coping, and social support need to be opened up for reexamination if they are to be applied to efforts to support the well-being of QLGBT migrants. Critical qualitative research perspectives have an important role to play in this reexamination.

Psychology and health researchers have investigated the mental and physical health concerns immigrants and refugees bring to service providing agencies (Gagnon, Tuck & Burkun, 2003). Within this research, the well-being of refugees has received less attention than immigrants (Berrada, Rousseau & Bertot, 2001). In this literature, threats to the well-being of migrants have been framed using psychological theories of grief and loss, acculturation stress, depression and anxiety, as well as trauma (Gagnon et al., 2004). A meta-analysis framed through DSM-IV diagnostic criteria (APA, 1994) suggest that refugees are significantly impacted by both depression and posttraumatic stress disorder, both having a ten times greater prevalence among refugees than the general population (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005).

However, it remains unclear how well Western psychological concepts of mental illness reflect migrants' experiences. Considerable controversy exists around the validity of using assessment instruments and therapies developed from these constructs, with migrants (Hollifield et al., 2004; Keyes, 2000). In order to better support the well-being of migrants, health researchers and service providers are calling for studies into how pre and postmigration experiences relate to refugee health and well-being (Gagnon & Tuck, 2004).

As part of this work, qualitative health researchers are beginning to look at understandings of mental health and well-being in local migrant communities (Dossa, 2001). Challenges to well-being that have emerged as themes in immigrant women's migration accounts are isolation, invisibility, and discrimination. Migrants' sense of worth and self-continuity is challenged by the erasure of competencies or experience from their home communities (Dossa, 2001). The women in Espin's research on migrant lesbians in the United States (1999) spoke often of loss and grieving of their former self. Espin raised concerns that in focusing on the process of adaptation to the new country, immigration researchers may have overlooked the deep and pervasive impact of loss for immigrants. Many of the women in Espin's studies held a phenomenology of ever-present comparisons and questions of what might have been had they not left their home country.

A qualitative inquiry into QLGB women's experiences of trauma, *Archives of Feeling* (Cvetkovich, 2004), worked with oral histories of queer activists, as well as literature and film produced by queer women as research texts. Cvetkovich draws connections between oppressions of queer women, their communities, nationalism, colonialism, and trauma (Cvetkovich, 2004). Her work points to the need for collective and public, rather than private and individualized, responses to trauma. She argues the need for communities to "forge models for how affective life can serve as the foundation for public culture" (2004, p. 20).

Feminist approaches to trauma provide an expanded understanding of trauma, recognizing insidious traumatization (Brown, 2004) that occurs as a result of on-going

exposure to harassment, discrimination, and images or stories of bias-related stigma and violence. Although these events may not directly threaten safety or life, they serve as frequent reminders of the precariousness of one's safety or life in the context of oppressions (Roots, 1992; Brown, 2004). Exposure to sub-threshold traumas, over a lifetime, produce unique vulnerabilities, and unique ways of coping (Roots, 1992). The experience of everyday microaggressions (Sue, 1995; 2001) of oppressions complicates the effects of major traumatic events. Research on the effects of sexism, heterosexism, and hate-crime victimization on lesbians suggests that the level of psychological distress experienced after a hate-crime is adversely impacted by the interaction of everyday experience of oppressions and crime victimization (Szymanski, 2005). Put simply, day to day experiences of discrimination exacerbated the psychological distress women experienced after a hate crime.

Psychology and health researchers have highlighted the challenges for of reestablishing social networks for migrants, as well as the importance of these networks to successful settlement (Behnia, 2002; Gagnon & Tuck, 2004). This literature hints at the complexity of navigating relationships to create social networks (Behnia, 2004). Social contacts are potential points of access for information and resources. Emotionally, relationships may offer connection, support, and acceptance. Conversely, they can also be sites of tension, conflict, rejection, or oppression. Much of this work has emphasized family and cultural cohort groups and given minimal attention to other relationships such as friends (Behnia, 2002). This limitation is problematic for all migrants, but particularly for QLGBT migrants.

Queer studies scholars offer a perspective on kinship and social ties attuned to the relationship and family dynamics frequently experienced by QLGBT people in North American (Weston, 1991; 1998). Weston highlights the importance of friendship networks as surrogate families, and the creation of kinship lines that are not biologically based, within QLGBT communities. Buckland's (2002) ethnographic study of queer dance club culture richly portrays the social practices of queer life-world making, including the importance of relationships in helping people find and create environments where they are able to enact QLGBT identities.

Revisioning Settlement: Mobilizing Multiple Identifications

Reconceptualizing the settlement processes as a dynamic dialogical negotiation, rather than a teleological progression holds promise. Bhatia and colleagues (2001, 2004) have proposed using a dialogical approach (Hermans, 1997, 2001) for revisioning acculturation. A dialogical approach, as elaborated by Werstch (1991), informed my own investigation of QLGB women's migration narratives *Coming (out) to Canada* (2004). The dialogical approach to human activity draws on the theories of Bakhtin and Vgotsky (Bell & Gardiner, 2002), to construct a sociocultural theory of human activity and mediated agency. Human beings, including our thoughts, feelings and selves, come into being in and through the socio-symbolic interactions of relationships. Selves are constituted in relationship with and through the voicing of others. Human activity, including language, is understood as sedimented or saturated with pre-given meanings (Werstch, 1991). In our efforts to coordinate and relate with others, we are in creative engagement with these layers of meaning. Our utterances hold our creative struggle to

make language with pre-given meanings function as we intend in social interactions. This creative struggle can be analysed in human interactions, by understanding utterances as a polyphonous, or many voiced., navigation of relational intentionality and constraint.

Voicing, from dialogical self theory, focuses on the multiple, sometimes competing, self-positions we create through speech in our interactions, and the creative struggle with pre-given social constructs we are all engaged in. Dialogism provides a means for understanding and investigating the nuances of settlement. It acknowledges that feelings of dislocation, displacement, and disjuncture may co occur with those of connection, attachment, and continuity. It enables a view of the tacit negotiation of tensions of belonging and not belonging (Fortier, 2000) of being both unsettled, and settling.

A dialogical approach self-identity negotiation of settlement into the spatial and social interaction of groups, I draw on the work of Goffman (1959, 1963). Goffman's work contributes a view of self-enactment that attends to emotional-relational processes in social groups (Goffman, 1966, 2005). His work elaborates on the embodied, non-verbal aspects of enactments including gestures and props (1959, 1979, 1982). Goffman's metaphor of staging, and examples in his work, provide a rich vocabulary for investigating spatiality. I propose a dialogical self theory (Hermans, 1996, 2001; Wertsch, 1991) and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical self as a promising approach to conceptualizing and investigating the realignment of identifications that is part of QLGBT refugee settlement. Both theories posit that selves are brought into

being through communication practices in our interactions. Both voicing and enactment attend to relational-emotional and social-symbolic contributors to self.

The dialectic of identity and social group formation is further, and more systematically, elaborated by sociocultural theorists Lave and Wenger (1991) theory of situated learning. As we participate in particular groups or communities, we learn the practices of the group, the implicit norms of participation, and simultaneously, re-interpret and reconstitute self/identities through our attachment to the group. Identity and community formation are reciprocal processes, mediated by social relations, artifacts, and power (Bryson, 2005).

Refugees who have made claims based on sexual orientation or gender identity have lived in daily defiance of social erasure, stigma, and threatened or actual violence. By building lives that deviate from normative life paths, engaging with a matrix of enabling and constraining impacts of oppressions of racism, heterosexism, classism, and neo-colonialism to do so, they have stretched the bounds of the possible. Their accounts tell us how they did it, and what it has meant to them.

As a discipline, psychology has only begun to grapple with the mutable, multiple identifications all people embody, and the complex interactions of multiple oppressions that many people encounter in their daily lives. There is growing recognition of the need to enhance understanding of connections among sexualities, genders, race/ethnicities, migration, and mental health. I recognized the potential for this investigation of how the quotidian struggles of unsettling and settling are navigated by QLGBT migrants to contribute to multicultural psychology research and practice.

Through this critique and inquiry process, I aim to contribute to the revision of psychological understandings of settlement, including how multiple identifications are lived, and how quotidian traumas are survived. I seek to challenge and inform our understandings and practices around mental health for migrants, for QLGBT persons, and potentially others. I open my inquiry broadly with the question how do QLGBT migrants engage in settlement?

CHAPTER 3

Mode of Inquiry

Due to their reliance on Western modernist notions of self, sexualities, and culture, current psychological theories of QLGBT sexualities/genders and of migration prove inadequate for the task of conceptualizing complex and mobile selves. Social service practices rooted in these theories are similarly limited. At present, QLGBT migrants are not fully supported by either QLGBT community services or immigrant community services. The goals of my research are theoretical, pragmatic, and transformational. I aim to critique and inform psychological discourses on QLGBT sexualities/genders as well as migrant acculturation and settlement. Resting on a fixed and bound self, these theories underattend to the relationality of identity formation, and complexity of mobilities. A critical ethnographic inquiry into how QLGBT refugees negotiate settlement directs attention towards practices overlooked by current psychological approaches. Documenting the accounts of people who have engaged with and lived in resistance to multiple oppressions in order to build lives for themselves has transformative potential for QLGBT, migrant, and other communities.

I have embarked on research into queer (QLGBT) migration in “interesting times.” The landscape of social science research on sexualities is shifting. The field of social science research on QLGBT sexualities has gone from “unreflective confidence in the existence of sexual subjects—who only needed to be found and documented—to a boom in lesbian and gay studies filled with subjects speaking and writing about their

own lives..." (Gamson, 2003, p. 541) This could almost be a story about the invisible, becoming visible; staking our own claim in the research terrain (Gamson, 2003).

Almost. As QLGBT researchers waded in, we have muddied the waters, raising "suspicion that sexual subjects do not exactly exist to be studied." (Gamson, 2003, p.541) My position as a critical researcher in psychology has challenged me to negotiate the shifting terrain of differing conceptualizations of self, identity, and sexualities. Work from a range of disciplines and epistemological perspectives has, through my review of the literature, informed my research: psychological research with post-positivist and postmodern epistemologies, critical sociocultural scholarship, and queer studies scholarship shaped by poststructuralist epistemologies.

Grappling with postmodern perspectives requires researchers to reflect on what we are doing when we research people who call themselves queer, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Two key epistemological tensions arise for research involving human participants. The postmodern critique of stable unitary self/identities, effectively does away with heterosexual/homosexual, gay/ lesbian/trans/straight, and man/woman as stable, ontological categories. As social construction, self/identity is fluid and on-going process (Gergen, 1994, 1997). Following this, identity cannot be understood as fixed "standing still, ready for its close-up." (Gamson, 2003). Identity ceases to exist as a stable starting point, object of study, or generalizable finding (Arvey, 2003; Gergen, 1994; Gamson, 2003). Second, as discursive productions, accounts or stories cannot be treated as "lived experience"(Gamson, 2003). Researchers cannot make claims that they are accessing the actual events in research participants' lives. Nor can researchers

claim an objective stance or “bracket” their own subjectivity. Our presence throughout the research process, from words chosen to frame the question, through interview interpretation, to reporting and discussion is shaped by the same discursivity and power we aim to investigate. This raises the question of how to bring interpretation into the research process and product, while producing research that is trustworthy.

Queer studies perspectives pose further challenges for researchers doing social research involving people who identify as queer, lesbian, gay, bi, or trans. Widely cited, Judith Butler’s concept of genders/sexualities as performative (1990) has proven appealing to critical scholars seeking non-foundational approaches to gender and sexual identities. However on close reading, her theory, as outlined in *Gender trouble* (1990), effectively does away with human agency in the process of forming sexualities/genders (Nelson, 1999). In elaborating a view of identity as subjugation to discourse, the theory undermines identity construction as a meaningful process with the potential for resistance (Bryson, 2002; Nelson, 1999).

Butler posits that no subject precedes or exists outside of discourses of gender/sexuality; we are born into and are constantly constituted by discursive practices already in place. Subjectivity is theorized as entirely opaque, and performativity as unreflexive. Taken to its extreme, we become mimics of deceptive discourses, tricked into creating identities that perpetuate existing power relations. (Bryson, 2002 ; Gamson, 2003). Although Butler has explicitly stated that humans are not determined by discourses of sex/gender identities (1997), she locates the potential for change in the instability of the signifying process; variations in compulsory

sex/gender performance occur spontaneously. Discursive practices are altered by accident. In focusing on the moment of subjugation, Butler's performativity theorizes away the possibility of human engagement in creative struggle, complex negotiation, or collective resistance.

A further challenge arises from the ways that Butler's notion of performativity has been taken up by queer studies scholars. I am wary of the tendency to discuss people exclusively as textual or cultural phenomenon (Deveaux, 1994; Glick, 2003)—as "abstracted subjects" (Nelson, 1999). Describing people as discursive products can obscure or ignore ways that our bodies both enable and constrain us. Transgender theorists have pointed out the limits of investigating transgender lives through the lens of discursive production of identity (Namaste, 1996 ; Prosser, 1998). Exploration in queer studies of the discursive construction of bodies provides a useful critique of the "givenness" frequently ascribed to biology, including sex differences, (Butler, 1996), but proves incomplete for theorizing human experience.

Investigating QLGBT lives primarily or exclusively through texts underattends to the affective/emotional, and relational processes that constitute the embodied enactment of identities. Even by its own scholars, queer studies has been critiqued for its "overtexualization of lesbian and gay experiences" (Plummer, 1992). In *Archives of Feeling*, Cvetkovich challenges scholars not to overlook affective, emotional, relational aspects of human lives in the pursuit of a particular politics:

"...the unpredictability and contingency of affective life trouble any systematic presumptions about identity and politics, including models of political

liberation that depend on the repudiation of the normal or the embrace of it. An important agenda for queer studies then, is an inquiry into the nuances and idiosyncracies of how people actually live their sexual and emotional lives.”

(2003, p. 47)

Further, describing power effects in purely textual terms can erase the material impacts of oppressions in our lives (Deveaux, 1993). Similarly, valuing resistance in the form of subverting discourses in cultural and aesthetic realms can overlook everyday acts of resistance (Bryson, 2002; Ebert, 1996). Researchers doing multicultural and anti-racist research within queer studies have argued for the need for more attention to the materiality of QLGBT people of colours' lives (Glick, 2003). Scholars of queer migration have made a case for attending to quotidian practices (Bryson, 2005), the nuance of tactics that emerge in specific settings and reconstitute them as spaces of resistance (Manalansan, 2000; Munoz, 1996; Sanchez-Eppler & Patton, 2000).

Taking postmodern and queer studies perspectives into account creates several tensions for researchers: how to conduct research that allows insight into QLGBT people's lives, without further entrenching minoritizing (Sedgwick, 1990) or essentialized understandings of identity; how to acknowledge the contested and constructed nature of identities, while respecting the ways that identities are meaningful, and matter, in everyday life; how to conceptualize human beings and their social worlds in a manner that acknowledges the productive power of discourse, without theorizing away the possibility of creativity, agency, and resistance; how to conceptualize the formation of subjectivities around gender/sexualities that attends to

social-symbolic processes without subsuming human lives into discourse, thereby missing the relationality of human experience and consequent affective/emotional, and sociocultural/material constituents that shape human lives.

In this chapter I outline a mode of inquiry that I have used in an effort to address these challenges. I begin by making explicit the critical values orientation of my research. I then outline the relational view of human beings I work with, and its implications for ontology and epistemology of interpretive constructivism. Noting the convergence in key constructs of interpretive constructivism and critical approaches, I elaborate a framework comprising: a theory of knowing as historically situated, interpretive and recursive, an understanding of self as dialogical and enacted, agency as mediated, and power as distributed.

In this section I also discuss implications of this theoretical framework for proceeding with a critical ethnographic inquiry (Carspecken, 1996; Foley & Valenzuela, 2005).

Axiology

I began this inquiry keenly aware of the potential for researchers to create distorted, pathologized, or sanitized accounts and explanations of human beings in general, and QLGBT lives in particular. For this reason I sought out a research approach that clearly acknowledged social inequality and gave attention to ways unequal power relations shape social practices—including research itself. Critical researchers envision research as part of a larger project of political action towards social justice ends (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005): exposing the taken-for-granted assumptions that

reinforce social inequality, creating and refining social theories that inform and guide social practices, and evaluating and refining social practices in order to enhance social justice. Research, as a cultural product and set of practices, can be used to reproduce and naturalize oppressions or, can be used to challenge oppressions and generate alternatives. Thus, in addition to producing research that promotes social transformation in communities and social institutions, critical researchers are engaging in a transformative project within and across disciplines, initiating dialogue around what constitutes knowledge production in academia (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005). I share this orientation in my research on QLGBT migration, seeking to catalyze changes in community and academic practices. I aim to contribute to reconceptualizing psychological understandings of settlement and QLGBT sexualities that are inaccurate, restrictive, and potentially damaging because they uncritically espouse western, modernist conceptions of self and sexualities as universals.

Positioning myself within a critical approach also challenged me to work to understand the complexity of power relations and multiple, interconnected forms oppressions can take. QLGBT people who migrate are grappling with discourses and practices of classism, neocolonialism, racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Critical scholars and scholars working from feminist (Collins, 2000), post-colonial (Bannerji, 1997), and multicultural queer (Glick, 2003, Manalansan, 2000) and trans (Namaste, 2000, Munoz, 2008) perspectives have enriched understandings of interrelations among oppressions. A critical stance calls for attention to struggles with all of these forces, without assuming the predominance of any one, as an overemphasis

on one may neglect important interrelationships (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Homophobic and transphobic persecution propelled participants' migrations and was therefore a starting place for inquiry. Yet, I aimed to investigate participants' negotiation of multiple co-constituting oppressions.

Relationality of Being: Ontology

Human beings are born into, grow up, live, age, and die in webs of relationships. Our first experience of this web is through our caregivers—mothers, fathers, grannies and elders--and then expands. A relational understanding of human beings does not mean merely that relationships are important to humans, but more fundamentally that relationships precede and constitute individuals (Gergen, 2009). We come into being in and through relationships. Our intelligibility, viability, and survival as human beings depends on others. It is in and through relationships that we learn how to function and come to understand ourselves and our surroundings.

The relationality of human beings has been obscured in Western psychology by a philosophy and science of individualism. An individualist psychology based on the bound self has valued research that identifies individual traits, predicts their causes and effects, and then presumes these to be universal (Gergen, 1994). Moving towards a relational understanding of human beings radically reconfigures the focus, goals, and process of research. Within the discipline of psychology the work of Constructivist (Neimeyer & Mahoney, 1995), Social Constructionist (Gergen, 2009), Sociocultural (Wertsch, 1991) and Relational-Cultural (Jordan, JV 2000, 2002) psychotherapies are contributing to this reconfiguration .

What does it mean to shift from an individual to a relational understanding of human beings? Taking this approach draws attention to the *co-ordinated activity* among people that patterns life. The process of co-ordinating and co-acting, rather than the actors and their characteristics, becomes the focus (Gergen; Neimeyer & Mahoney, 1995). This approach emphasizes communication practices as relationally charged co-ordination of meaning. Much of the co-ordination that occurs in relationships is carried out through social-symbolic practices. As we engage in social-symbolic practices with others, we are co-constituting or co-creating the meanings of these practices. Co-ordinated activity creates *patterns* for living and communicating that are constrained but malleable. Patterns are constrained by the fact of arising in and out of patterns already in existence. Yet, patterns are also malleable because they arise in novel relational contexts and remain open and sensitive to the multiplicity of relationships in which we are engaged.

These pre-given patterns, or discourses, function both to enable and constrain our interpretive activity, or meaning-making; simultaneously facilitating and limiting what we attend to, perceive, imagine, say or do. Thus, when I work with psychological constructs like *cognition, emotion, or schema, self or identity* I understand these not as purely "internal", but as processes emerging out of on-going co-ordinated activity of humans in relation with a particular environment. Mental phenomena commonly believed to reside "inside" or in the minds of individuals are relationally produced. Emotions, memories, intentions, and identities arise in and through our relationships. Their existence cannot be isolated to particular individuals, or locations in the brain.

Rather, complex mental phenomena are stretched over, or distributed across relational networks with multiple contributing constituents.

A relational view of human being holds important implications for understanding and researching social groups, institutions, and places. Our social worlds are patterned through the co-ordinated activity of networks of relationships. Humans are born into social systems—families, schools, neighborhoods-- already in existence. We interpret and engage with these for our survival. Interpretive activity occurs in a context that has been structured by previous social and linguistic activity (Neimeyer & Bridges, 2003). Thus there is a tendency for social systems to recursively reproduce themselves. Yet the potential for changing systems exists through the relational networks that produce them. Based on this understanding, three questions guided analysis of interactions. How are humans (participants/QLGBT migrants) engaging with social systems (families, social groups, institutions)? How are they constrained and enabled by the social systems in which they live? How are social systems re-calibrated by the relational networks that co-constitute them?

A relational approach blurs the static separations between humans and their surroundings. The skin boundaries of our bodies may allow us to be recognized as individuals, but they do not make us autonomous. Human beings are dynamically interconnected with each other and with their surroundings. All human activity is contiguous with, stretched over or distributed across, not insulated or separate from, its environment. Through the patterning of co-ordinated activity any given context—a

classroom, a theatre, a busy street pre-figures possible next actions. Our activities are called forth, or elicited, in an implicit way, by our surroundings.

Relational Co-Construction of Knowing: Interpretive Constructivist

Epistemology

I bring an interpretive constructivist epistemology (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2004; Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1997) to conceptualize how humans come to know. I augment this epistemology with conceptions of mediated agency (Werstch, 1991) taken from critical sociocultural theorists and an enhanced understanding of the productive effects of discursive power (Foucault, 1980), in an effort to strengthen the critical potential of an interpretive constructivist approach. Points of convergence exist in the epistemological positions and key constructs of scholars in constructivist psychology informed by interpretivism or hermeneutics (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2004; Raskin, 2001) and critical social theorists (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Marsch, 2001). Carspecken (1996) and Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) articulate guiding epistemological positions of critical social research: understanding that relationships between concept and object is unfixed, unstable, and socially mediated; positing that all knowing is mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted; and emphasizing that language is central to formation of subjectivity (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). These mesh well with paradigmatic themes of hermeneutic constructivism as outlined by Chiari and Nuzzo (2004): embodied subjectivity, historicity and recursivity, and language. I briefly outline a theory of knowing as human activity, and its implications for self/identity and agency.

Knowing occurs through the active relational interchange among humans and their environments. Constructivist psychological approaches posit knowing not as passive information retrieval, representation and processing, but as active and enacted meaning-making. We construe our environments through active interpretation. In contrast with a view of knowledge occurring exclusively in our brains, constructivism emphasizes embodied knowing. Interconnections among the body's multiple systems are involved in our efforts to function in and understand our environments. Thus, active sense-making or interpretive activity entails: rapport with the environment, perception or discernment of distinct elements, the senses and sensations, affect and basic feeling tones (positive, negative, neutral), action impulses based on these feeling tones (approach, ignore, withdraw), emotions, thoughts, actions, and our varying awareness of any or all of these (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1997).

Our embodiment holds traces of our past experiences. Interpretive activity deploys the knower's history of embodied meaning making (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2004). Senses, as basic as smell, are not "a passive mapping of external features but a creative form of enacting significance on the basis of ... embodied history" (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1997, p. 80) Thus, our embodied knowing becomes patterned. Bounds of intelligibility and horizons of possibility are both constrained and enabled by the patterns created by our embodied meaning making. The patterns created through embodied interpretive activity have been theorized by constructivists variously, as constructs (Kelly, 1955), schema (Greenburg, 2004) or borrowing from Buddhist psychology, dispositional formations (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1997). Wersch (1991)

theorizes patterned interpretive activity as repertoires. The interpretive repertoires or schemas that guide activity are associations among sensing/perceiving, attending, feeling, thinking, acting, and languaging. Much of the repertoire operates at an implicit, out-of-awareness, level. All of these terms convey meaning making as active, embodied, and patterned through interaction with the environment and comprising

Historicity refers to the manner in which our embodied meanings are redeployed in present interactions (Chiari & Nuzzo, 2004). This creates a recursive process, where interpretations, and therefore actions in the present, are shaped by our previous actions and interpretations. We engage in an on-going process of making sense of experience, these meanings then form the meaning systems through which we experience. The exchange of human activity/environment creates two interrelated streams of knowing: experiential embodied-knowing and conceptual-linguistic knowing (Damasio, 1999; Greenburg, 2004). The interchange of these two streams form "felt-meanings" (Greenburg, 2004). We lean into life (Mahoney, 1981). Our embodied memories are brought into present moments, anticipatory of a future.

Critical interpretive constructivist view of knowing as embodied meaning-making situated in relational, social-symbolic processes, informs my conceptualization of self. Scholarship in constructivist psychology provides a view of self as process, which departs significantly from the views of self and identity provided by humanistic, or social-cognitive psychologies that rest on a core, bound or true self. Constructivist approaches to self also differ from traditional psychodynamic psychologies, in that there

is no fixed structure of the psyche, or unconscious, assumed to apply to all human beings¹.

It is useful to distinguish between self (small s, or self-identity, in this sense of emergent embodied patterned ways of being, and Self (capitalized) to refer to the experience of a stable, independent, intrinsic Self. Constructivist therapeutic approaches informed by Buddhist mindfulness traditions, place the paradox of having no Self, yet clinging to Self, at the crux of the human condition (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1997). Human suffering is rooted in our continual grasping for an independent, stable Self. We create and use the effect of Self to protect us against knowing, in an embodied way, our own impermanence. Self-organizing, or autopoiesis, is a process all human beings engage in—a biological capacity, relationally constituted, that we use to ensure our survival and viability (Mahoney, 2003; Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1997). The elaboration of self-systems of increasing complexity enables us to function in our changing environments. In contrast, maintaining a belief in Self, that is stable and independent, is a protective illusion. I emphasize this distinction because it enables of view of human beings in which the elaboration of self-systems, or identity formation, is a meaningful, valuable process. Further, the distinction calls attention the potential harms that occur when transitory, context-dependent self-systems are confused or

¹ Some constructivist scholars (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1997) are exploring convergences between constructivism and contemporary object relations theories, positing a self comprised of internalized significant others (Klein, Horowitz). For the purpose of this research, I have not elaborated on these possible convergences, but note the productive potential of this exploration.

conflated with stable, bound, reified Self—by individuals, or by theories and disciplinary traditions(Gergen).

Humans organize self in and through the interchange of multiple relational systems. This organization is on-going, thus, self is a process and remains mutable. The self is heterogeneously distributed (Wharton, 2001), meaning it is “stretched over”, not divided, among the multiple systems that extend beyond our skin boundaries: biogenetic, personal-embodied, dyadic-relational, socio-cultural (Neimeyer & Bridges, 2002). In this way, we bring self into being through embodied enactment. We imbue this moment-by-moment enactment of self, with a sense of continuity and coherence, using the body as nexus.

Constructivists elaborate human development processes that contrasts sharply with developmental theories that postulate development as an expression of inborn or essential traits, occurring through predictable, linear patterns (Neimeyer & Bridges, 2002). Human development occurs through dialectic self-organizing activity through relationships, across the life span, in non-linear, but patterned manner depending on context (Masterpasqua, 1997). Humans, as living systems, act to create, maintain, and elaborate a patterned order to their experience (Mahoney & Moes, 1997).

Constructivists propose that four ordering processes are common to all humans: reality and meaning, value and valence, self and identity, and power and agency (Mahoney, 2003) In each of these core ordering processes we construct relationships of contrast into patterns of increasing complexity throughout our lives. The core ordering processes

can be understood as biogenetic capacities, relationally constituted and honed for survival.

1. Reality and meaning: our capacity to create a coherent and continuous reality constructs perceptual constancies and delineations of stable-unstable, possible-impossible, meaningful-meaningless, real-fake.
2. Value or emotional valence: our capacity for relationship and survival, give our experiences emotional valence that create patterns around contrasts of pleasant-painful, approach-avoid, good-bad, positive-negative, safe-unsafe.
3. Self or identity: our capacity for sense of personal continuity constructs self and identity around contrasts of body-world, me-not-me, and us-them.
4. Power and competence: our capacity to act volitionally, constructs a sense of agency around dimensions of able-unable, engaged-unengaged, hopeful-unhopeful, in-out of control.

Development occurs in cycles of expansion and contraction as we form patterns of increasing complexity in each of the core ordering processes. The desire for order, coherence, and continuity is in dialectic relationship with our need to adapt to changing life challenges and contexts. This dialectic creates cycles of expansion, chaos, reorganization, and consolidation in different aspects of our lives (Mahoney & Moes, 1997; Mahoney, 2003, Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1997).

Our participation, and self-organization, in multiple relationships and contexts creates multiple self-systems (Gergen, 1994,1997, 2009). We organize selves around our interactions, in the various relationships, groups, and communities we participate

in. More than different roles that we fill, the needs, wants, and values of one self-system may be quite different, or competing with those of another system (Hermans, 1995, 2001). However, this does not mean that humans are endlessly fragmented. Different systems of the self-system may be in contact with each other.

One key process by which the self-systems organize and make contact is through dialogue or voice (Hermans, 1996, 2001; Werstch, 1991). Drawing on the work of Russian linguist Bahktin and psychologist Vgotsky, critical scholars (Smith, 1991; Shotter, 1995; Werstch, 1991) have begun researching self as polyphonic (many voiced) or dialogical. In dialogic approaches, the performative function of language--our use of language not just to represent, but to accomplish goals --is emphasized. We enact self through our interactions with others, including those only mentally present. Conversation is understood as joint-action between the speaker, listener and implicit others (Shotter, 1995). Language, including nonverbal communication, is saturated with pre-given meanings, and follows numerous implicit rules. Our talk or communicative practices hold our creative struggle to make language with pre-given meanings mean what we want it to. In this manner, our agency is understood as mediated—a volitional struggle with the pre-given and implicit (Wersch, 1991).

A dialogical approach to self and understanding of discourse enables an investigation of how power is implicated in self-organizing. Our interpretive self-organizing activity is mediated by power. A dialectic relationship of power and knowledge reinstates practices that regulate what counts as legitimate, possible, and normal (Foucault, 1980). Foucault's work contributes an understanding power as both

enabling and constraining, restrictive and productive. Power is also understood as distributed, rather than as monolithic and unidirectional. Practices imbued with power reproduce themselves, and yet, the potential for resistance and alternative practices to arise exists through creative improvisational activity in distributed relations of power.

Critical Ethnographic Inquiry

Critical Ethnography provided a theoretical framework and process guiding fieldwork and analysis that attend to my social justice aims, while engaging multiple modes of knowing (Carspecken, 1996; Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002). Different phases of data generation and analysis were used to create an account enriched by multiple interpretive frames. Because no one participant, including the researcher, is able to 'stand outside' their interpretive frame, system level, and implicit power relations must be surfaced through analysis and comparison of multiple frames. The types of data generated included: a monological account written by the researcher based on lengthy engagement with the research site, a reconstructive analysis, dialogical data generation, systems level comparisons of sites. This analysis of multiple kinds of data is used in critical ethnography, not for triangulation as in grounded theory, but to open up, or loosen monolithic narratives or discourses.

The theoretical framework I outlined informed my use of critical ethnography. A critical ethnographic inquiry enabled a view of human beings engaged in multiple contexts that is sensitive to power relations. Understanding the research process as stretched over sites, multiple interconnected settings based on shared practices, and wider locales (Carspecken, 1996) enabled a complex understanding of the research

problem. There are specific phases of the research process, the reconstructive analysis and investigating system relations, which attend to ways that discursive power constructs knowledge

Interpretive constructivism informs my decision to investigate the communicative or interpretive activity in research interactions, such as interviews, as relational social practices. Thus, one of the “settings” under investigation is the interaction between myself as researcher, and participants. The enactivist turn in critical scholarship is informing greater attention to ways meaning is jointly produced by participants in the act of research (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Actively “working the hyphen” of self-other (Fine, 1994) to investigate the joint production of meaning contributes to the transformative or critical aims of research by bringing the views of participants forward in the interpretation process, and also attends to ways power may be at work in the interactions. I outline the process I propose to use in conducting fieldwork, focusing on data collection strategies.

Critical ethnography investigates the “lived culture” of participants, elaborating ways that the social activity of participants constitutes and is constituted by wider social systems (Georieou & Carspecken, 2002). Lived culture is investigated through the communicative activity engaged in by groups, and accessed through the social practices and communicative repertoires used by members. Cultures are understood to function in networks of social systems. Understanding the social world through social systems of activity works against totalizing or static constructions of the social. An action orientation to social systems posits that the emergence and maintenance of any system

occurs through continuous construction and recursive reproduction. This view allows room for creative alteration of cultural conditions (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002), while recognizing the tendency for social systems to be elaborated and maintained by actors within them.

Validity and Trustworthiness

In his description of the critical ethnographic approach, Carspecken reworks understandings of validity, in order to produce clear criteria for validity that acknowledge the social construction of meaning and the mediation of knowledge by power, while avoiding the pitfalls of extreme relativism. Truths are necessarily situated, and provisional. The content of truth claims can never be verified in a final or universal manner. Therefore, following the American Pragmatist tradition, Carspecken argues that critical researchers strive to demonstrate validity of their claims by showing that the process of making claims adheres to standards derived from human communication practices. He distinguishes three "realms" with corresponding approaches to validity claims based on communicative practices: objective, subjective, and normative-evaluative.

Validity claims can be objectively approached, by referring to aspects of the research site that could be accessible to multiple perspectives, for example observable behaviors, and material objects. Carspecken explicates a negotiated and mediated understanding of objectivity that acknowledges the role of power and language in making truth claims, without doing away with the possibility of referencing the existence of identifiable entities. For example, all people in a room could agree on the

number of chairs in a room, provided they held a shared language to refer to chairs, and a shared counting system. Thus, objectively referenced validity claims are supported through attention to details open to multiple-perspectives.

Validity claims may reference the subjective realm by making assertions about the subjectivity of participants and researcher. Acknowledging that one can never be fully understood or known by others, and that our own subjectivity is not transparent, critical ethnography relies on inferring subjectivity through intersubjective processes. These intersubjective processes are mediated by both power and relational processes, in particular, our desire to be recognized. Thus, validity claims about the subjective realm are supported through attention to the intersubjective processes in the research setting, and the ways power and relational processes may be mediating them.

Normative-evaluative claims reference socially constituted meanings and norms, and make assertions about their appropriateness or justness. Meanings and norms cannot be observed directly, by participating in and observing social patterning, the researcher engages in position-taking. The validity of normative-evaluative claims in research is supported through intentional engagement in position-taking and dialoging this process. Critical ethnography provides a process that juxtaposes and combines objectifying, subjective, and normative-evaluative practices to understand the research site. Understanding emerges intersubjectively, through movement among each of these positions. At each stage of the research process, Critical Ethnography provides specific strategies for supporting validity.

Overview of Research Process

Research Purpose and Question

I conducted a critical ethnographic inquiry into the practices of QLGBT migrants as they settled in the city of Vancouver on Canada's West Coast. I aimed to produce research that will be of value to mental health and migration studies researchers, as well as practitioners involved in settlement support for QLGBT migrants. My aims are theoretical, practical, and transformational. This research critiques current theoretical approaches to QLGBT and migrant mental health in multicultural psychology literature, and will contribute to current research efforts to reconceptualize QLGBT sexualities and migrant settlement. I aim to create accounts of settlement that will be of use to practitioners by providing insight into how people negotiate complex and shifting identifications as they encounter and engage with multiple oppressions during the day-to-day work of settlement. Finally, I see transformative potential in creating accounts of lives lived in defiance, conveying the nuance and poignancy of their efforts, as examples of ways people stretch the bounds of the possible.

I opened my investigation broadly with the research question: How do QLGBT migrants engage in settlement? Additional orienting questions focused attention on specific sub-processes important to their engagement:

- How do QLGBT migrants make meaning of their interactions with people, places, and events that are important to their settlement?
- How do QLGBT migrants negotiate interactions to create social relationships?

- How do QLGBT migrants dialogically construct and negotiate identities in their accounts of these interactions?
- How do they engage with power/oppressions in these interactions?
- What meanings do they make of this engagement?

Research Site and Settings

Consistent with critical ethnography, I situated my investigation in a research site comprised of multiple settings, and embedded in larger locales and social systems. This investigation was sited in Vancouver, BC, Canada. The activities in which QLGBT refugees are engaged in as part of their settlement in this city are the focus of inquiry. Multiple settings informed my investigation: meetings of a QLGBT refugee support group, Rainbow Refugee Committee; accompanying claimants during application and settlement tasks along with narrative interviews with participants. These settings provided both opportunities to observe participants' activities related to settlement, and to involve participants in constructing and interpreting meanings around their settlement process. Settlement activities in this urban centre are situated in wider locales and social systems. Thus, I attended to participants' trajectories through geographic locales and social systems, for example, the immigration system constituted of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Canadian Border Services Association.

Community Consultation & Recruitment of Participants

Community Consultation. Organizing members of Rainbow Refugee gave me permission to introduce the research project at a monthly Rainbow Refugee drop-in. I

involved drop in attendees in consulting on the research project during this introduction. In this consultation process I introduced the rationale and research question and ask for input on what domains community participants see as significant to “settlement” and what groups or audiences need information about QLGBT refugee settlement. For this introduction I prepared an outline and guiding questions on large format flip chart. I presented a preliminary plan of the research process and asked group members how they wanted to be involved and kept informed. I created a sub-committee of community members who agree to act as community consultants that would enable the group to bring forward both suggestions and concerns; I asked the group for permission to use observations of the group to inform my research. As part of this process, I facilitated a discussion about how to protect rights of group members during observation and the research process as a whole. For example, no names or identifying details were used in field notes.

Rainbow Refugee Participants. Participants in Rainbow Refugee are predominantly men who identify as gay, bisexual or queer. A much smaller number of women who identify as lesbian, or queer come to the group. An even smaller number of transpeople, almost exclusively transwomen, attend. I use queer/trans and QLGBT interchangeably to encompass the diverse sexualities and genders of the group, acknowledging that the limited language we have available in English to refer to non-normative sexualities and genders is saturated with cultural and political implications that may not suit participants. The group comprises diverse countries of origin: South/South East Asian (Fiji, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Singapore), African

(Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda), Middle Eastern (Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria), Caribbean (Jamaica, St Lucia) and Latin American (Columbia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru). Spanish speakers from Latin America, Farsi speakers from Iran, and Arabic speakers from Middle Eastern countries are the largest language and cultural groups. Because of the focus of the group on the refugee claim process, the vast majority of participants are in the process of making Inland refugee claims. A very small number of Government Assisted Refugees, Iranian or Iraqi nationals who made successful claims at the UNHCR offices in Turkey or Syria, have recently tapped into the group for social support and community referrals. The table below (Table 1) provides a sense of the composition of the group during my participatory-observation. I stress that I cannot and do not make any claims that this group, or interview participants, are representative of LGBT asylum seekers or refugees. These summary facts are provided in order to give a sense of who I have interacted with to co-construct this knowledge.

Table. 1: Rainbow Refugee Participants Jan-Dec 2008

Countries of Origin by Region	MEN	WOMEN	WOMEN	
	Cisgender Gay Queer or Bi	Cisgender Lesbian Queer or Bi	Transgender Transexual	
South & Central America	16	2	2	20
South & South East Asia	9	3	2	14
Africa	5	1		6
Middle East	12	1	2	15
	42	7	6	55

Interview Participants. Participants were recruited through an introduction and announcements made at Rainbow Refugee Committee meetings and recruitment notices distributed to refugee service support organizations and lawyers. Recruitment criteria specified that interview participants had completed one of three different processes to apply for status in Canada: a claim for asylum made within Canada, a refugee claim made from a country outside Canada, or an application to remain in Canada on Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds. Both the refugee and asylum applications require extensive documentation of well-grounded fear of persecution in their countries of origin because of their “membership in a particular social group.” Thus, successful applicants must make a case for the existence of persecution against QLGBT people in their countries of origin, and provide evidence that corroborates their gay, lesbian or transgendered identification. Humanitarian and Compassionate applications to remain in Canada are typically used as a last resort when a refugee application has been denied. These applications are decided on a discretionary basis and require applicants to document that returning to their country of origin would be a hardship, and they have significant ties to Canada.

I aimed to recruit participants that reflected the diversity of QLGBT migrants seeking refugee protection. A total of nine people participated in interviewing and interpretation. Three additional men offered to participate, but because I was working to include queer women and trans claimants in a limited number of participants, I chose not to interview them. I interviewed three women who identified as lesbian or queer, two transwomen, and four queer men, three who identified as gay and one who

identified as bisexual. Recruiting queer women and trans participants took more time and effort, but eventually through the contacts of Rainbow Refugee and personal networks, volunteers who met criteria came forward.

I introduce each interview participant by pseudonym in the following chapters, describing their background and the context of their involvement in the study. To protect confidentiality I provide demographic information in aggregate and report only the region, rather than country of origin. Participants had been in Canada 2.5-9 years. All spoke English as their second or third language. Participants were 25-42 years old. Their socio-economic status in their home countries included those from rural, poor backgrounds, urban middle-class, and urban elite backgrounds. Six participants had some post-secondary education prior to arrival in Canada, of these, three pursued further education in Canada, and two others pursued post-secondary education in Canada. Eight of nine were employed in jobs that included: hotel accountant, warehouse manager, IT specialist, retail sales staff, and business manager. The chart below (Table 2) summarizes the Regions of Origin, Persecuted Identity and Application Process.

Community Informants. Additional informants with insight into the settlement process of QLGBT migrants were interviewed. These informants included organizers of community services, groups, or events, and immigration lawyers or consultants who have represented QLGBT refugees. I identified community informants through my own knowledge of groups and settings important to Rainbow Refugee members: Informants included: Organizing member of Salaam –a social/support group for Queer Muslims;

service providers in a refugee settlement organization who works with QLGBT claimants and a refugee lawyer with fifteen years of experience in QLGBT claims.

Table 2: Interview Participants: Region or Country of Origin, Persecuted Identity, Process

Participant (pseudonyms)	Region of Origin	Persecuted Identity		Application Process
		Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	
Devon	South East Asia	Gay		Inland Refugee Claim
Adil	Middle East	Gay		Inland Refugee Claim
Jamil	South Asia	Gay		Inland Refugee Claim
Mzalendo	East Africa	Bisexual		Inland Refugee Claim
Sarah	South East Asia	Gay Lesbian		Inland Refugee Claim
Alana	Latin America	Gay Lesbian Queer		Inland Refugee Claim
Miriam	Middle East		Transwoman	Overseas Refugee Claim Government Assisted Refugee
Eleheh	Middle East	Lesbian Queer		Inland Refugee Claim
Stephanie	Latin America		Transwoman	Inland Refugee Claim

Informed consent. The informed consent process began with the community consultation meeting when drop-in attendees provided verbal consent for me to introduce the research at a drop-in. While discussing informed consent with participants I raised three issues. 1) What steps should we take to protect confidentiality? 2) I would like your involvement in the research, but also understand that it takes time and effort. How can we make sure you have enough but not too much involvement? 3) If

participating in the research makes you emotionally uncomfortable, I want to know and I will work with you during or after interviews to make sure you have support or ways of taking care of these feelings. I asked participants about their concerns or questions. We revisited these issues at subsequent meetings for joint interpretation.

Knowledge Construction Process

Critical Ethnography comprises five phases that weave together two different orientations to inquiry: interpretive and functional-systemic (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002). The two orientations are enacted through distinct modes of communication. Interpretive data construction is carried out through first and second person modes of communication. The researcher takes on an insider's position in the social activity conducted by the cultural group. Carspecken's critical ethnographic approach does not require the researcher to enter the worldview of participants, as some traditional ethnographic approaches do. The approach to developing an emic, or insider stance, is positional or performative. The researcher aims to participate in and, through the interaction of first and second person modes, understand the communicative activity of a social setting. In contrast, the functional-systemic orientation is enacted through a third person or objectifying mode of communication. Here, the researcher uses language that constructs the social site and setting from a non-participant, outside, position.

The researcher uses these two orientations to produce a cultural reconstruction and a systems analysis (Carspecken, 1996). The cultural reconstruction process creates an account of the "lived culture" of participants of a social setting. This account outlines

the ways that meaning is constituted in the group as actors coordinate their activities. It articulates the intersubjective patterns, including the negotiation of power, through which meaning arises. The account also attends to the ways actors constitute selves/identities in the group, noting the cultural typifications sanctioned or engaged with as meaningful, by the group and how this shapes possibilities for action. The cultural reconstruction is produced in the first three stages: compiling the primary record, preliminary reconstructive analysis, and dialogical data generation.

The systems analysis occurs in the fourth and fifth phase (Carspecken, 1996). The researcher explores relationships between the social site under investigation and other related social sites with the objective of surfacing relevant system relations. In the last phase, the social interaction patterns, meanings, and self/identity positions articulated in the cultural reconstruction are explained in the context of the system relations outlined in stage four (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002). The relationships among these are understood to be complex and dynamic. In this way the recursive, mutual constitution of actors, interactions, and system relations are explicated.

In this research plan, I provide a detailed account of my research process, including inquiry strategies for data generation, interpretation, supporting validity, and producing research outcomes. I outline how I intend to use the five phase framework provided by critical ethnography, while integrating text construction and analysis approach from collaborative narrative approaches (Arvay, 2003; Gee, 1986).

I. Participant Observation and Compiling the Preliminary Record

The first strategy entailed participant observation to generate my own embodied knowledge of QLGBT refugee settlement. I continued participating in RRC as a volunteer and wrote reflexively about what I have learned through these interactions. I attended monthly drop-in meetings throughout the course of this research. I assisted RRC members with settlement tasks such as applying for legal aid, preparing documentation and letters of support, and reporting for security checks. I attended 10 hearings and 2 expedited interviews as an observer. I participated in the public awareness and education work of RRC, including the Pride parade. I helped plan and conduct service-provider workshops for two organizations that support refugee settlement.

I participated in meetings throughout my research process, and engaged in a thick field note writing process after five of these meetings. These notes described the context, settlement issues that arose, how they were dealt with in the group, and the patterns of interaction that occurred as part of dealing with the issues. My aim as a participant/observer was to engage in typical group interactions, and through this develop an embodied knowledge of the groups' communicative practices. Critical ethnography calls for attention not just to the content of group interactions, but the embodied practices engaged in by group members in order to better understand the interpersonal processes of group members. My training in counselling has attuned me to signs of the emotional and relational processes at work in groups, and I will draw on this in my participant-observation process. I will be attending to both the verbal and non-verbal activity and the content and form interactions take. In the content, I am investigating the explicit and implicit meanings negotiated in the interaction. For

example, noting not just the topic being discussed, but how the topic was introduced, what topics are engaged with as meaningful, and what is left out. In the form, I am investigating the process, largely implicit, whereby these meanings, and power, are negotiated. Form observations include interaction patterns and sequences, position, and role taking in meetings (Carspecken, 1996). For example, who initiates or takes leadership, how turn-taking is handled, how decisions are made. I also noted typical cultural repertoires used: humour, story-telling, and language switching.

II. Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis

The combined field notes of multiple observations form the material from which I produced a primary account of the “lived culture” of the group. In this text I provide a detailed description of the group’s cultural practices as related to settlement. I then used this primary account as the text for conducting preliminary reconstructive analysis. Using a variety of text-reading techniques (Carspecken, 1996) this analysis investigated the meaning making, and power relations at work in the interactions, and in the group members’ lives. I gave special attention to non-verbal aspects of interactions as indicators of embodied meaning-making and power in interactions (). The coding process moved through varying levels of inference. Questions that guided this analysis included:

- How do group members construct QLGBT refugee settlement?
- What meanings are made of the settlement process?
- What problems arise in the process of settlement?
- How do group members construct these problems?

- What resources do group members draw on? Bring to the group?
- How does the group produce and exchange knowledge related to settlement?
- What other settings or sites are important to settlement?
- What social conditions shape the activities of the group and its members?

This reconstructive analysis provides key themes and issues that were then explored in the dialogical data generation phase.

Trustworthiness of the Reconstructive Analysis. Validity was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the group setting and interactions with people engaged in QLGBT settlement. The process of writing field notes enhanced validity by using writing techniques that make the inference and interpretation process explicit, and that encouraged intentional movement between objectifying, subjective-referencing, and normative-evaluative referencing. Following these guidelines, I recorded observable aspects of the interactions in my notes, along with the normative-evaluative or subjective inferences I made from these observations. I wrote in the first person using tentative language that attended to my interpretation process, for example, I notice that P. seems anxious, perhaps wanting to convey urgency (speech is forced, his hands clenched).

III. Dialogical Data Generation

In this third phase I worked to bring the themes, questions and issues I generated in the preliminary analysis into dialogue with others. From this point, I opened the investigation to include the others in the process of generating data and bringing interpretations to this data. For this phase of the inquiry I conducted in-depth

narrative interviews with nine refugee claimants or convention refugees, and involved them in a collaborative interpretation process of their interviews.

1. Narrative Analysis of Settlement Accounts. I adapted the interviewing and collaborative interpretive process outlined in collaborative narrative inquiry (Arvay, 2003). I understand interviews as engaging participants in one instance of constructing meaning around their settlement process. The interviews can be heard on multiple levels: In their content, they provide accounts of people, places, events, and things that have been important to their application and settlement process. These accounts are of interest as individual's trajectories through social sites, and as self/identity being negotiated in the narrated social settings. Events, people, and identities constructed in accounts do not have a fixed relationship with "real world", nor are they fictional constructions with no relationship to events. The analysis process considers what makes this account meaningful, and important to be heard (Dyck & McClaren, 2001) for participants.

The interaction of the interview is also understood as one instance of relational self construction. Narrative self-identity construction occurs in the employment and meaning making around significant events, and in the interaction between the teller and the listener. To conceptualize the interactional self-construction process the collaborative narrative approach draws on Bakhtin's notion of self-narrating and the self as a "polyphonic novel" (Bakhtin cited in Arvay, 2003; Shotter, 1995; Shotter & Billig, 1998). Each time we narrate part of our lives three parties are present in the narrative process: the speaker, the listener, and a third imagined "superaddressee" (Arvay, 2003)

who is presumed to understand. Thus, three voices exist in the speech of the narrator: the understanding of the speaker, the presence of the recipient or listener, and the presumed other. It is interrelationship of these voices that creates self-identities that simultaneously emerge in the specific context while contributing to a sense of continuity. The tensions of discontinuity and continuity, coherence and incoherence, unity and dispersion thus exist in the relational performance of the self-narrative (de Peuter, 1998).

As participants tell me their settlement accounts they are drawing on cultural discourses to construct and negotiate self-identities. In this way narratives are an excellent tool for investigating individual negotiation of power in social settings. Accounts are polysemic, and some of the multiple meanings are brought out in the collaborative interpretation process.

Preparation. I contacted people who were interested in participating by email and/or telephone prior to meeting. In these conversations I prepared participants for the interview and provided an opportunity for questions about participating. I provided potential participants with a brief outline of areas of interest for our interview: (a) their experience in their home country, specifically what led up to leaving their country of origin (b) their experience of relocating to Canada (c) their experience of the application process (d) their experience of settling in this city. I invited them to share other documents with me, for example their Personal Information Form prepared for the Refugee Hearing, but emphasized that this was optional. I sent this information by email and a copy of the informed consent.

Preliminary Conversation. The first meeting comprised the preliminary conversation and the narrative interview. The preliminary conversation was as an opportunity to begin establishing the basis for a collaborative relationship. I give participants a chance to ask questions they have about the research project or my interest in it, and briefly discussed the values and purpose of the collaborative interview and interpretation process. During this conversation we also discussed the informed consent. I described my view of the informed consent as being not only a document, but also an on-going process in which participants will work with me to ensure that their confidentiality is protected. To initiate this process, I began a list of details that would need to be omitted from transcripts and final research report and suggested that we revise this list as needed. If they brought their Personal Information Form we discussed how these would be stored and whether I had their consent to quote from it in the final report.

Interview Process. How I began the interview depended in part on how much of a participants background I knew prior to the interview. For those not connected with Rainbow Refugee, at the beginning of the interview I asked participants if we could make a time/place line of key dates next to a map. I found it worked best to start in Vancouver, asking about application and hearing dates and date of arrival, then moving back to how people had traveled, and how long that took, stopping points along the way, and then the departure date from their country of origin, birthdate and place. If any of the key locations (childhood hometown, places of long term stays) were unfamiliar to me, I would ask them to describe them a little (town or village? How

large? distance from a major city). Some participants preferred to move right into the narrative interview. For those connected with Rainbow Refugee, details were part of my background knowledge, and I could check and confirm dates and places as the interview progressed.

I began the interview by reminding participants of the parts of their experience I am interested in: their lives in their home country before leaving, their relocation, their application, and their experience settling or rebuilding a life in Canada. After checking if this structure for the interview worked for them, I asked if they could tell me about their life in their country of origin. Once participants began their story I engaged in carefully attuned listening. I encouraged deeper exploration through probes, reflections and at times sharing my own reactions. I also worked to remain aware of my role in the interaction and in the construction of the text.

Listening, Transcription and Analysis Process. From my work in narrative inquiry I have developed a transcription process, drawing on Gee (1986) and Reissman (1993) that attends to the spoken form of the interactions. By transcribing into phrases grouped as stanzas, and organized into episodes the form of interactions becomes more apparent for analysis. This enables listening to and reading interviews as polyphonic dialogic negotiation (Bell & Gardiner, 1995; Shotter, 1995 ; Wersch, 1991) of power at work in settlement process, and in context of interview process. Relations of power are tacitly present in the form that interactions take—silences, subtle deflections, the avoidance or repetition of particular terms can all reflect power at work in the interview.

Organizing and displaying the text in stanzas and episodes helped me to understand how each participant emplots their accounts, and makes the form of their account, and our interaction, more apparent. Stanzas, following Gee's listening method as described by Reissman (1993), are a series of speech phrases grouped by the meaning they convey. Next, I identified episodes that comprised the narratives of the interview. Reissman's descriptions of entrance and exit talk guides how I demarcate the episodes. I have noticed that reading interview texts in stanza/episode form is very different from reading interview texts transcribed into sentences and solid blocks of text. Transcripts read like free form poetry. Participants' use of parallel structure, metaphors, positioning language, and double-voicing all become more apparent.

Nonverbal communication such as tone, pacing, silences, and gestures are critical to the meanings of interactions. I used my notes and memories of the nonverbal elements of our interactions, creating a coding category for these in Atlas.ti. My interpretive process has changed with the ease of digital recordings. I listened more frequently and later into the analysis process than I had in past research projects that used audio cassettes. Noting time markers with the episodes in the transcripts made it possible for me to return to audiorecorded excerpts right through the writing process, allowing me to attend to emotional tone, pacing, and silences throughout interpretation and writing.

With the transcripts prepared, I continued the interpretive process using four lenses outlined in collaborative narrative (Arvey, 2003): a) reading for self of the

narrator b) reading for the research question c) reading for power and d) a reflexive reading.

a) Reading for Self of the Narrator. With the first reading, I analyzed the text for the dialogical self-construction process. I have used guiding questions (questions 1-11) from Arvay (2001) for this reading and added the last four questions on relational and contextual constituents.

1. Who is telling this story?
2. How are they situated in this story?
3. How do they present themselves?
4. What voice are they using?
5. What are they feeling?
6. What do they share about themselves? Possibly keep hidden?
7. What relationships do they draw on?
8. What do they want to convey to the listener?
9. What do they want to convey to others in the story?
10. How do they create a sense of continuity/consistency of self?
11. How do they understand discontinuity or changes?
12. What relationships do they draw on to tell their experience?
13. How do they speak of time and space?
14. What elements of their contexts do they recognize as significant? How?
15. What cultural resources or meta-narratives do they draw on to tell their story?

b) Reading for the Research Question. The second interpretive lens that I applied to the interview transcript is an analysis for the research question (Arvay, 2003). How are QLGBT migrants engaging in settlement?

c) Critical Reading. In the third reading I applied a critical lens to the interview text. Here participants' interpretations of the relations of power and oppression and their strategies for dealing with power and oppression were the focus. The guiding questions, again taken from Arvay (2001) are:

1. How do they speak of power, authority or oppression (racism, heterosexism, sexism)?
2. What meanings do they give to power and authority in their lives?
3. How do they speak of social institutions (e.g. immigration policies)?

4. How do they come to learn of these social institutions?
5. How do they understand the impact of these institutions on their lives?
6. How do they understand their interactions with these institutions?

d) Reflexive Reading. I engaged in reflexive reading of my interactions in the interview. I made notes on the self-identities I was enacting, how I was positioning myself, and ways power might be at work in the interview interactions.

Collaborative Interpretation Process. The collaborative interpretive process was designed to engage participants in a dialogue that jointly interprets their account of their settlement. In the original collaborative narrative inquiry (Arvey, 2003) participants are provided with copies of the interview transcripts, and questions guiding them through multiple readings: 1) for narrated self-identities, 2) the research question, and 3) a critical reading for power. However, given that English is a second, or third language for most participants, and many of them are working long hours I adapted the collaborative interpretation process to be less text and time intensive.

For the collaborative interpretation, I created a visual representation of the key interaction sites narrated in the account. Each interaction site formed for a node on the map. I placed phrases from the interview quotations around the node, and a time marker for its location in the audiorecording. The time marker allowed participants and I to listen to these parts of the interview together during the joint interpretation meeting. I also prepared a point-form guide of the themes emerging across interviews so that we could discuss their account in relation to these larger themes. I completed preliminary analysis of five interviews prior to beginning joint interpretation sessions.

Because interviewing and analysis proceeded concurrently, the point form guide varied somewhat between joint interpretation sessions.

Collaborative Interpretation Meeting. During this interview the participant/co-investigator and I explored the interaction sites on the map. During this conversation, we together considered possible interpretations of these interaction sites. I emphasized with participants that we were not trying to reach consensus on one particular meaning or interpretation, and that places where we had different interpretations were of interest to me. After the interpretive sessions I listened to the audiotapes of the interpretive sessions, making detailed notes. I saved these notes as memos on Atlas.ti attached to the transcribed interaction site.

All but two of the participants were able to complete the full interview and joint interpretation process. Mzalendo moved out of the province for work shortly after our interview. I was able to check interpretive themes by email with him, but we did not meet again after our initial interview. Miriam preferred to meet only once for the interview because of a combination of a busy schedule and feeling uneasy about revisiting painful experiences in the past yet again. Most participants preferred not to listen to the audiorecording and we worked with the interaction site map.

Trustworthiness of Dialogical Interpretation Process. The richness of the interpretive process enhanced by repeated meetings with participants. As rapport and comfort build, the quality of intersubjective exchange increases. Giving participants an opportunity to reflect on their interview will also bring multiple perspectives to the data. I presented findings to members of Rainbow Refugee consultation group for discussion.

IV. Systems Analysis

The purpose of the systems analysis is to create a third person “objectifying” account of refugee settlement that attends to the multiple social systems in which settlement occurs. I used three strategies for generating data for the systems analysis: 1) interviews with lawyers and community organizers 2) documents produced in the application process 3) publications from media and community organizations.

1) Interviews with Community Leaders. I identified individuals who are involved in refugee settlement through their work as community organizers or service providers. Some of the community leaders I intend to interview are working to organize groups of diasporic QLGBT people for advocacy and support. Others are lawyers or case-workers actively involved in QLGBT migration cases. The interviews were semi-structured, and I developed questions for these interviews during the preliminary reconstructive analysis. At this stage I was interested in the content, rather than the form, of the interview. For this reason, I could conduct some as telephone interviews. Also, the transcription process is less elaborate without the attention to non-verbal communication or form. The analysis process for these interviews aims to identify elements and conditions of relevant social systems, and power relations at work.

2) *Documents from the Application Process.* All participants were asked if they were willing to provide a copy of their Personal Information Forms. These documents provide examples of how QLGBT refugee cases are presented to the IRB.

3) *Analysis of Media and Community-based Publications.* I have been gathering examples of news stories published in mainstream and QLGBT media for the past two years. These publications include coverage of QLGBT refugee claimants from AIDS conference held in Toronto in August 2006, coverage of the campaign in February 2007 concerning the denial of the refugee claim of Alvaro Antonio Orozco, coverage of the private members Bill C-280 (2007) and then C-291 (2009) calling for implementation of the Refugee Appeal Division, and the support campaign for the current legal challenge against the safe-third country agreement launched by Amnesty International and Canadian Council for Refugees. The updates from three active listserv groups were helpful in directing me to publications and events: Canadian Council for Refugees, Metropolis BC, and *No One Is Illegal* distributes a summary of migration related events and news bi-monthly and this has been an excellent source of links to publications. These publications provide evidence of the wider systems impacting the settlement process of QLGBT refugees.

Procedures for Systems Analysis. The systems analysis was guided by my reading in critical social theory (Carspecken, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). My aim was to identify relevant social systems. Once I have developed a view of relevant systems relations, I explored the reconstructive analysis in the context of these systems relations. At this stage I wrote point form field notes that are more journalistic in style

(Carspecken, 1996). Using the third person, I will write accounts of the evidence I gather for systemic relations. These fieldnotes will be entered as memo documents in Atlas.ti.

Trustworthiness of Systems Analysis. The validity of systems analysis was enhanced by consulting relevant literature looking for both confirmatory and counter-evidence.

V. Integration of Dialogical and Systems Analysis

To move towards writing the final text, the different forms of interpretation were juxtaposed and integrated. The dialogical reconstruction and the systems analysis, are juxtaposed, and through iterative reading and coding processes, integrated. Juxtaposing the two forms of analysis serves to open up discourses, and dominant meta narratives. The goal of this analysis is to reconstruct a view of wider systems relations that constitute the settlement processes of QLGBT refugees

Trustworthiness of Integration. I asked two members of the community who had not been involved in interviewing to read and respond to the preliminary findings chapters. Prior to publication I will make a presentation of preliminary findings at a community meeting. This community meeting will be an opportunity to discuss, augment, and revise findings.

Representation of findings My challenge in this final stage of the interpretation process was to convey the complexity and dynamism of QLGBT refugee's engagement in settlement. I produced participants accounts of interaction sites in text to illustrate the interrelationships among the social interaction patterns, meanings, and

self/identity positions articulated in the cultural reconstruction and the system relations outlined in phase four (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002).

Relational Ethics of Research Practice

Throughout the research process I was engaged in multiple relationships—as a group member, and as a researcher, with many of my participants. I began this research recognizing that my multiple positions in the community I am researching are both a strength and a challenge. As a researcher in counselling psychology, I approached this inquiry as a scientist-practitioner, bound to the code of ethics of the Canadian and American Psychological Associations. Yet, my previous experience of qualitative research within QLGBT communities has shown me that I need to look beyond codes for guidance on ethical research practices. In my therapeutic practice I have worked to attune myself to ethically important moments—noticing potential conflicts or dilemmas, anticipating potential harms, and engaging in a decision making process that considers the multiple perspective, needs, and power relationships involved (Haverkamp, 2005). I have come to understand that conducting research requires a commitment to continuous attention to acting and communicating with integrity in all relationships. Haverkamp (2005) calls on qualitative researchers to take a stance of trustworthiness in all research relationships—with individuals, groups, communities, and the wider public.

The prior and on-going relationships I had with participants enhanced my ability to proceed responsibly. Our relationships grounded me in a sense of ethical responsibility that feels deeper and weightier than any professional code of conduct.

Participants and I will continue to be members of the same group, and participate in community events together. Most of the participants had a prior experience of me through our interactions, and were comfortable enough to raise concerns or questions. For most participants I had some knowledge of the contexts of their lives, the supports and resources available to them before and after the interviews. I had the reassurance of knowing that all but two of the participants had on-going contact with others in Rainbow Refugee if they needed support. The research structure of the follow-up joint interpretation interview gave me an opportunity to check in with participants on their reactions to the interview process.

I view informed consent as process, not a document, and engaged all participants in discussion of the measures we needed to take to protect their confidentiality. This is particularly important given the closely networked nature of the communities participants and I are involved in. During discussions of informed consent, I used questions that engage participants in thinking through the longer term implications of bringing particular details into a public record.

My concern with issues of researcher power contributed to my decision to incorporate community consultation and collaborative interpretation into a critical ethnography. My experience as a queer person reading research about QLGBT people, and as a woman reading research about women has sensitized to issues of misrepresentation by well-meaning researchers. I am not, however, immune to committing the same errors myself. As a White, university educated, middle-class, native English speaker, and Canadian citizen I have a very privileged positionality

relative to most of my participants. For this reason, I selected a method that gives participants a high degree of input into the interpretation process. The consultation and collaborative process is designed to challenge my own interpretive process and enrich the research with multiple perspectives. The interpretive process outlined in this method required and encouraged a high degree of self-reflexivity in an effort to surface ways that I shape the interview and interpretation process.

I have not viewed the decision to involve participants in a collaborative interpretive process as a way of "giving voice" to participants. I have opened a space in the research process for participants to use their own voice in a dialogue. The degree to which they do this depends, in part, on my ability to communicate openness to genuine collaboration. Further, although I aimed to foster a dialogue that co-constructs the meaning of the interview text, I will make decisions about how this co-construction is incorporated in the final research text. I own both the privilege and responsibility of creating the research question, setting the interview context, providing guidelines for interpretation, contributing my own interpretations, and making final decisions on how to present the research text. It is my voice that is privileged through the research and writing process. In these ways this research method differs substantially from Participatory Action frameworks or Community Engagement models of research. Given the resources available for this project, and the busy schedules of participants, embarking on a full Community Engagement or Participatory Action research process did not seem either feasible or ethical.

Although I brought transformative social justice aims to this research, I recognize that there is both positive and negative transformative potential inherent in the interviewing and group processes. My belief that the act of giving an account will impact the teller, shaping how she sees herself, has informed my decision to use a process that gives participants an opportunity to reflect on their own process of giving an account. However, I want to clarify that in being explicit about the transformative potential of relational dialogue, I am not setting out to liberate, emancipate, or raise the consciousness of the individuals who participate in this research. The people I am interviewing are already actively engaged in understanding themselves and in understanding and resisting oppression. My hope is that in writing about their engagement I have provided both a catalyst for others to further their own engagement and exemplars that open alternative possibilities for engagement.

My volunteer work with Rainbow Refugee had given me some sense of Queer refugee's experiences of persecution and migration prior to beginning this research. I knew that as part of recounting their experiences, participants would be retelling traumatic experiences. My awareness was somewhat limited however, because meetings focused primarily on the practical day-to-day work of the application and settlement processes. Each meeting began with a round of introductions that asked people to share just their name, where they are from, where they are at in the process, and what questions they have for the group. Facilitators maintained a focus on current challenges, while acknowledging that everyone in the group has faced problems with persecution in some form. This practice emerged over time as the group grew, in part

because of limited time, and also to maintain a level of emotional safety given the drop-in format. Group participants usually referenced problems in their country of origin without going into detail. Having several facilitators and experienced members at each meeting meant that when group members did disclose traumatic events in the group, the roles of responding to that member, modeling respectful listening, and attending to the other group members was distributed over 3-5 people. Over time, individual group participants usually found one of the facilitators or longer term members that they connected with to confide in privately. As a volunteer with Rainbow Refugee I have listened to the experiences of QLGBT refugee claimants with a conviction that seeking out the comforting presence of another person to witness both suffering and survival is a step towards healing the traumas of exclusion and violation.

I began this research acutely aware that we are potentially moved and changed by the act of retelling our experiences to another. In particular how people respond when we recount experiences that have threatened our survival holds the potential to exacerbate or ameliorate feelings of shame and alienation. My training as a therapist makes me very aware of the limitations and challenges of holding research interviews without contributing to emotional harms. The context of a research interview can work against ensuring the emotional safety of participants. Having control of when, how, and with whom to share a traumatic event enhances safety, yet the research process inherently limits participants' control. Participants did not seek me out, they responded to my request to share their story. I worked in ways to return some control to participants: choosing the physical setting and time. I always placed the recorder next

to the participant and reminded them that they can hit pause, take breaks, or stop at any point. A spacious approach to interviewing allowed participants to gauge how much depth and detail they wanted to relay. With all participants I listened with attunement for signs of distress, and if a participant hesitated, reminded and reassured participants they did not have to go further.

Each time I sat down with a participant I sought to be a respectful attuned listener. Close empathic attunement communicates acceptance and understanding, that can counteract shame and alienation, and has the potential to facilitate self-acceptance and deeper meaning making. I also worked to be a compassionate witness in interviews (Chadron, 2003). Becoming a compassionate witness means developing both the equanimity and fearlessness to stay present with your own or another's suffering, while directing compassion towards the person who is suffering. Being compassionately present with another person as they recount their experiences of violence, threat, and exclusion can soothe alienation and shame. Witnessing a person's courage and will to survive can remind them of their own strength.

CHAPTER 4

Persistence in Persecution: Living in Countries of Origin

QLGBT refugees who participated in this study have lived lives that defy norms. In their countries of origin they have survived efforts to suppress and eradicate transgressive sexualities or genders. Their efforts to seek safety and belonging mobilized them to seek out similar others in their home countries, and eventually to leave home countries. By crossing international borders towards potential places of safety, they took on systems geared to exclude. By accessing the refugee determination system they have engaged in a struggle for recognition and credibility while persisting in uncertainty. The daily work of settling creates both the opportunity and obligation for reconstruction of self and social relationships, negotiating safety and belonging in a range of communities and contexts. During each of these processes, QLGBT migrants are in engagement with multiple co-constituting power relations, in particular racism, classism, neocolonialism, sexism, heterosexism, and transphobia. Through their efforts to live livable lives, QLGBT migrants have stretched the bounds of the possible. In their accounts they tell how they did it, and what it has meant to them.

To present a view of how QLGBT refugees engage in settlement I foreground the voices of participants as they recount significant events and interactions. Nine participants who have made refugee claims based on persecution due to sexual orientation or gender identity told me their stories of living in and then leaving their home countries, migrating, making a refugee claim, and settling in Vancouver, BC,

Canada. I opened this inquiry broadly with the question *How do refugees who have made claims based on persecution of their sexual orientation or gender identity engage in settlement?* Recognizing that pre-arrival experiences critically shape settlement, I asked participants to begin with some of the events that led up to their departure. Our interviews explored the meanings they made of country-of-origin and migration experiences before their arrival in Canada, and then their experiences of the refugee determination system as they simultaneously made efforts to rebuild lives in Canada.

Recounting their country-of-origin and emigration experience was an embodied act of remembering and meaning-making. Participants and I are engaged in active co-construction of meaning, and the polyphony of the interviews reflects their relational negotiation of power. As participants narrated their experiences with me they relayed important events and interactions, evoking past and present emotions. As they reenacted these events, they were voicing selves and others involved in the event. In the process of narrating their experiences, past selves were brought into contact with present and possible future selves. Interpreting the dialogical process of constituting self-in-relation enabled an understanding of the relational processes at work in interactions with close others, social groups, and institutions. As participants narrated their experiences they were engaged in a creative struggle to make language sedimented with pre-given meanings mean what they want in a particular circumstance. Attention to these relational processes provides a view of how participants engaged with power and oppression in their settlement process.

In an effort to portray the polyphony of the interviews and the interpretive process, I use a variety of narrative and text formatting conventions. Participant voices and interview interactions are indented. These excerpts follow audio-recorded interviews very closely. For this purpose I used transcript texts edited slightly for ease of reading. I inserted punctuation and omitted most *ums ahhs* and false starts. I provide a view of the interpretation that occurs in the joint meaning-making of the interview itself by including the interview dialogue. I retained my responses if they were more than minimal encouragers (*mmm, ahh*).

The places where participants told their stories through remembered, imagined, or composite conversations are written as dialogue using the language of participants. I portray double-voicing of selves or internalized others through the use of italicized text. In remembered conversations italicized text in quotation marks denotes voiced others. Drawing on Bakhtin's concept of double voicing (Bell & Gardiner, 1998; Whorham, 1999), I interpreted these uses of quoted speech and hypothetical dialogue as places where intensified conflict exist as participants develop their own voices through contact with other voices. I have kept some excerpts in the stanza format I used for transcription to draw attention to participants' use of metaphor or rhythmic phrasing that suggest places of emotional *liveness*. Presentation of text in stanza form invites very close reading.

This chapter draws on participants' accounts of their country-of-origin to show how these pre-settlement experiences shape QLGBT refugees' engagement in settlement. Interpretation from the successive listening/reading process and joint

interpretation interviews follow each excerpt. The narrative excerpts and interpretation build on each other to elaborate the relational processes that shaped participants' exit from their countries of origin and migration trajectory. I draw attention to sociocultural, interpersonal, affective/emotional elements. I summarize these processes and highlight their implications for settlement at the end of the chapter.

Juxtaposition of participants' narratives draws attention to ways in which participants' social positionality enabled and constrained possibilities for mobility, safety, and belonging. Excerpts and interpretation elaborate some of the ways that refugee migration and settlement is intersectionally constituted. Dialogical interpretation of the interviews explored the subjectivity and embodiment of this intersectionality. Readers can gain insight into how these different social locations shaped the experiences and meaning-making of each participant. Recognizing that remembering is a social act (Harre & Stearns, 1995) and cognizant that these accounts should not be read as literal representations of the past, I invite the readers to enter into the social worlds of the participants, working to notice and make connections between social location, experience, and subjectivity. I invite you, as a reader, to notice places where judgments and defensiveness arise as well as where connection and resonance occur. Use your emotional response to the text as an entry point for self-reflexive questioning.

Prior to leaving their home countries QLGBT migrants have lived in daily defiance of homophobia and transphobia. Their accounts convey the range and interaction of extreme forms persecution through more subtle impacts of stigma and social erasure.

QLGBT migrants' efforts to live livable lives propel them out of these contexts, towards places of potential safety and belonging.

Adil

Adil is in his late twenties. We met at a rainbow refugee drop-in in 2007. He walked with Rainbow Refugee in the Pride parade in both 2007 and 2008. The first year we used masks to cover our faces so that people could walk regardless of their residency status or need for confidentiality. The second year, Adil, along with some others, chose not to wear masks. I remember him walking alongside me, dancing with the beat, saying *this is so strange, in front of all these people, and I'm feeling fear, pride, fear, pride-- and I'm just dancing through it all.*

In our interview, Adil explained that he grew up in one of the Gulf States, the cherished son in a family of daughters. He told me about how after six years together, his boyfriend wanted to continue a secret relationship while they both started dating women, possibly even married. Adil said his boyfriend was being realistic. When I asked if he knew others who managed this way, Adil explained.

I don't know. I wasn't really in touch with other gay people. I isolated myself... It was really dangerous to be part of a ... a group. It is really *crazy* to be part of a group. If something happens to this group, I'm part of them, my name will somehow be out there. I don't want anyone to come to my dad and tell him "*your son...*" People know my father and I can't let that happen. I still want to honour my dad. I don't want to bring my name anywhere.

So I was like no...I don't want to be comfortable, because if I feel comfortable something will happen. Something will definitely happen. It's always like that. So I was always cautious.

Adil looked around wide-eyed, vigilant and fearful. I asked Adil, how did you figure out that it was dangerous?

.....Mmmmm.... the news. On the news "*So-and-so was beheaded tonight because he was homosexual.*" Isn't that enough?

Policemen harass me because they want something. Like *do me this favour I'll get you in trouble.* I cannot complain. I don't have the right to speak. It's not a place where people can live. You have no rights whatsoever. So what's the point?

So I was always quiet. Keeping myself in--to survive. Dress in a certain way so I won't attract attention. Even walk in a certain way because I don't want attention. Because if I walk the way I walk--people follow me on the street. I don't know who they are: Are they interested? Are they cops? I don't know. Is it a trap? I have no idea.

We explored the meanings of drawing this kind of attention a little later in the interview.

S: So the way you walked and talked could draw attention to you very easily?

Very easily--and I don't like that.

S: And it sounds like the attention you drew brought assumptions of you being gay and they also assumed that you sleep around.

Yeah this is what they assumed. That because I'm gay, I'll service anyone.

I'm just a whore.

It's not true. I'm just normal.

I actually think that gay people are more men than them because it takes balls to love balls.

S: absolutely.

So come on be realistic about it.

I'm more macho than they are. *Come on.*

S: Absolutely it takes courage.

Yeah, completely.

S: So the sense that I'm getting is that at school, at work, in your family, you really had to work hard to not draw attention to yourself--be kind of as quiet and under the radar as possible.

Yeah.

S: And even then, you didn't feel safe.

No, I was constantly depressed.
 Nobody nobody ever wanted to...
 Everybody saw sadness in my eyes.
 Everybody saw a broken soul, but nobody asked me.

This is the part that kills me the most, because

I'm your child.
I'm your brother.
I'm your friend.
Why don't you ask me
"What's there?"

Without being judgemental

Why didn't you ask me?
"What's going on in your world?"
"You're not the person you used to be"
"I want to know, and I promise you, I will not judge you."
"Say whatever you want to say--I will help you"

Nobody ever said that.
 Nobody ever said that.
 And this....really really really irritates me
At least ask...say something...something

Part of it I think is me....because maybe I should ask for attention

S: mm...ok?

I don't know. I have no idea. I don't like to blame.

S: But I can hear how you had to avoid attention, because that was the way to keep safe and yet you're saying there are ways that meant you were very alone.

Very lonely ...and very bitchy. Because nobody understands me. Nobody wants to know. So I was really bitchy. I don't care how other people feel, because they don't care how I feel. *Why do I care?*

In Adil's account I heard how official persecution creates the means for abuses of power by police—and others in authority. Portrayals of homophobic violence instill fear, and this fear becomes embodied—constraining movement, enforcing social isolation, and fuelling mistrust of others and self. The ever-present possibility of verbal or physical aggression, something Didier Eribon (2003) terms *ambient harassment*, shapes the lives of QLGBT people profoundly and subtly. Ambient harassment makes it unclear whether leaving is an escape, or forced exile.

In Adil's account I heard how something as basic as how one walks can become a dangerous marker of a persecuted identity. I heard the pervasiveness of the danger—how it seeps into daily life through the surveillance and gossip of neighbors. The possibility of recognition carried fear, shame, and stigma not only for Adil but also his family. The weight of carrying his family name edged him towards conformity. Although this conformity offered some protection, the effort required to sustain this conformity made a livable life impossible.

The stigma against same-sex desire that Adil worked against carried associations of sexual availability and promiscuity. Adil explained that in his culture it is being receptive, or bottom, that is shamed and stigmatized as unmanly. Adil voiced the stigmas he lived with in his country of origin, and then talked back to them. Going beyond claiming "*just normal*" he argues with me, and implicit past others, that he is courageous, and has a claim to masculinity for having the balls to love balls.

Adil explored the tension he felt over wanting the attention and care from his family and friends, while also isolating himself and avoiding others. He voices an imagined appeal to those around him with “*I’m your son. I’m your brother...*” and the understanding, non-judgemental support he wished he had from them.

Jamil

Jamil is in his late twenties. We met at a Rainbow Refugee meeting in 2005. I remember him being quite shy and soft-spoken in the group at the time. The first in-depth conversation we had was at a drop-in when he arrived visibly shaken. He had been walking to the bus stop at a local mall when a group of young men had started shouting at him and threw a bottle at him. I remember him guessing at what it was about him that drew their attention— perhaps the fact that he was carrying a purple bag. He was reluctant to acknowledge the possibility of racism, even though all of the youth had been White.

The first drop-in after Jamil was granted Convention Refugee status, he arrived sporting low-slung jeans that showed off his Molsons’ “I am Canadian” briefs and worked his way around the room grandly, giving each of us a big hug. He continues to know how to work a room, and now speaks publicly on behalf of Rainbow Refugee.

During our interview Jamil was animated as he described his life in his home country in South Asia, pantomiming interactions and drawing a map of the family compound in the rural village where he lived. The love he has for his mother, uncles, aunties, sisters and brothers was clear as he described the daily intricacies and tensions of large multigenerational family life. He became tense when he spoke about his father

who was alcoholic and chronically angry. Abusive with all his children and his wife, Jamil's father was particularly enraged by perceived failings in Jamil's masculinity.

...and everyone is sleeping on the floor. So I'm here, my brother's here, my aunt, my uncle...everyone's sleeping next to each other. We have a mosquito net, and using old saris you can make the net stretch to the ceiling.

So when I get up it's like I'm in some kind of web. And as soon as I get up I fall. And when I fall, everyone's net comes crashing. I fall on the ground and I hit my head. My brother and my mom they say that my eyes were open. I really don't recall that. I don't recall anything at all. I remember that it was complete darkness.

When I did open my eyes, the first thing I remember, is seeing this really HOT doctor. Dr Sharma--he changed my life.

"So you really wanted to die, huh?"

That's the first thing I remember him saying when I came to consciousness.

Jamil had just relayed the series of events that had led up to this suicide attempt—Jamil's tone was light as he relayed the story of the night before.

I was bored. I was seriously bored. I put on one of my mom's *tika*, and I totally forgot. When my sister came to call me, I swear to god I forgot to take this tika off. Because when you wear something, you're wearing it—it's like an earring or something you totally can't feel that you're wearing it. So I totally forgot when I was going before my dad to take it off-- And that night was...hell. It was a disaster.

Jamil's slightly nervous laughter gave way to a deeper, more serious tone. The details of his father's abuse conveyed to me extreme, deliberate cruelty aimed to punish and humiliate. Jamil's father tethered his son's feet with a rope, hung him upside down by the beam across the ceiling, stripped his shirt and beat him with the radials of a tire.

Jamil blacked out. In the fog and anger that followed, he swallowed a handful of pills his sister had been given for fever.

Jamil had made several suicide attempts before leaving his family home. When rumours about Jamil's sexuality started circulating in the village, his father beat both Jamil and his mother, blaming her for being soft with Jamil. Witnessing his father's violence against his mother triggered his first suicide attempt.

I swear to God --I was holding the rope and the branch broke. The rope got so tight and I just had to quickly grab the branch. I heard the minah birds and I thought--I can't do this. I have to find another way to die.

I've always thought when I die.
I want to die a really peaceful death.
We all do...
I don't want to die from suffering and torture.

So I had this really big red scar on my neck and I'm thinking *What if my family sees this? I'm going to be in so much shit.* We got clothing from the Red Cross people, so I went and got some shirts. I would only wear clothes with a really high neck. But my mum saw it, and my mum knew if my father saw it that my father would only beat the shit out of me, instead of trying to work things out. So she went and she told my father's brother, my Babikaka.

He took me and my brothers out for a treat, and when he and I were sitting alone together he said

"Look your father is a drunk, and all he does is smoke pot. He's really fucked up. But are you fucked up? What are you doing? By doing these things are you making it worse?"

He was caring for me, but at the same time, he was caring for the young boy who he wanted me to be, as in his imagination--who would be tough and straight. His support was for his nephew, who is just a nephew, not for a gay nephew--not the nephew that I really was. He was there for me as a person. But he wasn't there for the gay man I was becoming.

The hospital sent Jamil to the police station in his village to get a form that would allow them to file a report on Jamil's injuries. The futility of filing a report

became clear to me as Jamil took on the mocking tone and threatening stance of the police officers. Pointing at his bare chest in his torn shirt, they derided him.

"Look--not a hair on your chest. You're no man. Get out of here you Kandu!"

His efforts to seek protection from the police resulted in further harassment.

*After that time, I decided, you know what,
I'm going to go crazy
I'm going to do whatever it takes to end this life and be on my own.
I'm going to start with nothing.*

And you know what, one day I just eloped from the house when everyone was sleeping.

I said, you know what, I'm getting the hell outta here.

As he speaks Jamil reenacts persuading himself to leave—mustering the courage to be on his own, poor, at sixteen.

I went to [the capital city]. I would have absolutely zero cents in my pocket and yet there wouldn't be any stress in the day. No one telling me off. No one beating me.

For two years Jamil worked in the tourist hotels of the coastal capital. In the city he met other young gay men working in the bars and hotels as busboys, bar boys, and kitchen staff.

So that way of life was good. I had no money. I had not the best clothes and things, but life was going good. Then I started encountering problems, problems like ...this vigilante group.

There are a lot of vigilante groups that are so manly and so macho, and they beat on guys like us. I remember hearing about this one guy. They shoved a rubber plant up his bottom and the guy was dead the next morning.

The targets would be someone who is weak. Why would you want to bully someone who was very strong?

While living in the capital city, Jamil became involved with Jake, an Australian man working for a non-governmental organization.

I remember the first gay case in the news. I followed the case. He was released by the judge because there was politics...That case was very scary. It scared the shit out of me.

S: What did it mean to you?

That news, when I read it in the newspaper, told me to *be very careful, to watch my back*.

Two in the morning my friends would call me. "*Hey, there's a cop car parked outside.*" Me and Jake would sneak out the back doors, we'd go through the bushes and we'd hide somewhere.

There were people that tried their best to make things worse for us. Like my aunt went to the police station and made complaints. We heard the extent that she went to make our lives miserable.

it was the vigilante groups
 it was the villagers
 it was the uncles
 it was the entire system
 it was the the guy I was working for
 who would scream in front of his clients *Kandu*

it was everywhere
 it was in the buses
 it was in the taxis
 it was in the bars
 it was everywhere

it's like....its like a game you enjoy while you are hidden,
 but once you come into the picture,
 once you come into the mainstream...
 you're bringing yourself attention for violence.

Jamil narrated a relationship with home and family complicated by heteronormative scrutiny and extreme homophobic violence. As he spoke of his time in

his country of origin Jamil embedded himself in a web of family members that loved and cared for him, while simultaneously rejecting his gay sexuality and queer gender. Family members tried to buffer Jamil from the worst of his father's brutality, while also pressuring him to conform to masculine heteronormativity in order to avoid provoking his father's rage. Jamil struggled with feeling both intimately tied to and alienated by his family through much of our interview.

Jamil's account names suicide as a manifestation of homophobic violence. His repeated attempts were efforts to escape brutal violence and pervasive harassment when no other way out was apparent. I also heard the possibility that he was sacrificing himself in order to protect his mother from violence and family from shame. The physical violence and emotional alienation of his home life made a livable life impossible. Having the doctor take his side became a turning point for Jamil, helping him muster the courage to seek protection, and then to leave when protection was denied.

The circulation of scrutiny and control among village, family, and police in Jamil's account provides a sense of how proximities of surveillance (Foucault, Puar) can play out in the lives of queer people. Gossip by villagers shamed Jamil's father who intensified his abuse. Attempting to get protection from police exacerbated harassment in his village. Escaping from his father's violence at home brought him into the capital city; a place that at first provided some camouflage, opportunities to meet gay others, and a means to support himself. His movements away from home, family, and village

were attempts to evade surveillance, but the reach of surveillance extended into the city. Complaints by his Aunt in the city brought Jamil to the attention of police.

Jamil' account hints at the importance of understanding his experience in its neocolonial context. Like many former British colonies, Jamil's country of origin maintains penal code provisions against homosexuality that were set in place by the colonial state. These provisions have been taken up by nationalist governments. In the process, queer sexualities have been constructed as a corrupting influence from the west. Jamil's encounters with homophobic violence at the hands of vigilantes were tinged with the racialized violence against the ethnic minority he belonged to. I heard in Jamil's account how the chaos created by political upheavals, racialized conflict, widespread poverty and unemployment created room for homophobic violence to thrive.

The intersections of development work and gay tourism in the capital city made meeting Jake possible. Jamil' relationship with a much older White man may have intensified his Aunt's scrutiny and heightened Jamil's visibility to police. Jamil was uneasy as he worked to make sense of the power dynamics in the relationship during our interview. In very practical ways, the relationship made Jamil's departure to Canada possible, and remaining in his country of origin impossible. Jamil struggled with the sense that he used Jake, and raised the uncomfortable possibility that it was mutual.

Mzalendo

Mzalendo responded to a request for participants forwarded by his lawyer. I met him for the first time at our interview after making arrangements by phone and email.

He offered that he would like to participate, but had an extremely busy schedule. He was nearing completion of a graduate degree, taking additional courses by distance education, while also working.

Mzalendo left his home country in East Africa to come to Canada on a student visa. He was in his late thirties at the time of the interview. He asked questions about my interest in the research topic, and was interested in the fact that a group like Rainbow Refugee existed, but made it clear that participating in any groups was out of the question. As I had in other interviews, we started by creating a rough time line, and then invited his story.

Where do I begin? Should I begin in [East Africa]? Or should I begin my experience in Canada?

S: For me it would be helpful to know a bit about your experience in East Africa before you left...

First of all, in my country in the 1980s, socially it was not acceptable to be any other sexual orientation other than straight. Anything else it is not acceptable. So the best that you can do for yourself, because you want to fit in, is conform. So conform I did.

I've been reading in the East African newspapers now, that people are coming out. I admire their guts, because up to today nobody knows my status. Aside from maybe you, and the refugee people, my lawyer, nobody knows my status. For me it is that closeted. Nobody knows and nobody has reason to suspect.

So that was my story in East Africa, moving here I kept the same secrecy.

As I listened to Mzalendo, I was struck by the weight of living for years in this kind of secrecy—the incredible control and discipline with which Mzalendo lives his life.

Being part of a close-knit Christian and African diasporic community in Canada entails living in continuing scrutiny here.

Along with admiration, I heard yearning and fear when he talked about those who are now coming out in East Africa. Changing country conditions for QLGBT people have created the beginnings of an imaginable future in East Africa that did not exist for him when he left. Rather than recount painful events, Mzalendo provided me with a copy of his Personal Information Form (PIF). I have quoted from and paraphrased his PIF to construct a brief narrative of his experiences in his country of origin.

"I was born and brought up in a strict Christian background. Religion permeated every aspect of my life." Mzalendo attended Christian schools and his family was prominent in his church. In these communities "Relationship with the members of the opposite sex were closely regulated and sexual contact, it was drilled early in life, is strictly for married couples of *opposite sex*. Sexual relation between the members of the same sex was portrayed as sinful, dirty, and against God's will. The penalty for this sexual orientation is eternal burning in hell. Homosexuality is a plague."

Mzalendo had his first sexual relationship in his last years of high school. The two young men were discovered and in Mzalendo's words the punishment was "swift and brutal." They were suspended for two weeks. On their return, they were punished with daily hard physical labour and forced to make a public apology. Mzalendo was moved out of the dormitory, purportedly for his own safety due to harassment by schoolmates. The other young man left the school. He avoided relationships with men for several years.

A church elder introduced him to the woman he would marry. They maintained a long distance courtship, and she became pregnant before they married.

"My main motivations for marrying were to please my ailing mother, give my daughter an opportunity to grow up in a family environment, gain social acceptability and appear 'normal.'"

"The turning point in our rocky relationship was when I was beaten senseless by my in-laws. My wife backed the crime. Although I reported

the matter to the police, the police referred the matter to the social workers and eventually the case fizzled out. I lived under the shadow of fear from my in laws.”

“Sexual contact with my wife was minimal and declined over time. My wife became unfaithful. Threatening and taunting calls in the middle of the night became frequent. Appeals to the security authorities yielded no results.”

“I could not take it any more. The violence, the threats, the faked lifestyle and above all, the tension was taking its toll on my angel- my daughter. Enough was enough. I had to reclaim my freedom and give my daughter a future. To do this, I need to be alive.”

“I am *perceived* as a homosexual and therefore prone to treatment subjected to homosexuals in my country. I identify as a bisexual man.”

The past and on-going importance of Mzalendo’s Christian faith was very clear in our interview. Tension between his deep commitment to his faith, and his church’s strict enforcement of conservative heteronormativity permeated our interview. Mzalendo described how conservative Christian churches promoted exclusion and violence against QLGBT people in East African nations. As some denominations in North America and Europe have moved towards recognition of same-sex unions or ordination of gay or lesbian ministers, their African counterparts have severed ties and refused aid money. At the same time, links with conservative religious organizations in the United States provide funding to many of the churches, schools, and charities they run. The churches, he explained, hold immense political influence and maintain a strong hold on community values. Both political and religious leaders have mobilized nationalist sentiments—creating a discourse that queer sexualities or genders are *Un-African*. Fueled by anti-colonial nationalist discourses, several East African nations are seeing a rising backlash against queer people.

Mzalendo's marriage provided the ease of social acceptance and *appearing normal*, but was not merely camouflage. Being a husband and a father was imbued with ties to his own family, faith, and church community. Mzalendo's love for his daughter came through as he spoke of her. All of these attachments were jeopardized when his marriage, and relations with in-laws, became tense and violent as a result of suspicions about his sexuality.

Eleheh

Eleheh fled her country in her teens. She was granted Convention Refugee status at age twenty-two. She is now in her early thirties and working as an IT specialist. Eleheh and I met socially. Without knowing her history, I talked about my work with Rainbow Refugee and this research. She offered to participate. Her mother was in Canada for an extended visit at the time of our interview. When I arrived at her apartment building Eleheh met me downstairs, told me her mother had cooked both of us lunch and apologetically asked me to avoid queer topics and refer to my partner as male with her mother. I managed, with only one near slip. During our interview she narrated this experience from her high school years in Tehran.

I don't remember exactly how old I was. I think I was 16 or 17. I was in love with one of my classmates. We had a relationship for almost 2 years.

A couple of the students found out --like we were kissing, affectionate, holding hands.

So they report you. So we got in trouble.

First they separated us. They called our parents in. They said, "we won't call the revolutionary guard--this is a warning." They sent her to another school.

So she went to a different school, but we still kept in touch. It's hard....We were in love with each other.

S: mm. You're sixteen and in love.

We would still plan and go out and meet each other secretly. So they saw us and they took some pictures.

S: Who took the pictures?

They were [religious revolutionary guards]. They are really fundamental, right wing, and very violent.

Our house got raided and we were taken in separately. We were there for a good six months.

S: Oh...

on death row.

We both take a deep breath and hold the silence for a moment. Prior to our interview I knew that Eleheh had fled for her life, but I had not known how perilous her time in her country or her escape had been.

My sister was against the government. She was an activist and she had flyers in the house. So I thought it was because of her initially, because...she wasn't very secretive or discreet. She would always blow up in the meetings or outside in classrooms. She got a lot of attention. So I thought it was definitely something to do with her---and then it was meit was like.... fuck ...

S: mm...How did it become clear to you that it was you?

They tell you to confess, because if you confess to it, part of it will be forgiven.

I shake when I even think about it....it's been so long.

S: Take a couple of deep breaths and you don't have to go into any more detail...

We sit facing each other. I match my breath to hers, and then gradually slow each exhale. I check in to see if she would like to move away from talking about this part of her experience, or stop.

Its just when I think about it its so vivid my memory....I remember the scent of the place....everything.

I stay with her as she cries, quietly comforting. I see her calm herself, drawing deep breaths. She takes a few drags of her cigarette, musters herself, and continues.

They killed my sister and they made me watch.
 And they torture you.
 Every month they say "*Okay, it's your execution day this day.*"
 They prepare you for it.
 They are supposed to stone you,
 so they wrap you up.
 Take you outside.
 You don't see anything.
 You think you're dying.
 They leave you out for 24 hours
 and then they bring you in
 and beat you up.

If you're a virgin...and their definition of virgin is you haven't slept with a guy.
 If you are on death row as a Muslim, you can't die a virgin, so they have something called *sireh*....this temporarythis line of Koran
 They have sex with the inmates. They rape you.

Everyday it's like
I hope they kill me.
 It's just so hard.

I had no idea of the outside world.

My Dad--my family had money, so they helped me escape, just a little bit before
 they were going to do the same to me.

As Eleheh narrated her perseverance and survival, I could sense her brave struggle against becoming overwhelmed by the memories of her imprisonment, torture, and her sister's execution. I wavered in my faith in courageous witnessing—questioned whether proceeding was ethical and compassionate. Experiencing sensory details like the scent of the prison signaled to me how vividly she was reliving the memories. I reminded myself to respect her strength. Once Eleheh grounded herself, she was unflinching and unsentimental. Her shift into the second person created some distance between her present self and the events in the prison, but she returned to first person, voicing her thoughts of death as an escape.

I witnessed the intense effort containing deeply traumatic memories takes, and stayed attuned as Eleheh worked through the emotional impacts of revisiting these memories throughout our interview. Our interview was shaped by the confusion created by the trauma. Shifts in tense, fuzzy, sometimes fragmented timelines made the interview disorienting---we moved through time and place with feelings rather than chronology providing the structure. I frequently had to ask questions to reorient to time and place. We paused to reground at several points.

Eleheh's account demonstrates how homophobic persecution can become a tool of political repression for nationalist or fundamentalist religious projects of states. Her classmates, teachers, and school administrators became agents of surveillance and enforcement. Their involvement shows how homophobic persecution can become distributed among social institutions and networks. These distributed networks of

surveillance made everyday activities—like going to school or holding hands—dangerous and relationships with others treacherous.

Devon

I met Devon at his first Rainbow Refugee the day before his eligibility interview. I was sitting beside him and his nervous energy was palpable. His fears were that he could be detained and sent back to his country of origin immediately if he was found ineligible. Group members' explained the limited purpose of an eligibility interview. Repeated reassurances that he would not be immediately detained and removed were only somewhat comforting to him. Devon has become very active on behalf of Rainbow Refugee—he speaks eloquently about his experience in public forums and is a skillful networker. While working, he is taking certification courses that will help him in his career.

Devon invited me to his one room apartment for the interview. As he made tea for us he described how he had furnished the room—finding items at Value Village, disassembling them, carrying them home one-by-one, and reassembling. Two years later, he still remembered the prices of each item, and the cost of taking a cab to bring home a second-hand TV and computer from Craig's list. He began by describing his family life in his South East Asian country of origin.

In Indian society. I'm a good Indian boy.

You have roles to play in life. I'm not just gay--that's not the whole definition of who Devon is. I'm also Asian. I'm also a Indian. And I may be Indian, but I'm also different from Indians in India because I never lived there. That makes me a very unique person.

I'm also trained as a [profession] and I left that profession to strive for a new profession. And that makes you you.

I'm not just a gay man. But that part was very hidden. I call it stunted growth, because a person has so many parts to them that makes them them—a career, a religion. But as you go through life all those parts grow together, because you are putting time into every part of who you are. But as a sexual person, your sexual orientation, doesn't have a chance to grow with the rest of you. You suppress it. Mainly because I'm aware that society doesn't accept it. I'm aware that if I get caught, I'm fucked. I'll be arrested. I could be thrown in prison immediately. Then you read in the papers about entrapment and policemen dressed in plain clothes, and walking around the gay beach, smiling at guys, until people touch them. Immediately they arrest them. I was afraid and the fear takes that part of who you are. So you push it out of your mind. You deny it. Fear and denial has taken over and then you don't want to do any research and find out.

When you have that sexual urge, when you have that desire to be a sexual being or when you feel lonely. Like I may have all those parts of me--excellent friends, excellent family, excellent colleagues, excellent classmates and everything. As a person I get lonely, I want that companionship too, even if it is a few minutes. You crave that --you're a human being. You cut yourself from everything else.

I'm just going out for a walk.

And you learn. You find out where to go--that gaydar, that antennae thing. You go places. You start cruising. Then you have that quick relief. You took care of that for the time being. And then you go back to being you again --that's how it was in my country.

In his account of his country of origin experiences, Devon constructed himself as a *good Indian boy* embedded in a very loving family, and a complex of ethnocultural memberships, situated in diasporic and national memberships. When I asked about what it takes to be a good Indian boy Devon replied love and obedience to parents and diligence in school. He comfortably names the multiple self-identities he lives, and his sense that he develops them by putting time into them. His metaphor of stunted

growth of his sexual self makes meaning of how his sexuality is isolated from other selves. This metaphor becomes important in making meaning of his later migration experiences.

Devon explicitly names the tension between owning and disavowing a sexual self under conditions of persecution. "Fear and denial has taken over and then you don't want to do any research and find out." Fear held him back from putting time into "finding out" or exploring possibilities. When he voiced his excuse "I'm just going for a walk" it is unclear who he is keeping secrets from—himself or others.

I heard in his account the tension between his fear, and his desire for both sex and companionship and how this plays out as moving between conforming as a good Indian boy, and then escaping, briefly and in secret for sex and companionship. In his teens and early twenties, he described family surveillance as holding him back. In his twenties, under the threat of entrapment, sexual relationships became something to be taken care of clandestinely. Sexual relationships and in the process, sexual selves, become imbued with fear, shame and secrecy. Conditions of persecution and stigma limit possibilities for the sustained relational connections that facilitate articulation and avowal of sexual selves.

Devon names *gaydar* as a skill he learned. We discussed the possibilities of gaydar more in our joint interpretation interview as a sensitivity to cues that people learn. Gaydar works when two people in an interaction are both orienting their attention to these cues. In conditions of persecution and stigma, attunement through gaydar becomes a survival tactic, and important homing device.

Devon narrated much of his account using the second person. (e.g. *You* learn, *You* find out where to go). As a therapist, I am inclined to hear this as a tactic that cushions the emotional impact of narrating a difficult memory. In this interview, I think the tactic served another function. In our interviews I felt like Devon was taking on a teaching stance. He was educating me, with the *you* serving to make the lessons more general. The *you* invoked the presence of similar others, and suggested any person, including me, in his situation would do the same.

Alana

I met Alana at a summer barbeque in 2004 hosted by one of the Rainbow Refugee volunteers. In the fall of 2006 she and I were part of a small group that presented together at a symposium on refugee and immigrant mental health.

Alana, grew up on the outskirts of a city in South America. She is 36 now, and left her country when she was in her early twenties. When I asked her about the events that led up to her leaving, she started with her junior high and high school years

I wanted to be with a girl
But I was so scared

I was trying not to be...
I was kind of rejecting the idea....
I didn't *want* to be gay
...that's the word
I didn't want to
But I wanted to

S: yeah I hear this tension,

Yeah, I shouldn't, but I do

S: I want it, but I shouldn't.

I want it, but its *wrong*.

That's the experience I had with this first girl.
We want this so bad, but it's so wrong.

No no no

Like whatever we were doing, whenever we started being ...close ...or
whatever,
it was like

"No. No. We need to stop. This is wrong..."

I would always keep trying toyou know...be with her.
And at first she was fine, and then she was always the one telling me
"No. No, we can't."

She was the one who was more like *"No, this is not right."*

Me, I was the one, like, *"I don't care!"*

That was my first thought. I probably wasn't going to yell to the world—
but I was going to do anything I had to to be with her. Even if we had to
hide forever. I was to that point. But I guess she was scared. The last
time we saw each other....I basically said,

*If I can't be with her, then I can't be her friend,
and I have to.....somehow I have to leave.*

The last time we talked she...at first we were kissing and stuff

And she said *"No,"*

And I said, *"This is how I feel!"*

And she said *"No, I thought about it many times....and I can't
really..."*

She said, *"We will never be able to have a life together.
We will never be able to be together....
...and.....no.
I can't do it."*

Alana was eight years younger than her brother who had left for the United
States at nineteen. Alana remembered anger and fighting between her brother and
father before he left, but did not learn until much later, when she joined him in the US,

that he was gay. He had left home and the country, after coming out to his parents had gone badly. Alana's brother had been extremely social, and always had big groups of friends coming over. Even after her brother left, friends would continue to drop by for visits.

I remember this friend Monica. She said to me,
"Oh do you want to come with us to a party? And then we're going to a gay bar..."

I don't know. What if I don't like it?

"I promise, I'll take you home if you want to leave"

You promise?

...and finally I decided I was going to try and meet some girls.... but I always had it in the back of my mind that it was wrong, that I can't, and I was scared.

First, we went out to a party at a house because most gay people go to party at a house. They can't really be themselves on the street, right? They can be themselves only at a bar. So at first they meet at houses....to change, to meet. So I went there, and I saw ALL these girls...and the funny thing is I saw my PE teacher. It's true!

{Both of us are laughing}

S: That's hilarious! That's so perfect. Where would we be without PE teachers?

It's so funny!She used to be a PE teacher in my first high school. And it's funny because I used to think, well *she's athletic*, and *kind of attractive*, and *a little bit butch*. And so I always used to look at her *What's going on with her?* And this was when I was really little, but she was a little bit different...

S: so you could just tell something...

Yeah I just kind of knew. It was my gaydar ...maybe?...

S:mm... I think there might be something to that. Do you think....

Oh yeah! Totally! Like I have a very good one...

S: Does it work in different cultures? It sounds like it worked very well in your country...

In my country it works. It's very good, because it's very hidden. People are trying to hide it, but you can tell. There's this special slang to say things. Like there was this slang word we used as a warning.

Caution!

Behave yourself.

Someone's coming!

Stop whatever you're doing

And... act normal.

There was a word for that.

S: What's the word?

They call it *booses*

And I said *What does it mean?*

And they said--I don't know if this is true or not--but they said it was some kind of cop and it was his name. They were afraid of cops. Because the cops would come and take you to jail because you are gay.

Through her connection with Monica, Alana met Gabriella, an ex-girlfriend of her former PE teacher.

She was my first girlfriend as an adult. I was so traumatized that it took me three months before I could be with her. Like we would kiss, but I would stop her. And I remember her being like,

"Come on..."

Yeah it wasn't easy. I still felt like it was bad and wrong. And mm....the first time I was with Gabriella, I started crying.

She asked, "What's wrong?"

"Its not you."

That was the only time I cried. I started crying because I realized all these things that I'd been avoiding. I think I started crying because then I knew. *Yes-- I am gay. And I may not like it, but there's nothing I can do.*

S: so...*Ok, this is me. And, Oh no, this is me.* Is that kind of the feeling? {I try to capture the mix of relief, resignation, fear and shame I am hearing.}

Yeah....because it opens up all kinds of questions.

As I listened to Alana I heard how desire, in tension with and against the fear and shame, moved her. Desire moved her to pursue a relationship with another young woman, and then Gabriella as an adult, while fear and shame held them back. Fear and shame kept Alana from seeking out others; four years passed between the end of the relationship with her first girlfriend and her first efforts to meet other young women. I interpreted Alana's shift into evasive language to describe sexual intimacy with her girlfriend as a sign that shame may have been at work in our interview.

Desire drew Alana to similar others. Alana voiced her attraction to her PE teacher, taking up the voice of a much younger Alana. She raised the possibility of gaydar, and then hedged. But my interest and question invited her to elaborate. Alana's experience of gaydar suggests it functions as a form of implicit knowing, a learned attunement to subtle signs of interest fueled by desire. It is not clear what Monica knew or sensed that prompted her to invite Alana to the gay bar. Attunement served as a homing device that drew Alana towards people that then connected her with hidden QLGBT networks.

Alana's account provides an example of how, even under conditions of state persecution and pervasive cultural stigmatization, people who defy sexual and gender norms find ways to connect and congregate. Her account highlights some of the tactics

used to forge subaltern networks--personal introductions, private spaces as gathering places or staging grounds, secret language, and oral histories.

Alana described the tension of not wanting, and wanting, to give a name to her sexual desires—to be gay. She produced this dialectic in the repetitive back-and-forth of her words as she described her relationship with her first girlfriend. Dominant discourses of sin, deviance, and pathology were the primary language available to Alana. Drawing on these discourses created a tension between disavowing and owning a stigmatized identity. As she told her story, Alana narrated shifting relationships with her gay sexual self. By highlighting the cliché of meeting her PE teacher, she created an in-joke shared by queer women. In doing so, Alana evoked a shared sense of belonging in our interview, and I reciprocated. In contrast, she narrated an I-position on the outside of gay social life, an unnamed *they*, when she relayed the process of learning about *booses* as a signal of danger in South America.

Alana imagined a future with her girlfriend that required them to stay hidden. When her girlfriend's fear foreclosed this possibility, she foreclosed an imagined future self for Alana. The loss of this relationship and the possible future based on it propelled her towards leaving.

Miriam

Miriam was connected with Rainbow Refugee by a settlement worker. Having arrived as a Government Assisted Refugee from a Middle Eastern country, she already had Permanent Resident status and so did not need the support of the group to make an application. She was however, having difficulty finding safe housing. A queer friend

interpreted when another RRC volunteer and I met with her. We introduced Miriam and her settlement worker to the housing board at the local Queer bookstore. Miriam attended a few drop-ins, and then we didn't hear from her for over a year. She and I bumped into each other on a downtown street in the spring of 2008 and I was immediately struck by how much more relaxed and at ease she seemed.

For the interview we conversed in English, with the same friend available to ask for interpretation help.

When I was a small child I didn't have too much problem, because my family tried to understand me—and they would say *a small child doesn't know what to do*. But day-by-day as I got older that's when I started to have lots of problems--especially when I was a teenager.

When I went to high school, my classmates would insult me, harass me. So that's why I tried to hide myself and live with a mask. I tried to walk like a man. I tried to speak like a man. Sometimes I even exercised for hours and hours when I was alone in my place toexercise to try to walk like a man. Because people would ask me "*Why do you walk like women? Why do you talk like women?*" So it was very difficult for me, but after years and years, I could handle it.

And always at night, when I start to sleep, I would think about it. I did not want to forget myself, to forget that I'm still alive. *I'm not this guy whom... they know as a guy...*

When I'm a teenager I thought maybe I'm gay, because I just know gay, I didn't know word transsexual. I didn't know what lesbian means. I didn't know what bisexual means.

S: But gay you had heard. Do you remember how you heard it?

How did I hear it? Lots of people talk about gay people and homosexuals who are interested in the same sex. I knew that when I was a teenager. It was very usual. I knew that, but I didn't know transsexual

.....I remember visting an internet site for gay men--and they were all muscular, all manly. *If they are gay, what am I?* I just started to ask

myself. I got so confused. I thought *I am nothing*. I thought *I am nothing in this world--not even gay. So what am I?*

After that I read an article in the newspaper about transsexuals because they arrested two transsexuals in a city nearby and a journalist interviewed these two transsexuals. A doctor explained about transsexuals, and said *"Police, please don't disturb them and don't abuse them. They don't have any fault. They are women. They just need surgery."* Always I knew that I was a woman--but I thought that I was gay. I didn't know.

When I was 36 years old, through chat I met this guy, I explained my case to this guy, and I told him about my case, about my sexuality, for the first time. It was the first time, and it was very difficult for me, and I was very happy that I could share my experiences with somebody else.

S: This was the first person that you started talking about your feelings with?

Except one of my close friends, who was my friend for 22 years. She was transsexual like me and she tried to hide herself too. We didn't share our experiences with anybody else, but our families asked us to separate from each other because they said *you have bad effect with each other*. They say that when we are together we try to be like a woman. And we attract attention on the street when we walk together...it was so difficult.

At night I tried to go outside and talk to myself. I always had a friend in my mind that I could share my experiences with, and he helped me---it was a he, I don't know why. He helped me so much, so I always talked to him, explained my feelings to him--so I don't forget myself.

I was in an internet chat room. Just by accident--I really believe that sometimes the universe helps you---I went to a room for a province, not the city where I am from. I met this guy there. We talked for 5, 6 months and I was so scared "I want to tell you something--a secret--it could destroy us."

And after I told him he was so upset. He said *"Why did you think our friendship would be destroyed? I still like you and I will try to help you. You are a woman—not a man. You should not have to hide."*

So when he asked me to leave [my country], it was very difficult for me. I told him, "I have forgotten about everything. I don't have any wishes right now."

{to interpretor} am I right I have not more wishes...{*checking the words*}?

I: no more dreams

I have no more dreams.... and I am 36 years old.

He said "*You have time. You have a future. You can help yourself. Please promise me to help yourself....I consider for you as a human being and this is important. You can go to [neighboring country] and go to the United Nations.*"

S: What was it about him that helped you feel comfortable telling him your secret?

How come? I don't know. After 36 years of hiding myself. Also there was lots of people around me, but I always felt alone because I couldn't talk to anybody. So I tried to play a man's role ...the role of a man.

So when we had guests in the house, or when I had to meet my classmates, or when we had to give presentations all my body shake, because I tried to be a man. I deepened my voice. Sometimes it was so funny

That's why I tried...I just decided to tell him, I thought he's not in [my country]. He can't tell anybody. This is a chat room. This is a safe place. I can keep my privacy. I can trust him --and he was very nice.

Erasure, the practiced denial of the existence of queer sexualities and trans genders, renders livable lives for LGBT people invisible. Without the stories, language, or examples of viable lives to help organize our experiences, we are left with the partial and the problematic. In her encounter with a web site for gay men, Miriam's words "*I am nothing in this world*" is an aching example of how erasure can produce abjection. She approached the site with a sense of possibility for herself, and not seeing herself in the muscled images, experienced confusion, alienation from herself, and the world. There is both disorientation and possibility in her question "*So what am I?*"

Miriam's narrative hints at some of the ways that queer sexualities and trans genders are produced through cultural, medical and legal discourses. Miriam's first encounter with a name for her experience is layered with associations of criminality, and a medical authority specifying a particular course of treatment. Encountering the narrative of transexuality in the paper brought a mix of relief, shame, and fear—she hid the article to prevent her father from finding it and recognizing her. Miriam avoided encounters with the police, but heard about legal sanctions against queer sexualities and trans genders from others. Males found in feminine attire or make-up could be arrested. After interviews with a psychiatrist they were issued a document that permitted them to dress publicly as a woman, and required them to report to authorities within six months for sex reassignment surgery. Compliance with this process allows trans people to exist, but does not protect them. Police harassment and violence continue despite having complied with state requirements to undergo surgery.

Miriam's account points to the importance of imagination, fantasy, fiction and online interactions as staging areas for selves-in-process. Miriam constructed her self-as-woman in imagined conversations with a male friend. She sought out material for possible selves in websites and newspaper articles. Reaching out online allowed Miriam a relational space, emotionally intimate but physically removed, for being and becoming a woman. Miriam voiced her fear of rejection when she risked outing herself to the man in the chat room she now feels fated to have met. Through their interactions, Miriam experienced acceptance and validation, and learned of the option to claim asylum.

Eventually, this man used his contacts to help her connect with a safe house for QLGBT asylum seekers in the neighboring country.

Miriam's words "*I have no more dreams*" conveys how erasure can interfere with imagining a future. Difficulties imagining a possible future in their country of origin was voiced by all participants. For some, imaginable futures felt inhospitable. Conversations with others who reminded them of future possibilities and asked them to hold onto hope were prominent turning points in several participants' accounts.

Participants gave accounts of their daily lives under conditions of homophobic and transphobic persecution. Juxtaposing their stories provides a sense of the range of persecutions and its interactions with stigmatization and erasure. Four participants were directly confronted by physical violence, for two the violence was life-threatening, for Eleheh execution was imminent. For these participants the immediate vulnerability of their lives necessitated emigration. For those that did not experience direct violence or imminent danger, living with ambient threat and pervasive stigma fuelled alienation and unease. All were ensnared in networks of surveillance that required constraint, or made daily activities—the basics of walking, or going to school, trying to meet others—stigmatizing and potentially dangerous. Scrutiny by others impinged on both safety and belonging. Seeking safety and belonging moved these participants out of places of scrutiny, towards places of potential belonging.

Through their efforts to seek safety and belonging, participants connected with local and transnational networks of QLGBT people. These interactions helped create an imaginable future elsewhere. Internet chat spaces, gay tourist destinations, nightclubs

frequented by expatriates, NGO meetings and websites were places where participants encountered QLGBT people from other countries and learned of possibilities for living their sexualities or genders that existed beyond their national borders. Interimbricated QLGBT networks of local and transnational, offline and online provided the possibility, the hope, and for some the means of mobility.

Participants' ability to connect with queer networks, while remaining safe, was complexly and intersectionally constituted. Both Jamil and Devon discussed ways that being part of racialized minorities in their country of origin made them more vulnerable to vigilante violence or surveillance by police. Mzendo was from a prominent family in a politically influential church, and so constrained his efforts to seek out others, knowing that he would be scrutinized, and his family vulnerable to bribery. Eleheh was targeted by authorities in part because her sisters were openly opposed to the governing regime. Engaging in activism on queer, HIV/AIDs or labour issues has made some Rainbow Refugee members targets for scrutiny and persecution.

Persecution, Pervasive Stigma, and Erasure. The interaction of state persecution and pervasive stigma ensnared QLGBT in networks of surveillance. State means of control were extended by surveillance and punishment that occurred in families, neighborhoods, and schools. Family members, peers, teachers and administrators became enforcers of heteronormativity and gender conformity, making even proximal relationships potentially threatening. In these relationships instilling shame, through threat of exclusion, and fear, through threatened or actual violence, served as a means of social control. Homophobic and transphobic persecution was

perpetuated through relational expulsions and violence. Distributed and proximal means of control constrained QLGBT migrants efforts to seek safety and belonging in their homes, home-towns and home- countries. The traumas experienced by QLGBT people living under these conditions were imbued with relational betrayals, and linked with a shamed identity.

Survival Patterns/Mobility Patterns

Under conditions of persecution, pervasive stigma and erasure, participants worked to negotiate safety and belonging. This negotiation shaped participants sexual/gender identity formation, relationship formation, and imagined future-selves. Desire worked with and against fear and shame to produce survival patterns of: dis/avowing transgressive desires, trying on/distancing from available identities, seeking/avoiding similar, and un/imaginable futures. These survival patterns manifested as a dialectical mobility pattern of conforming /escaping.

Desire Working With/Against Shame and Fear. Affect and emotion play a critical role in directing attention and mobilizing action—desire, fear, and shame all pull our attention, and impel action. Desire draws attention towards others, and encourages movement towards. Desire attuned participants to signs of similarity or interest—as in Alana and Devon’s experiences of gaydar. The fear induced by living with the threat of violence created increased vigilance to possible danger. Living with pervasive stigma, experienced as the ever-present possibility of shaming, was embodied as heightened self-monitoring and efforts to avoid attention or visibility. Desire fuelled efforts to connect with similar others, and to seek out potential places of belonging. Fear and

shame worked against efforts to connect with others, but sometimes propelled movements towards potential places of safety.

Dis/avowal of Transgressive Desires. Desire working with and against fear and shame shaped participants sexual and gender identification. Desire brought participants into interactions that enabled them to recognize same-sex attraction or trans gender identification. Shame and fear worked against participants owning these desires or constructing selves based on these feelings. Participants moved between acting on and distancing from their feelings.

Trying on/Distancing from Available Identities. Same-sex desire and felt-gender were filtered through culturally available identities and narratives. Participants distanced themselves from pathological and problematic discourses.

Avoiding/Seeking Others. Attention, visibility, and recognition and were fraught for participants. Living with pervasive stigma and the ever present possibility of threat made attention from others dangerous. Efforts to avoid attention from others, and feeling vulnerable when visible were narrated by many of the participants. Retreating from others created some sense of safety, but also isolation. Taking the risk of seeking out others broke through the isolation, but evoked fear and shame. Individual survival relied on dissociation from a collective, and distancing from an identity based on sexuality or gender.

Un/imaginable Futures. Under conditions of erasure possibilities for living queer or trans lives were obscured, partial, and problematic. Pressures to conform to heteronormative life-scripts increased as participants became adults and reached

marriageable age in their cultures. Possible futures based on their felt-gender or sexuality were difficult, or impossible to imagine. The futures that were imaginable—staying hidden, being alone—seemed bleak. Participants narrated difficulties imagining a future self—and struggled against hopelessness when the futures they could imagine were inhospitable.

Conforming/Escaping. QLGBT migrants relayed accounts of dialectic movement between conforming, and escaping: conforming in order to maintain connections with family, friends, and community; conforming in order to distance themselves from discourses of queer sexualities and genders as pathological, deviant, or immoral; escaping into pubs known by word of mouth, secluded parks and hidden social gatherings; escaping into secret relationships or online spaces; escaping into their own imaginary; escaping into bigger cities, tourist enclaves, or overseas. For some of the participants, adolescence afforded some latitude to have hidden same-sex relationships or to secretly transgress gender in their own hometowns or cities. However, as participants moved into adulthood increased social or familial pressure to marry required greater distance to escape the pressure. It was not unusual for people to have moved back and forth several times between home towns, to bigger cities, or even other countries, in this dialectic of conformity and escape.

CHAPTER 5

Exit, Im/mobilities and Precarious Migrations

Migration trajectories of QLGBT migrants in this study were lengthy, complex, and for some precarious. For most participants permanent settlement in Canada followed domestic, regional, or temporary international relocations. Complex migration paths reflect intersectional im/mobilities and the relative obscurity of asylum protection for queer and trans people. Participants' migration trajectories became complex, in part, because of the ways that identity formation and migration processes shaped each other: persecution constrained possibilities for identification, while propelling exit. The hope of finding similar others mobilized; subsequently, meeting others in new locales opened up new possibilities for identification, and access to knowledge about QLGBT asylum. The complexity of migration trajectories also reflects participants' negotiations of attachment and loss in the process of homing. Complex migration trajectories became precarious, courting violence, exploitation, or "illegality", as migrants' mobility was constrained by the obscurity of the asylum option for QLGBT people in interaction with increasingly stringent measures to limit access to asylum protection.

Adil

S: How did you start to think about leaving?

Well, I worked on the ships and I met lots of Europeans. They weren't gay or anything, but they were interesting. I was interested in how the West thinks. They had more freedom and this is what I want. I want freedom. So I was interested in the way they think. It opened my mind a little--that I have the right as a living human being to live the way I want to.

I guess the internet helped as well. I started to chat with people online and there is life out there! People are having it there. They're comfortable. They hold hands on the street and stuff.

S: Do you remember how you figured out...the first time you got on the internet and started chatting with someone. How did that happen?

Well at the beginning I was really excited chatting with other gay people. I thought *this thing is really serious* and people connect. Because it works perfect in [Country], because people are very secretive. You cannot go out. And we cannot go hang out at a certain spot to meet other gay people. So I thought online is the perfect environment for this because you're anonymous. You have an anonymous email. You can be very secretive. You can chat with a person, and if you like that person, take it from there.

I was being really careful, but people there, they're not serious, because they're so afraid--so afraid. So I believe they release their stress on the internet. So just talking, because most of them are married. So they just want sex on the side--no relationship whatsoever.

So I met this guy from Italy online and we were chatting. I was telling him about my situation. And I met another guy from Canada from Calgary. And we were just chatting. Both were interested. I was telling them and listening to their reactions and thinking *oh my god you guys have a lot of freedom. You have a lot of freedom. You have no idea what it like here. No idea.* So ahhh.....that changed my mind a little

I was dreaming--just dreaming--even back when I was on the ship. When I was on the ship we would go ashore, and I would see someone cute. *Like oh my god, if I fall in love with this guy I believe he will take me home.*

"Forget the ship. Forget [Country]--Come down here and live with me."

Just fantasizing. Just dreaming. Being a romantic.

Adil took a job on a ship shortly after graduating college, drawn to the opportunity to travel. Interactions with Western others on the ship brought him into dialogue with a more individualized notion of self and freedom. On the ship, he explained in our joint interview, he experienced living without carrying the weight of his

family's reputation. Online, he met an American expat working in the Middle East. When the man returned he asked Adil to join him. For Adil, leaving for North America meant fulfillment of a dream, and an opportunity.

Eleheh

I went to India first. I went to a very remote location so they don't find me.

S: Can you tell me a little bit about how India and why India?

Yeah. Well I had to change my identity, so I got different passport. It was the easiest country to go to. It had very good education level, and I figured its close to my family.

Really, it was not my decision and I didn't care at that point. I didn't really have a say in it. My parents just said "You're going here. You're studying this. This is your passport. This is your new name and you're going to lay low."

Under threat of her immanent execution, Eleheh's parents paid a bribe for her release from prison. They arranged for her to go to India as a university student using a new identity. Eleheh recounted this first leg of a three-year trajectory to Canada, first providing reasons and positioning herself as the decider. At the time, India was a common destination for young people from her country to pursue post-secondary degrees, many on government scholarships. Then, she sighed and shifted stances. She voiced her past self in the passive position of being told what to do. "*You're going here....you're going to lay low.*" The numb exhaustion of persevering through torture in prison left little room for feelings, thoughts or choices about leaving.

I juxtaposed Eleheh and Adil talking about their departure to provide a sense of the wide range of migration trajectories taken by QLGBT migrants in this study, the

multiple meanings these held for participants, and their potential to shape safety and belonging. For Adil and Devon their migrations were a gradual extension of their career- - carefully planned opportunities to study or work abroad. Mzalendo and Jamil also left on student visas, but their departures were made under threat of escalating violence and, for Jamil, under police surveillance. Eleheh's departure was made under urgent duress. Participants' migration accounts covered wide-ranging terrain: relatively cushioned relocations as international students or workers on temporary visas; long periods living in precarious status; through dangerous journeys controlled by agents.

Intersectional Im/mobilities

Intersecting asymmetries of gender, sexuality, social class, race, and nationality enable and constrain who was able to leave their homes and home countries, cross borders, and obtain travel documents. These im/mobilities worked for and against potential QLGBT migrants, producing diverse and complex migration trajectories.

Sarah

So when this girl and I broke up I was very depressed. I think my father had gone to visit my brother in the States, so I was alone. I was having all this stupid imaginations. I was thinking too much. It was confusing. *Why did she change her mind so quickly?* And so I thought, *If this doesn't work, nothing will work. There's no way I'll go with another girl, and same thing will happen. They will go with the real men-- eventually they go back to the boys, right. There's nothing for me here. There's no way I can live like this.*

That's why I planned all that. Yeah, I think they sent me to see a psychiatrist or something. I don't remember. I was trying to forget everything. And my father was encouraging me. You know I wanted to go to the US to see my friend Jane, and he encouraged me to go. Just get away from everything.

So I had some savings, so I just went. I just wanted to forget everything. I went to see my friends, my ex-classmates. Visit here and there. So when I came to the States everything was new. So it was good.

S: Kind of like a fresh start to you?

Yeah, it was good, but its not that I'm going to go looking for girls. It's just a new life. I'm going to start making some money and stuff like that. It's not . Well you know, at first it was just a holiday. I go to Jane's place and stay there and see what happens next.

Among the women I interviewed, having family already living abroad, travelling with a family member, or having the financial support of family enabled them to leave. In many parts of the world for women and those born female, restrictions on mobility begin at home—with social and legal sanctions against independent travel. Robert Hughes, a QLGBT refugee lawyer, relayed that lesbian clients from countries with these sanctions had undertaken elaborate and harrowing schemes to obtain travel documents and leave their homes in secrecy. Among queer women participating in Rainbow Refugee, a number have had to escape confinement by their families. A trans person, identifying as a man but documented and presenting as a woman, who was assisted by Rainbow Refugee also planned his departure covertly, because of fears his family would interfere.

Miriam

...I said, "I don't know anybody in [neighboring country] and I have never been out of [home country]. How can I go to [neighboring country], and especially based on my case?"

He said, "I know a guy there and he can help you to find a place."

I decided to take a risk, and it was really a risk for me because at that time I didn't know. At most I could be killed in [neighboring country], but at least it will be better than this because I can't hide myself anymore.

It was very difficult for me. My whole body was shaking when I bought a bus ticket, and the whole time on the bus.

S: I don't know a lot about... for someone from [country of origin] to cross the border into [neighboring country] what kind of travel documents do you need?

M: Just passport.

I: You don't need a visa.

M: We don't need a visa

I: {Speaking in first language} I asked, you didn't need permission from your family?

M: No, just for girls--genetic girls. If they are single...

I: they have to have their father's permission

M: but if they are married they still have to have their husband's permission

S: But you didn't need anyone's permission. You could leave?

M: No, fortunately I was a guy so I didn't need anyone's permission
{laughing}The only time it helps me was that time...being a guy.
{laughing}

In this part of Miriam's account she voices her fears about traveling alone to a place where she knows no one. I hear in her feared imaginings "*I could be killed ...*", how her experiences of stigma, heightened the danger of moving into an unknown place. In the discussion of travel document requirements, she clarified our interpreter's question using the category *genetic girls* to delineate gender status in a way that

maintains her belonging with girls and women. She laughs, with a mix of relief and wry irony that, for once, having a passport documented male worked for her. Miriam described shaking with fear throughout her bus trip across the border, anxious of the scrutiny at the border, and having her safety in the hands of strangers when she arrived. Miriam's departure account reflects the intersectionality of her im/mobilities as a transwoman, enabled by her travel documents, constrained by potential threats to her physical safety.

Mzalendo

Another factor, maybe you may not find many (QLGBT asylum seekers) coming from Africa, because coming from Africa it's so difficult to come to Canada.

S: Yes!

... so that in itself limits people

S: Absolutely. How did you get here?

I came here as a student. Getting a student visa you have to show, first of all, that you have been admitted to a university that is recognized; that you have money and you have intentions to go back. Those are the criteria...and its tough.

S: Yes, very.

And there's a prejudice, I think, that Africans, once they get here, won't go back, so a lot are already sieved out by the immigration process.

S: Very much so.

It is easier to come from Europe to come to Canada. Almost a miracle to come to Canada from Africa. That would explain the some of the skewness.

All of the men had pursued education, training, or work that enabled them to obtain travel documents and cross borders, for example onboard ships, in tourism, or IT. They were supported emotionally, and in some cases financially, to pursue work or studies abroad. Among the men, the relative ease or effort of obtaining visas to Canada reflected intersectional im/mobilities shaped by class and geopolitics. Mzalendo named the visa practices and racist discourses that work against people from African countries being able to travel to Canada—and saw his ability to be here as *almost a miracle*. Jamil, a man from a poor rural family living in a country of the Global South considered “refugee producing” narrated each step of obtaining a student visa with suspense and effortful detail: going to an internet café to retrieve his first international email, carefully selecting his clothes for an interview, depositing money in an account he and his boyfriend had set up to, going directly from the interview to the flight centre to book a ticket. In contrast, Adil and Devon, both men from wealthier nations that are not typically “refugee producing,” both relayed their experience of getting a student visa for Canada in a matter of fact, unremarkable manner. They had both worked aboard ships and overseas prior to applying for student permits to Canada, giving them the financial resources and travel histories to facilitate direct visas to Canada.

Queer Im/mobilities

Obscurity of Refugee Protection/Erasure of Human Rights

Alana

Because in [home country] we didn't have anything, so how would you know that they would help you. We were living in the States for how long and we didn't even know. And in the States you have within your first year to claim refugee -- We didn't know that.

Seeking refugee protection was not an option that occurred to most participants before they left their country of origin. The majority of participants in this study left their home countries unaware of the asylum option, and did not learn about this option until after pursuing other, more accessible means of migration. The fact that homophobia and transphobia constitute persecution was often not apparent to those who experienced it--even in extreme forms. Further, sexual orientation and gender identity are not explicitly named as grounds for protection in the *Geneva Convention (1951)* and *Protocol(1967) Related to Refugees (UNHCR, 2007)*. Images of refugees as mass movements of people fleeing war meant that participants did not recognize themselves as potential refugees. Marginalization of queer sexualities and transgenders from human rights and refugee discourses has constrained the options QLGBT people consider when they are dealing with threats and violence, and has limited access to knowledge of refugee protection. At the time participants were migrating (prior to 2007) there was no information on QLGBT asylum apparent on the official websites or literature of the UNHCR. Even now, the visibility of this protection on official sites is limited. It is only since 2007 that sites offering information about QLGBT asylum have had web presence, much of it in English. Web presence alone does not create access given censorship, the unfamiliarity of key words for searching, computer access and language issues. Because asking for information and assistance entailed disclosing both their sexuality or gender, and for some their irregular migration status, participants

were very cautious about how they sought information. Most participants learned of the option to seek refugee protection only after living abroad for some time.

Identitification/Mobility. Participants recounted complex migration trajectories shaped by their im/mobilities in interaction with their identity formation. Persecution propelled exit, while constraining possibilities for identitification. Efforts to be safe, and for some the hope of finding similar others, mobilized. Subsequently, meeting others in new locales opened up new possibilities for identification. For some, living abroad to work or study was their first experience of open QLGBT public spaces. These experiences stretched the horizon of the possible for participants—creating an imaginable life, and future, in which they could begin to embody and live their sexuality or gender. Sometimes it was only after living outside their home countries to work or study, and shedding some of the constraints they had lived with, that people experienced the impossibility of living long term in their home country. After living for six months in the US on a temporary work visa, Devon found the effort of secrecy in his country of origin more than he could carry.

Devon

and let me go back, before when I said stunted growth... initially you have desire and as I started traveling, I gained some awareness. When I lived in the United States I gained a little bit of experience, so then when I went back I realized I couldn't live like this. I was miserable all the time.

Mzalendo

On coming to the freer Canadian society, the hitherto tight lid on my other sexual me was loosened. I rediscovered myself. The process was slow but irreversible.

My sexual desire for my wife waned even more. Phone calls became a shouting match.

In one of the emotional outbursts, *I said'....after all, I have no sexual desire for you any more, I am a gay!*

Although I had not by this time had any homosexual contact in Canada, I said it at the spur of the moment. The news spread like bush fire. She moved out, I later came to understand. My sister updated me on what was happening on the ground albeit apparently in a controlled manner. She tried to reassure me that all is well but my childhood friend kept me updated.

Meanwhile the unfolding crisis and the threats and concern for my daughter was taking toll on my studies My sexual orientation became common knowledge. The church was outraged and my extended family name's dignity was soiled.

Mzalendo's metaphor of loosening a tight lid conveys the sense of pressure released. Away from threats of violence, and scrutiny by a conservative religious community he is able to give attention to his *other sexual me*. His account makes apparent the power of webs of relationships even across a distance. An outburst in the heat of an argument outed him to family, community and Church. His stigma was carried collectively by his family, making a return not only dangerous, but also burdened with shame.

Attachment and "Homing." Participants narrated complicated relationships with family and home. Leaving families, homes, hometowns and birth countries brought both loss and relief, and for some efforts to maintain some connection with home and family shaped migration trajectories. Only three participants left their countries of origin with a plan for the move to be permanent. Others left initially with a clear expectation or vague hope that the move would be temporary, and that returning would be possible.

Attachments to others overseas shaped migration trajectories of participants. Intimate relationships with foreign nationals formed online or as expats created both the emotional attachment and practical support that facilitated emigration for several participants. Miriam's online relationship connected her with a safe-house for QLGBT asylum seekers in a neighboring country. Adil and Jamil both left their countries after extended relationships with expatriates. Adil chose Vancouver to be close, but not dependent on his US boyfriend. For him, Canada seemed more welcoming as a gay man, and less threatening as an Arab Muslim than the US.

Family or networks of closest LGBT friends, chosen family or created kin, shaped trajectories by being a temporary destination or way-station for some. Alana left South America and moved initially to stay with her brother at an Aunt's home in the US. Sarah left her country of origin after her break up for an extended visit with her close childhood friend Hanna—also a lesbian—in New York. Jamil had cousins and an Aunt in Vancouver that he could stay with when he first arrived on his student visa.

II/legality

To initiate a refugee claim, a potential claimant must pass through screening measures designed around the priorities of global capitalism, and post-9/11 notions of security to arrive at a UNHCR office in another country or a Canadian port-of-entry. Along with other western nations, Canada is using increasingly stringent measures to curtail "illegal" migration, and to screen out potential asylum seekers. Ordinary citizens from countries considered refugee producing are usually unable to obtain entry visas into Canada. In the mid-nineties Canada introduced the policy of holding airlines

financially responsible if they allow a passenger without appropriate entry visas to board a plane. Implemented in December 2004, the Safe Third Country Agreement between Canada and the US eliminated the possibility of claiming asylum for anyone who crosses between the two countries at a land border.

Alana

There's another piece to it. I only had six months to stay, but I didn't want to go back, so I got married. So at work I'm married, so how am I going to say I'm gay.

Basically it was a big gamble when you marry someone like that and you don't want to do that, but you have no options. You do that--or you go back and have no life.

Alana used an arranged heterosexual marriage with an acquaintance of a friend to attempt to obtain status in the United States. These arrangements were amicable at first, but became coercive over time. She spent six years in the US with status, but under scrutiny by US immigration.

Sarah

SJ: You said the fear of being sent back was what kept you from...

Sarah:...from talking or speaking out or trying to apply for anything...

People asked me "*Why don't you get an employer to sponsor you?*"

But I work in restaurants-- they don't need you. They can hire somebody else--unless you're a chef. I'm just a waitress.

By the time I thought of the asylum thing, not thought of doing it, but it even just coming to my mind, they changed the law so that I needed to go home and wait for the answer, because I'd been there for so long. So that was a risk. So anything to avoid going home, so I just stayed there.

Then Hanna and Elsie they wanted to go to Canada because Elsie was illegal in the US. So they contacted a lawyer in Toronto about immigrating to Canada. Hanna could work, and then bring Elsie.

They asked about my situation and then the lawyer in Toronto suggested a lawyer in Vancouver because he's closer. He got me in touch with the lawyer in Vancouver and that's when I got to know about Rainbow Refugee in Vancouver. ...so that's how the whole process got started. And they were saying the border is going to close...

It was the only way for me to get status and stay in North America and not get sent back.

S: It sounds like this was really on your mind, *How do I get status?*

Yeah...because I cannot stay on forever as an illegal in the US. Eventually they catch up with you because everyday I was thinking *They could come knocking on my door any day. Don't do anything stupid, or anything out of the ordinary. Stay low.*

I had the café and its dangerous, you know its open to everybody. You make a mistake and say the wrong thing, and you don't know who that customer is working for, because even little things can spark suspicion.

After spending several months with her friend Hanna in New York, Sarah remained in the US, fearful of returning to her country of origin. She began working under the table in restaurants, and then moved to a city on the West Coast to run a café owned by her brother, now a US citizen. She spent more than ten years in irregular status in the US before learning of the option to seek refugee protection in Canada. Her account reflects the day-to-day instability of living without status, and how it forced her to withdraw and remain vigilant in her interactions with others. For Sarah and others, living in irregular migration status reinforced tactics of covering and vigilance they had learned in their home countries. In this way the discourse of people

as illegals and heterosexism worked intersectionally, compounding isolation and working against connection and belonging.

Efforts to obtain status and avoid *illegality* were complicated by queer migrants' need to protect themselves by not disclosing either their migration status or their sexuality/gender. Sarah's account also reflects how, for many participants, relationships with QLGBT others played a critical role in accessing information about the asylum option through networks of QLGBT community groups, social justice advocates, and lawyers. Given the dearth of official information available, informal networks become critical to learning about the process. Reaching out online in a chat room connected one man with a QLGBT community organization, that then connected him with a refugee lawyer; another learned about Rainbow Refugee from a man he met online; Queer and social justice networks served as both conduits of contacts and intermediaries of trust, connecting people to the information and people that enabled them to access refugee protection.

Migration restrictions and the relative obscurity of the option of claiming asylum based on sexuality or gender identity combined to create situations in which queer migrants pursue more apparent, but sometimes irregular, means of migrating and gaining status. These irregular migration paths placed them in jeopardy of losing their status, and were rife for exploitation and violence.

For many participants, it was only after several years living abroad that they learned of the option to apply for asylum based on sexual orientation. For those who went first to the US, like Alana and Sarah, by the time they learned of the option, they

were no longer eligible to make a claim in the US because the US requires any refugee claim to be filed within a year of entry. Had the Safe Third Country Agreement been in effect when Sarah and Alana arrived at a Canadian border, they would not have been eligible to make a refugee claim in Canada. Now that the agreement is in effect, QLGBT migrants in the United States struggle to stay without documentation, holding the daily fear Sarah described, of being arrested and deported.

Treacherous Migrations

Elehej

...so my mother helped me get here, and it took me a long time. It was very rough

S: Do you know how she did that?

They have human smugglers that you pay. They get you fake passports. They take your picture, but the passport belongs to a tourist. They sell it and they have an agreement not to report it or call the embassy say for a month so you can fly with it, because if they punch the number, they'll know that you're trying to get somewhere. They have people from Europe they call them couriers or carriers--I don't know. They travel with you. But they are really British or American, so they pretend to be your friend--so that you don't look like a refugee, because you have an American passport, and yet you speak English with an accent.

So I had many different passports. I had to remember how to sign many different names. I had to practice and memorize the script for the immigration officer.

You can hear your own heart beat, when you're standing in the line up to get to the immigration officer. And they are so rough. Its not like here where you get a lawyer. Other places...I'm talking 14 12 13 years ago...you go to jail. Good luck getting out.

...we were this close to getting caught this many times, the minute you would sit in the cab to go, and my heart is accelerating. I can't tell you the biggest rush you get in your life and you get in survival mode, and you have to act. You can't even shake because they study your body

language, and if you're sweating, or if your hand starts to shake, they'll be like *search her*. Right away they know, so you have to smile and pretend. It was just the hardest thing. My English was really shitty and I'd been through a lot, so I was still a bit injured so it was hard.

S: sounds terrifying and I hear how you had to control everything--your every move

and we had different smugglers for different countries, and they kind of play with you from country to country. They are like salesman with no ethics. Because it's not like you can complain about them to the police. What are you going to do? Sure, they took your 20 thousand and years ago that was a lot of money. So I was really lucky that my parents came and they helped me and my sister. At a point they told my parents that they were they sending us to Vancouver. They actually sent us to Cambodia for 56 days--and it was the worst 56 days of my life...It was horrible...and...

S: You don't have to go into details, but can you give me a little sense of what was going on in Cambodia

Yeah, first they said you are here in transit for 24 or 48 hours, and for your own safety we can't give you flight information or destination. So they said first we're going to Philippines, and from Philippines we're going to Vancouver. Because the other way they go through Europe and ...so we believed them, and got in the car, and went with them, they wouldn't let us leave and we were stuck in a hotel ...

S: ...take a minute, because this sounds like its really hard to talk about, so let's stop there. You don't need to talk about what happened there. My sense is you went from Philippines to Cambodia and then after a very difficult time made it to Vancouver.

It was a bunch of countries. I don't really remember the sequence properly...But Cambodia and we walked 7 days to Vietnam once, so I remember I had leeches in rice fields stuck to me and I had to carry my sister

S: Because she couldn't walk?

She was just so spoiled. I don't know. She was smaller than me and I felt bad, and I was always trying to protect her. Especially after what happened to the other one. I was petrified

S: Your journey sounds completely grueling

I actually found a picture of me in Cambodia a couple of days ago, and I was looking at it, I was so young.

S: Yeah you would have been what 19, 20 at this point?

Twenty I think, because it took like a good six months to get here

S: What did you notice about you in the picture?

I look really scared. I'm not really looking in the camera...more scanning the environment...just trying to....just really scarred.

S: Yes, you're in the hands of these smugglers. They don't tell you anything. As you say you can't complain.

And then they sell you

S: Oh

Yeah...its crazy.

S: Ok. That's what happened in Cambodia...

And I think my memory from there. I think those were the hardest 56 days of my life. It was really hard....so.

S: You enduredyou made it through. Do you remember how you made it through?

I was just trying to protect my sister I think. Because of her I think she kind of gave me a reason to fight. Otherwise I would have just asked someone to take a gun and shoot me, because sometimes you wanted it.

S: Yeah, I can hear how any kind of escape.

It was just horrible living conditions. Really dirty. So...I got really sick. A Canadian guy helped us. He was a client there and I gave him numbers. He got in touch with my parents. At this point, they had no idea where the fuck we were in the world.

Eleheh had hoped to complete her studies in India, and return to her country under her new identity. In her second year in India a new influx of co-national scholarship students arrived at her university. These scholarship students were required to report to the foreign ministry on the behaviour of their classmates. A fellow student took an interest in Eleheh, and when she did not reciprocate he began harassing her. He stole the diary Eleheh had been keeping. Reading about her feelings for her girlfriend gave him the information he needed to escalate the harassment. He and a gang of his friends assaulted her, and threatened to report her to the authorities. Once again afraid for her safety, Eleheh sought out help from her parents. Her mother arranged for an agent to take her to Canada.

Eleheh was struggling against becoming overwhelmed while remembering her migration in the hands of agents who became traffickers. Here I chose to move us through, rather than more deeply, into the details of the events. Remaining open and attuned would have invited her to go further into the experience. Offering her a chance to move past and then focusing attention on her survival were my attempts to steer away from staying too long or going too deeply into the distress. Asked about how she survived, she tells how her bond with her sister, and being her protector, kept her going. In several parts of our interview, Eleheh voices a self-as-protector in relationship to her sister, constructing herself as strong and capable in the process. I hear Eleheh's resourcefulness in her being able to make a connection with a client under conditions that worked against her being recognized as anything other than a body for sex. I

highlight these as relational agencies Eleheh brings to her efforts to create safety and belonging.

Eleheh's account speaks to the impacts of migration restrictions that impinged on her efforts to escape homophobic violence, and the presence of criminal networks that exploit the vulnerability of migrants given these restrictions. Eleheh's description of smugglers as salesmen with no ethics is apt. Her experience of moving from working with an agent, to being trafficked for prostitution points to the opportunities for exploitation that are created through asymmetries of mobility. Without visible and viable alternatives, precarious migrations make people vulnerable to further coercion, violence and exploitation. Migration restrictions and the obscurity of the asylum option, place QLGBT migrants in the dilemma of remaining in unsafe conditions, or working with agents to cross borders to access a Canadian port of entry.

Miriam

I arrived there around 4 am and I didn't know anybody. But the guy was in the terminal, thank god! He says, "Come with me"

I say "*Where? Where do you want me to go?*"

And he said "We're going to a woman's place"

And I say "*Where?*"

And he said "*Please don't question me. We don't have time.*"

And I had to trust him, because I don't have anybody else in [this country]. I didn't have any choice.

Fortunately she was very good woman. She talked to me, She *said*, "I have seen lots of people with your case who came here everyday from your country. Gay lesbian and transsexual and they went to the United

Nations--So just feel comfortable with us. You don't need to hide yourself anymore."

S: Mm what was that like to hear those words *feel comfortable with us you do not need to hide yourself anymore?*

{Checks in with interpreter } I was so happy. I couldn't believe it. A woman tells me "*be comfortable. You are a girl.*" I couldn't believe it after all those years. She made up my face, tweezed my eyebrows. I started to cry and I just cried for hours.

Miriam had made it to a secret safe house for QLGBT asylum seekers. She made her refugee claim at the UNHCR office. Safe houses such as this exist in both Turkey and Syria, organized by groups such as the Iranian Railway for Queer Refugees, and an Iraqi LGBT group.

So I went to a small city where I had lots of problems. It was a little bit better than [country of origin], but people did not have any good ideas about transsexuals. So when I go out for shopping or other things it was difficult. First of all, all men thought that I'm a prostitute --*All men*, before they even start to talk to me. Sometimes they start to insult me and harass me, so I couldn't go out alone. I could only go out with my friends, because I found some friends there from my country--a few transsexuals from my country who had had surgery.

S: How did you meet them?

It was a small city and all refugees knew each other. When somebody new came they tried to make contact with her or him.

S: And it sounds like there you met other [co-national] women who were trans and had a chance to talk with them.

Yes, it was such a community...like a community.

Int: Why that city?

There were some cities, some limited cities who accepted refugees— [town] and some other small towns. Nobody can stay in the capital of [transit country] as a refugee.

S: While you are waiting?

Exactly, so when you choose your city. If you say [town] you have to go to [town]. And every night you have to sign a paper to say you didn't leave the city, because we weren't allowed to leave the city before we leave [transit country]. The police were responsible to make sure that you don't leave the city.

You had to go to the police station every day to sign there. Unfortunately, the police officers were worse than normal people on the street. When I went there, every night my whole body shakes. I got so upset. They looked at me like I'm naked. They looked at me from head to toe --It was very difficult.

I just said. *God, Please help me to live here.*

And I had a very bad experience there--very bad experience...I don't want to talk about it because it makes me upset.

S: That's ok, you say as much or as little as you want. It's ok.

I'm sorry. It's not about privacy. I get so upset because it was a big shock for me.

As Miriam spoke I heard the fears she held as she trusted strangers with her safety. Reassurances from the man she met in the chat room helped her trust them, and his political work connected her with a network of queers and allies who assisted LGBT asylum seekers. The organization created possibilities for safe passage for Miriam, as it has for many others. Miriam spoke with warmth about the woman who welcomed her to the safe house, remembering the simple rituals of femininity, make up, and eyebrow tweezing, as an important moment of belonging.

As Miriam explained, asylum seekers in some transit countries are relocated to small towns several hours from the cities where UNHCR offices are located. The support of other trans women there helped her tolerate daily transphobic harassment and threats. Seeking each other out, these women created something *like a community* for Miriam. In this way, moments of belonging in a small community of transwomen cushioned her from transphobic threats. These moments of belonging existed alongside profoundly alienating experiences of exclusion and surveillance as a refugee, and as a transwoman. The cohort of friends Miriam built while in transit has continued to stay in touch as they each settled in Canadian cities at different times, creating a small network dispersed across several Canadian cities.

While their applications are being processed asylum seekers in this transit country are required to report daily or weekly to the police. In the process, the surveillance measures used to curtail irregular migration put Miriam into daily contact with transphobic threats. Later in our interview, Miriam very cautiously alluded to having been sexually assaulted while in transit. The attack occurred when she was on her way from reporting at the police station. The requirement to report to the police station heightened her visibility and vulnerability as trans and as a refugee. The attacker had connections with the police. She pressed charges, but the attacker also had connections with the judge hearing her case and was found not guilty.

For Miriam and Eleheh, complex migrations became treacherous. Mobility restrictions and surveillance measures designed to curtail irregular migration, created conditions rife for exploitation. For Eleheh, agents became traffickers. For Miriam,

surveillance measures intensified her visibility as a trans woman and a refugee claimant, heightening her vulnerability to sexual violence. Both women spoke of the precariousness as migrants, and the limited protection the law provided them as migrants with temporary or irregular status.

Precarious Status in Canada

For those participants who were able to obtain visas to Canada, maintaining themselves in status was challenging. Like those outside Canada, their temporary status felt precarious, and for some fed into exploitation. All four male participants, Adil, Jamil, Mzalendo, and Devon came to Canada as students. To obtain visas, Jamil and Mzalendo faced intense screening as nationals from countries considered *refugee producing*. For them, the waiting period for the visa was tense, as they were facing direct threats of violence. Adil and Devon had both worked on ships prior to applying, and were not from countries considered refugee producing. Their departure was not forced by imminent threat of violence, although both described a sense of urgency to leave places where they felt stifled and alienated daily. None of the men arrived in Canada knowing about QLGBT refugee protection or with the intention of making a refugee claim. Each of them had planned to make permanent residency applications as skilled workers after graduating.

Maintaining a study permit in Canada requires continuous enrollment in a registered university or college, paying international student tuition three to five times higher than the subsidized rates for Canadian students. Most of the men struggled financially, working several part time jobs while attending school. All worked to

complete degrees that would make them eligible for Permanent Residency. In addition to meeting educational and language criteria, independent skilled worker applicants must also demonstrate that they have at least \$10,000 savings, and pass a medical screening. For each of the men, permanent status became illusory, while returning became unviable.

Although Adil's boyfriend wanted him to come to join him in the US, Adil was wary of being completely dependent on him. He doubted his chances of obtaining a visa to the US, and was uneasy about living in the US given the post 9-11 anti-Muslim, anti-Arab climate. He chose Vancouver as a middle ground. His American boyfriend moved to Vancouver from Seattle, and the two began a same-sex partner application. The boyfriend was controlling and belittling, and his abusiveness escalated to physical threats and sexual coercion. The impacts of being socially isolated and emotionally abused made thinking about leaving difficult. His studies suffered and he was in jeopardy of not finishing the degree that would allow him to make an independent skilled worker application. It was only after a year of enduring the abuse that Adil learned of the refugee claim option, and worked up the nerve to leave. Throughout his waiting period he remained fearful of retaliation by his ex-partner.

Jamil arrived in Vancouver to attend college. He stayed with relatives for the first year, helping his aunt with housekeeping and her looking after two preteen children. The oldest son became resentful of his presence in the small apartment. Jamil was sleeping on the floor, and would be woken up by his cousin kicking him. Both cousins started mocking him as "fresh of the boat" and effeminate. Staying in this home while

finishing his diploma and applying for Permanent Residence became untenable. Fights with his cousins escalated. After a fight when his cousin began throwing things at him, Jamil left the apartment. He stayed briefly with his Granmother in the city, but since she lived in an apartment that did not allow guests, he needed to find an alternative. Jamil had begun going online at gay.com. The first man he hooked up with in person offered him a place to stay.

And he gave me help in going to school.

S: How did he help you?

Well, I had no money, so he would help that way. He would go out and get groceries, and make sure the food is dealt with. He became a godfather-- an angel figure. When I was going out he would slide a twenty dollar or ten dollar bill in my pocket and he was very nice to me. He was an angel to me. But the condition was, he was going to make sure I got through school. And once I'm done school, then I would have to find my own place.

Jamil faced rejection and aggression from his cousin that stemmed from homophobic and xenophobic stigma. Jamil and I discussed how, for his young cousin, eager to fit in a Canadian school and peer group, being seen with Jamil would be stigmatizing. Caretaking for his young cousins became impossible as the young man's anger and violence escalated.

For both Adil and Jamil, precarious status in Canada created power imbalances in relationships, and instability in their housing and finances. Both remained in homes where they faced abuse out of a fear of jeopardizing their status. Although both young men had intended to make permanent residency applications after graduating from

Canadian colleges, their ability to complete school became threatened by the precarities in their relationships, housing, and finances.

Devon recounted the summer before his last year of his university. His father called him with the news that his mother's cancer had returned, and was terminal.

Devon made preparations to return for one last visit

I developed a lump. People ask me, "How could you not notice your own body?"

But I'm working 3 jobs-- You come home. You just fall on your bed. Drag yourself out of bed. Brush your teeth with your eyes closed.

S: You weren't in your body.

Plus, I was calculating every penny—pay my bills, groceries, set aside money. I had been so healthy I hadn't seen a doctor at all. I'd even let my care card expire. Suddenly I was thrown into this world of medical tests that you only see on ER.

Then my doctor says, "I am going to send you to the cancer centre."

My mum is dying of cancer. My dad is telling me to come home to see her on her death bed. *How much time do I have?* That was my first thought.

They performed a biopsy on the lump. During the biopsy the surgeon's glove tore. If there is direct contact they have to do a HIV test. So it was fine, I gave consent.

So it is five days before leaving to see my mother, and I'm waiting for two tests. Whether I have cancer or whether I have HIV. July 13th he calls me up, "You had been very anxious to know and you are leaving. So I didn't want you to have to wait any longer. I have something to tell you. Your HIV results have come back. You are positive."

Becoming HIV positive narrowed Devon's options for obtaining status in Canada.

As a result of his medical condition, Devon would be found inadmissible when he

applied for Permanent Residency as an independent skilled worker. He returned to his country to for his last chance to see his mother, keeping his fears about his own health and the uncertainty of his status secret from his family. The month he spent there confirmed for him that living there was not possible for him. Yet, when he returned to complete his last year of school, he had no notion of what to do.

Lengthily periods in temporary status—as students or temporary workers—in Canada, became complicated and precarious as finances, relationship violence, work exploitation or health conditions jeopardized participants ability to meet criteria for Permanent Status. Fearful of having to return to their country-of-origin, but unaware of the option to make a refugee claim, some participants endured relationship violence or remained in abusive employment or housing situations. Precarious status was prolonged by the relative obscurity of information about making a refugee claim based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Most participants learned of the option to seek refugee protection only after living abroad for some time. They learned of the option through informal, often queer, networks, not official channels. Reaching out online in a chat room connected Devon with a QLGBT community organization, which then connected him with a refugee lawyer; Jamil learned about Rainbow Refugee from a man he met on gay.com. Sarah's friends sought partner sponsorship advice from a QLGBT immigration lawyer in Toronto for themselves, and asked about Sarah's situation. He recommended a lawyer in Vancouver. Queer and social justice networks served as both conduits of contacts and

intermediaries of trust, connecting people to the information and people that enabled them to access refugee protection.

In *Making People Illegal* Catherine Dauvergne argues that the punitive effect on potential refugees of migration restrictions is contributing to an increasing illegality of asylum itself. The growing illegality of asylum has dangerous implications for all potential refugees. Migrants in this study courted illegality as a result of exclusions based on intersecting asymmetries of gender, social class and nationality. These migration restrictions, in interaction with the relative obscurity of the QLGBT asylum option, place QLGBT migrants on mixed or irregular migration paths, creating conditions that increase QLGBT migrants' vulnerability to exploitation and violence. Having survived the traumas of exclusion from families and communities, and of persecution due to their sexualities or genders, QLGBT migrants were then retraumatized by exploitation, and in some cases violence in the process of migrating.

The fact that the migration trajectories of QLGBT asylum seekers include social, economic, and sometimes irregular means of migration can play into popular criticisms of asylum seekers as "economic migrants," less than genuine, or less deserving refugees. At the hearing stage, mixed or irregular migration paths can undermine claimants' credibility. However, it is important to recognize that the root cause of the eventual need to claim asylum is the existence of homophobic and transphobic persecution in their home countries. Further, QLGBT migrants resort to alternative, sometimes irregular, means of migration because the option to make a claim based on

sexual orientation or gender identity is not apparent or accessible. Complex migration trajectories are conditioned by the lack of visible and viable alternatives. Categorizing people as “illegals” obscures the complex conditions that shape migration trajectories.

CHAPTER 6

Un/Settling

Making a Claim: Seeking Recognition/Resisting Exclusions

Mzalendo

Just one more comment before I answer your question. Even the way you make a refugee claim is dehumanizing. You go to the office here somewhere in Vancouver. I've forgotten where because I want to keep these thoughts to a minimum.

They call you through a window. They tell you

"Tell me your story. Why are you making a refugee claim?"

And you're in the earshot of people, some of the people are the very countrymen you are trying to get away from. I felt dehumanized.

You shout your claim through a bullet proof glass. It's not a very private process. It's not respectful. It is dehumanizing. You are forced to shout before them

*I WANT TO MAKE A REFUGEE CLAIM BECAUSE I AM
HOMOSEXUAL.*

S: ...that takes immense courage.

But you are desperate. You're in Canada without status.

Pursuing safety and belonging led participants to seek official recognition as refugees. To begin their claim asylum seekers must state their case to an officer at a Canadian border, inland Citizenship and Immigration office, or United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). Remember that asylum seekers are fleeing contexts

where police and officials are precisely the people they fear. One of the first questions an asylum seeker faces is “on what grounds?” One man, a Rainbow Refugee participant, after making his way from Iran to China, Indonesia, Japan, and eventually Canada, spent 27 days in detention before working up the nerve to tell his duty counsel that he was gay. Claimants’ interactions with the Canadian refugee determination system became some of their first and primary experiences of Canada. Ports of entry, eligibility interviews, and hearings all became places of scrutiny, in which their credibility and was tested, and often presumed suspect. As Participants narrated interactions with officials, I heard how each of these interactions become an intensified struggle for recognition, in which their safety and belonging is at stake.

Miriam

I went to UN, but I was very scared because they asked me lots of questions. They took pictures of me. The man who wanted to interview me, in the first interview, he said

“So talk to me. What happened to you?” {Leaning back, crossing arms over a puffed out chest}

S: “Oh....that’s intimidating. Arms crossed like that?”

Yeah! All that happened to me in 36 years. How can I explain it in a few minutes? And he said,

“Be comfortable. Nobody can understand what you say and I promise you to keep your information confidential.”

But I just started to cry, because I couldn’t speak. I couldn’t believe that it is a free country --more free than [country of origin], anyway.

Miriam re-enacted the presence of the UNHCR officer, leaning back, arms crossed over a puffed out chest. His casualness, perhaps intended to be comforting,

was intimidating to Miriam. The presence of others nearby was disconcerting. The fears Miriam was carrying, overwhelmed her in the face of the officer's expectation that she explain herself. Participants' initial contact with the refugee system was the first of repeated interviews in which they are asked to give an account of themselves.

Mzalendo

Then they start fingerprinting you like a criminal and making comments like

"You people come here to live off the system."

I never, never, lived on welfare in Canada. So I felt so defiled. Actually I've been thinking about how can I change that so that no one else has to go through that experience.

I didn't like the immigration part of the refugee claim. They start interrogating you like the [Country of origin] police so that is the experience I had. It was ...brutal....

I was made to feel desperate, which I had never had to feel in my life. I had a respectable life in [my country]. I was a very respected member of society. And here I was reduced to nothing.

Being fingerprinted...maybe I'm being too sensitive, but I've seen the police fingerprint criminals.

After that you are told,

"Surrender all your passports, all your identification."

So until you have your status, you have no identification. I understand it is administrative procedure and I don't have an alternative...

I imagine the intense shame and fear Mzalendo felt as he was forced to shout his claim to a sexuality that he has lived very discreetly to this day. His anger at being made to feel desperate was clear and strong, even in his measured tone. Mzalendo

voiced and resisted the racism of the officer's comment, and named the experience of being dehumanized and defiled. He invoked his past-self as a respected member of society in his country of origin to resist the racist discourse of Africans, and refugees, as living off the system. His resistance is also clear as he voices the need to change this for others. I heard this as speaking through the research interview in an effort to persuade others who may be in a position to make these changes.

In Mzalendo's account, and others, I heard a tension that runs through the refugee application process. While seeking refugee recognition and the protection it brings, Mzalendo experienced the relational insults of repeated social exclusions: as a *homosexual* outed to strangers, as African refugee accused of living off the system, as refugee positioned as potential criminal or *illegal*. Seeking recognition as a refugee entails negotiations of multiple exclusions.

Alana

So they get you out. They don't interview you, they interrogate you. That's what they did with me, and then they did that separately with [my brother].
Then they take you out. Then someone else comes to ask you the same questions.
Then they bring you back in. You feel like you're a prisoner.

Are they going to let us in or send us back?

We were there for twelve hours, and in the end I was exhausted--and I was like

You know what-- send me back or...or ...let me in...or just do something--Just don't keep me here.

They keep interrogating us and take our fingerprints. Then they take our picture. Then they say they're going to come--and then they don't come for hours.

So it wasn't easy, that border thing. Some people are lucky. They come in and go out in like 2-4 hours, but for us we were there for 12-14 hours.

S: And you said it wasn't an interview, it was an interrogation.

Yeah...like they don't believe you. They are like

"But why?"

"Do you really think that happened?"

"Really?"

They aren't listening to your story and being like...what do you say when someone listens and cares?

S: Empathetic? Respectful?

Yeah, they're not. They are trying to make you look like a liar and like you are making it up.

"Really, but why did you say this thing here?"

Like with me they were saying,

"But you got MARRIED?"

And I said *but it wasn't for real.*

"Oh?" They said.

They doubt you. And it doesn't feel good.

S: No...it sounds frightening.

Yeah! Plus it's uncomfortable to be treated like a liar. People had told us they would try to catch us in lies, but I guess they couldn't, because we were telling the truth. But they kept trying...

Like, about those guys that tried to grab my girlfriend and they tried to touch her, and tried to do things, they asked,

"How did you know they were trying to rape you guys?"

"Maybe they didn't want to do that?"

"Or, maybe you caused that to happen?"

Oh, plus they said we were liars because we were brothers-- brother and sister.

"That's so weird. Such a coincidence that you are BOTH gay."

"This is planned."

"This is fake."

"We don't believe you."

"Either you are both lying or one's lying."

Towards the end I felt like I was brain dead, mostly because they had us confined. And then when you're not confined, they're pressuring you. And they have your fingerprints-- so you kind of feel like you're a criminal.

As Alana recounted her border crossing, she re-enacts the suspicious stance of the border officials, voicing their disbelief and accusation that positioned her as a liar. She invoked the presence of the border officers and voices her anger at having to endure the uncertainty and powerlessness. As narrator, Alana takes on a stance of resistance as she critically spells out the tactics used to discredit and disempower her.

Stephanie

Well I arrived in Canada at Montreal International Airport. When I arrived it was the afternoon. I can tell I was really lucky, because the officers treated me very compass...they were compassionate and really friendly.

S: Ahh?

Because when I arrived in Canada I was dressing very androgynous. Somebody could have doubts about whether a male or a woman was in front of them. And the officers were really nice with me, so they just gave me some forms I needed to fill out.

S: And when you say nice, what kinds of things were they doing?

Well, they treated me as I wanted to be, like saying *Madame*, *Mademoiselle*.

So it was giving me more confidence that I was in the right place to be.

The immigration officers were very compassionate with me. They were friendly.

S: mmm...Compassionate and friendly how?

They don't make a big drama about how can I treat you. For example, they would ask *Just say your last name*. They didn't only go for your name on your papers.

They were respectful. They were totally taking care in the questions they were asking.

They were tough—trying to following up on every detail, and they were trying not to be offensive. They were really, how can I say, they put their judgments aside.

At the time of our interview Stephanie had completed her hearing but was still waiting for her decision. Preferring not to stir up memories of her time in her country of origin while in the uncertainty of the decision, she and I decided to focus on the application process. I heard relief and comfort as she described how the recognition of *Madame* and *Madmoiselle*, offered in a straightforward and routine manner created safety for Stephanie. This sense extended beyond the officials themselves to encompass Canada as being *the right place* for her. Among participants, this was the one positive experience of recognition by immigration officials in the context of first accessing the refugee system. Other trans women who participate in Rainbow Refugee have shared accounts of encountering difficulties at borders. As places of intensified scrutiny, discrepancies between gender presentation and documentation can become a reason for enhanced screening measures. As strongly as participants' accounts of negative experiences, this interaction speaks to the importance of everyday acts of recognition and respect for creating or undermining safety and belonging.

Stephanie was reassured by the efforts CBSA officers made to ask questions in a respectful manner.

Negotiating Refugeeeness: Seeking Recognition/Resisting Stigmas

Mzalendo

I don't know if there's any difference between a refugee and a protected person. To me, I'm more comfortable being called a protected person than a refugee. The reason is very simple. I come from [East Africa], where there are lots lots lots of refugees, because of the geopolitics of the region. [My country] is a very stable country, so they all come in. Sometimes they are not looked at so positively. Sometimes they are not received so positively, because they are competing for resources. They make prices go up. They make rents go up. People at times look down upon them--and so I don't want the same to be extended to me

S: mm...so that's the meaning of the word refugee for you?

I know...it shouldn't have any negative connotation but from my experience already in my mind it does already

S: and so for you protected person...

It's a more, psychologically it's a better term. It's like death and fatal. They mean the same thing, but fatal is more receptive to the mind than death.

S: mm. Fair enough, and also there is a slight legal difference so, do you knowis it ok to ask...If you were granted status as a person in need of protection rather than a refugee?

I don't know and to be honest, I detest the status, because I know I have what it takes to be an immigrant by other means which was my preferred route, which as the story develops, we'll come to that. But due to circumstances, this was my only option. But given the opportunity, I wouldn't go there.

But it's ok if you call me a refugee....Categorize me as you like.

Mzalendo raised his discomfort with categorization as a refugee at the very beginning of our interview. He explicitly named the problematic associations with the category and his wish to distance himself from the status. This discomfort was echoed both explicitly and implicitly in the accounts of many of the other participants. In our interview Devon repeatedly voiced the phrase "*I am a highly educated person*" defending himself against the discourses of refugees as uneducated and unskilled. *Refugees as burdens on the system* and *refugees as bogus* were other discourses participants wrestled with and resisted in their accounts.

Throughout their application and settlement process refugee was not an identity that most participants inhabited comfortably or easily. And yet, becoming a Convention Refugee requires considerable work. The work of the application and settling in requires repeated enactments of refugeehood in the process of making an application and rebuilding lives. For QLGBT claimants, their stigmatized sexual or gender identity is intertwined with gaining recognition as refugees. While engaged in the work of refugee determination and settlement, participants were negotiating recognition, visibility and salience of their sexual orientation or gender identities. Throughout this period, in both the application and rebuilding process, claimants engage in interactions in which they are negotiating the stigma of *refugeehood* and of their transgressive sexual or gender identities. Three requirements of the refugee determination process in particular amplify the intensity of stigma management requirements QLGBT refugee claimants face. The demands to prove credibility require claimants to repeat their accounts in a series of interviews, obliging repeated enactments of QLGBT refugee with government officers,

interpreters, lawyers and others. Gathering corroboratory evidence entailed asking past lovers, employers, and friends for support letters. Living with temporary status meant enacting self-as-refugee while applying for work permits, social assistance, and in job interviews. Performing the recognition work of refugee determination placed LGBT migrants in the paradoxical position of having to work very hard to gain recognition that many felt ambivalent or shameful about receiving.

While engaged in the work of rebuilding lives QLGBT refugee claimants negotiate safety and belonging in all their interactions. Their efforts to co-create safety and belonging in these interactions are complicated, and potentially undermined by a lengthy application process that requires them to repeatedly enact stigmatizing identities. The condition of living in uncertainty, and for many the constraints of living in poverty, further challenge their efforts to create safety and belonging during their settlement process. The work of orienting, day-to-day survival and rebuilding was intertwined with the work of the application process for all of the participants who made inland applications. Miriam, who arrived as a government assisted refugee, with permanent residency, had the certainty of knowing she could stay on arrival. Like the others she negotiated un/belongings as refugee and trans and dealt with financial insecurity.

Getting Oriented: Early Challenges to Safety and Belonging

Participants narrated early efforts to get oriented in an unfamiliar city, find shelter and then housing, and function in a second or third language. Their accounts

conveyed their excitement, bewilderment, and frustration with a mix of humour and poignancy.

Stephanie

They sent me to a place to stay. Since I arrived there it was kind of difficult because they were like,

*where can I put you...female or male?
Because the guy was like you look like a woman, but here it says
you are male. So I'm so sorry, but I have to send you with the
males*

In our interview, Stephanie voiced the apologetic, but bureaucratic tone of the shelter staff, narrating the decision without anger or blame.

So they sent me to the male beds. Fortunately that was only one night and I met some Spanish speakers from my country, and they were protecting me that night. They were awesome.

They told me about the system and said *you want to call home?* They took me to a place I could call. I called my family and it was really sad, because the feelings of the day before when I left were really fresh.

They took me to an organization that helps refugee claimants. The organization sent me to another shelter, and in this shelter, they sent me with female roommates and that felt totally awesome.

S: Yes! Can I check, what do think made the difference between the decision in the first place and the decision in the second place?

The second place wasn't as formal. I don't know exactly, but it was one of the managers who decided. He didn't care about the name. He didn't care about the gender on the paper. He just sent me with the females, which was very, very, nice.

S: Absolutely. I can hear how important that was.

It was. And so I stayed there for a month until I got my own apartment

S: And one more question, if it's okay. You said you were really helped by [co-national] folks. Can you tell me what it was like meeting them and interacting with them?

Sure, they were like,

"Do you need to go to this place? I can take you there."

And they went with me.

"Do you need to get to know the city? I can take you take you around."

They were talking about which schools were the best for language classes. Sharing the best things...very supportive. In [Country] you don't find that kind of support very easily--as easily as I found it there. But these people are really motivated to help you because they know how hard the process is and how hard it is for you to be a newcomer in the country.

S: They get it.

They get it easily and they were really supportive.

S: And just to check, did they understand that you were making your claim based on your gender identity?

They did understand....they did.

S: How did they deal with that?

Actually....ahhh...in the beginning it was kind of ...weird for them...weird. They also asked me, because it was clear that I was seeking refugee status because of discrimination issues. So they were asking *"So why did you come here?"*

At the beginning they were thinking that I was a woman. Apparently, for them the first impression they had was that I was a genetic woman. But then, as I was talking, they would see... there is something different about this person. And then they were like *"So why did you come here?"*

And I said *"Because I'm transsexual."*

They were like *"No way?"* {incredulous}

"Okay?" {perplexed}

"How can I treat you?" {curious}

"What name can I use?"

"What do I call you?"

S: You had to do some educating...

Yes, exactly. I needed to do that, but once they were educated things went better. They were respectful in that sense. Of course, when I was leaving, I heard some mocking. They were mocking and telling some jokes. You know, that *machista* thing, but when I was in front of them, they were totally respectful...

Meeting immediate needs for shelter placed Stephanie in the position of having to negotiate recognition as a woman, and visibility as trans, with agency staff and other residents. When agency staff prioritized her documented gender, she was placed in a potentially unsafe shelter space. Other co-national refugee claimants extended help and protection to her, and I heard relief and gratitude in her voice. She might have moved past this part of her account without sharing the ways she had to work for recognition and understanding, or the uncomfortable experiences of mockery had I not asked her to elaborate. As much as possible, throughout our interview, Stephanie emphasized moments of belonging, and minimized moments of exclusion. When we were exploring her experience of un/belonging with other co-national migrants, discomfort came through in her pause around the words *"...it wasweird."* I noticed that she located the awkwardness *in them*, and this is a relational tactic that she used in interactions throughout her account. She remained clear that the awkwardness was in others. She engaged in perspective shifting as she narrated, *"apparently the first impression they had was that I was a genetic woman."* This functioned to both locate the discordance in their perceptions and to create understanding around their reactions. She also

understood their reactions as reflecting the cultural discourse of *Machista*, creating a cultural frame that disperses the cause of the injury.

Stephanie narrated her inclusion in the female beds at the second shelter with joy, relief and some pride. When she moved to Vancouver several months later she used this experience to persuade the shelter staff in Vancouver to place her in the female section. The contrast between the two shelter experiences highlights a theme that continued throughout Stephanie's narrative as she negotiated belonging: being seen as a person, versus being seen as her documentation.

Miriam

When I came to Canada, I was so happy I can't describe it. But my happiness didn't last for long time--it was only 5 or 6 days. It wasn't even one week. I was in [Refugee House]--On [Downtown] Street. They were very nice to me. They said "*this is a free country --you can do what you want.*"

And I said "*Can I wear make up?*"

And they said "*You won't have any problems. You can wear make up. You can go anywhere. People are very educated here.*"

And I thought, *Oh my god! I'm just dreaming!*

That first week, one night I tried to walk to Granville St--A guy attacked me! He asked me something. I don't know what.

And I told him "*Sorry.*" And I just said "*No money. No money.*"

And he looked at me and he said. "*You look like a fucking faggot!*"

I'm sorry for swearing I just want to let you know—I didn't know exactly what faggot means. I just knew that fucking has a bad meaning,

I didn't say anything—

And he said it again, *You look like a fucking faggot!* And he hit me, and tried to beat me.

And I just ran away. It was so...I just ran away. Back to [Refugee House]. It was so terrible for me.

All my dreams disappeared. Nowhere can I be myself. Nowhere can I be happy. I just cried.

And I went to the manager, and I said *"You told me that this is a free country! You told me here I can be safe--and a guy attacked me on the street!"*

And he said *"Oh my god, it never happens here! Do you want me to call the police"*

And I said *"What can the police do?"*

Because I had a very bad experience of the police in [transit country]. I just remembered that memory --I had lots of witnesses. I had the right guy. The police had arrested him within 24 hours because I had written his car number. But here I don't have any witnesses. I don't know the guy. What are the police going to do?

And it was very strange for me--Nobody on the street helped me. They saw that a guy attacked me--but they did nothing.

I just ran away. I just cried.

They just looked at me--Nobody helped me. Nobody even asked the guy

"What's wrong with you? Why did you attack her?"

Here Miriam narrates her struggle for safety and belonging as she reconstructs her first week of arrival. Her sense of elation and possibilities was dashed when she was confronted by homo/transphobic violence in her new neighborhood. In this interaction she voices key others who impinged on her efforts to seek safety and belonging: a supportive, but naive settlement worker, an openly homo/transphobic violent stranger,

and unresponsive witnesses. While Miriam-narrated is shocked, caught unaware, Miriam-narrating reflects on how much more she knows now.

In her words "*Nowhere can I be myself*", she voices profound unbelonging. As she queried why no one helped her, she voiced the supportive allies she wished had been present. The silence of bystanders haunted Miriam, disturbing her at least as much as the initial attack. Their failure to act, and silent complicity left Miriam on the outside alone.

This event occurred in Miriam's first week in Vancouver and profoundly undermined her sense of safety when she moved out into an apartment on her own. I heard how traumatic events become recursively and complexly interrelated. Memories of homophobic/transphobic aggressions coalesce—with new threats or violence triggering felt memories of major life-threatening aggressions.

Practical lessons are contained in the actions of the service provider in Miriam's account. Well-intentioned ignorance can be dangerous. From the privileged place of living gender-normatively it is easy to conflate political rights with social acceptance and safety, and underestimate the threats to safety for visibly queer or trans and racialized people. Discourses of Canada as a gay haven or queer utopia can invite us all into dangerous ways of thinking about safety and belonging.

Miriam

After I found out that they pay me just \$575 I was shocked. Not just me, but all the people who were with me at [Refugee House]. We got shocked.

And they said *"You have to pay to rent a place from this five hundred and something."*

And we said "How we can afford this ourselves?"

And they said "You have to choose a roommate."

But for me it was different. I couldn't choose any roommate--any man roommate. And for woman roommate it could be confusing for them. Especially at that time, I had short hair. It was very difficult but they tried. The Manager said *"Yes, you are right. Your case is somehow strange."* And so they tried to find a cheaper place for me outside of downtown.

So after they found me a place, they just called a cab, and they sent me to my place---and just LEFT me alone.

Imagine! I didn't know anybody. Imagine you are in a big city you don't know for the first time. You don't know even one person. You don't have TV. You don't have computer....you...I had nothing. So I just look at the walls. It was a basement-- I didn't even have a window so I can look at the street.

And the taxi driver told me. It was on [warehouse] street--and the taxi driver told me *be careful*. The taxi driver was [co-national]. He asked me *"Are you [nationality]?"*

I said "Yes."

He said *"Be careful. I think I know your situation and this is a dangerous place. After dark don't go out."*

I couldn't go out. After that experience on Granville Street. I was so scared.

Miriam named the shock she and others felt when they realized the constraints of living on social assistance in a city with the highest housing costs in Canada. The proposed solution of sharing housing confronted Miriam with exclusion. Her sense of alienation came through as she voiced her memory of the Manager's words *"your case is somehow strange."* In this interaction with the Manager, Miriam is positioned as the

problem. Living alone protected her from the awkwardness others might feel, but left her isolated. This isolation was then compounded by her fears that her neighborhood was unsafe. In Miriam's interaction with the taxi driver, he recognized her as a fellow co-national, discreetly alluded to her gender variance, and spoke to her as a woman. His warning was protective, but also left Miriam feeling unsafe in the entire neighborhood.

Miriam had been introduced to a support group for transgender people by her settlement counsellor, but was afraid to attend the drop-in group meetings because it would mean returning after dark. She spent three months in this apartment before moving downtown, and making contact with both the support group and Rainbow Refugee. The assault on Granville Street carried associations with the assault she experienced while in transit, and the combined associations profoundly undermined Miriam's safety in these first months. Eventually meeting others in the support group helped Miriam learn the city from the perspective of safety for transitioning trans women.

Stephanie

There is something that I noticed and sorry for saying this

S: No, say it.

But the culture between the East, Montreal experience, and the culture here is different. Montreal people are more open-minded

S: Yes, I've felt that myself between Montreal and Vancouver. How did you experience that?

In Montreal, I never had a person point at me like "*This person has something different.*" Never never ever.

And when I was on the street, and men would look at me, and their look would say, "*you look gorgeous.*" Here they are more ...selective. I was lucky in Montreal with men. On the subway, on the street, I felt like I was attractive in Montreal. And all the people I met were more friendly, more open.

S: Here in Vancouver it sounds like you've had more experiences that made you feel different?

Yes, because for every organization you have to go, for example Service Canada or [settlement service organization] Every organization I needed to go to in Montreal they were very open. Even for doctors or everytime I had to do to the hospital-- like it was funny. They would ask, "*Are you pregnant?*"

I'm like "*No!?!?*" They didn't have doubts about me. They weren't so stuck on the paperwork.

Here, I noticed it's more like they are going through the paperwork. They are more seeing the paperwork rather than seeing the person in front of them.

S: That's a really great way to describe it. That's helpful. This is a tough question maybe, but can you flesh out "being seen as a person?" What does that look like with a service provider or a doctor....

Well, I don't know if it's a part of their lifestyle? It's in the environment too. Vancouver city is pretty open, but outside the city, what I could feel is they know they cannot discriminate, because there is a law they have to respect. They have to obey. For us it is protection. We cannot be discriminated against, but its not because they want. It's because they are forced.

Stephanie's account speaks to the importance of acknowledgement and recognition extended through day-to-day interactions with others as people orient to a new city. Her movements through the city in Montreal helped her feel recognized as an attractive woman. In contrast, her movements in Vancouver were punctuated by stigma as different. She moves on to contrast interactions with service providers. She

enacted being asked if she was pregnant by medical staff with satisfaction and playful humour, emphasizing the degree to which she was recognized unproblematically as a woman in interactions. She contrasts this with the discomfort of having her documentation given priority, and receiving forced tolerance from service providers.

Alana

Chris (RRC founder/volunteer) came the next morning. We had a great day with her. She was just so friendly and helpful. She showed us around. Introduced us to Lisa and Maria (RRC members). Took us to Commercial Drive, Little Sisters. It was great. For us it was so amazing because we didn't know anybody, and to have this....stranger...basically...helping us this much. So we were very grateful to Chris.

The only thing is, well you know how it is, people have to go on with their lives. So we didn't see her after that until the next meeting.

And so the next day we were on our own--completely on our own. And the first thing we realized, because of the way we left, we didn't have much money because Oscar made us leave in a week.

Alana and Oscar had hurried to make it to the border before the impending implementation of the Safe Third Country ruling that would have barred their entry.

Plus we were shocked because [US City] to Vancouver, everything is double the price. We were shocked. We didn't have that much money. I think we only had \$6000 for both of us. We didn't have a job permit and to get a job permit was going to take three to four months. We were thinking "*Oh my god! Where are we going to live?*" We went to Little Sisters—you know they have the notices.

Through the Little Sister's housing board Alana and Oscar found shared housing to rent, first with a college student, and then through a friend of the student's mother, Monica, who rented rooms to international students.

Finally, Oscar and I could separate. I got my own bed and my own room, and then we got to know Monica and she's awesome and we are friends till now, best of friends

S: Wow...

So that's incredible, eh? How everything came together!

S: It sounds like one connection led to another. Like going to Little Sister's led to...

...and Chris took us there, cause that's how we knew about it. We probably would have found it eventually, but not as fast, because it's kind of hidden. So it was great. So we were living downtown and we were meeting with Rainbow Refugee and meeting everybody.

Alana narrated her first days in Vancouver with excitement and energy. The welcome and orientation she and Oscar were given by Chris—who speaks Spanish, the introduction to others going through the same process, created an immediate and strong sense of safety and reassurance. The morning after shock of the realities of being new and alone in a strange city, with limited resources was clear in Alana's voice.

All three women's accounts Stephanie, Miriam, and Alana's, point to the importance of accessing queer and trans knowledge of a city, its spaces, housing, and services, and safety issues. The contrast between Miriam and Alana's experience would suggest that accessing this earlier in the process creates emotional reassurance, and practical connections, that enhance QLGBT migrants' sense of safety and belonging.

At the time Alana arrived in Vancouver there were six to eight claimants coming to Rainbow Refugee meetings, and so there was time and energy for volunteers like Chris to provide close attention and full-day city orientations when people first arrived. Currently, with sixteen or more claimants per meeting, and new claimants arriving each month, it is rare for new members to have a full-day orientation when they first arrive.

Orientation happens more informally through meeting other experienced members in the group, and learning the city with them.

Un/settling Uncertainty

Jamil

Shortly after I started Rainbow Refugee then I started meeting people and I started networking, but I was feeling rather closed. You might have noticed the first couple of meetings. I was worried about my hearing. I had even made a deal with myself, that if I didn't win this case, I would commit suicide. I was very emotional.

During their application process in Canada refugee claimants are negotiating the conflicting requirements of rebuilding lives while living with the possibility of rejection. In the words of the director of a refugee serving agency, "The message is settle in, but don't get too comfortable." Simultaneously settling and staying unsettled complicated claimants' sense of their future. QLGBT migrants narrated a period of feeling without a future or avoiding thinking about their future. The uncertainty of their status made thinking about a future in Canada profoundly uncomfortable. Future thoughts were steeped with anxiety about potential rejection and anger at a system that holds their future in their hands. At the same time, past traumatic events gained potency as potential future fates if they were forced to return. The length of time claimants spend in the uncertainty of their application process has increased markedly between 2006-2009. The average wait time for inland refugee claimants in Canada stretched from 11 months in 2008 to eighteen months by 2009. Among Rainbow Refugee members who applied in 2006-2007 wait times of 2 years were common.

Un/settling Financial Insecurity

Participants narrated their experiences of arriving with clothing and a mix of sentimental or practical things they could fit in their suitcases—and not much else.

Participants who had been able to plan their migration had the cushion of some savings to ease them into the first weeks or months.

Eleheh

I couldn't work. We didn't have a work permit, so I wasn't allowed to work. I wasn't allowed to go to school. I couldn't afford international student rates, and you need a visa. And so you can't do anything. So I had to take welfare, for I don't know how long it took--six months to a year.

I got a job washing floors for like five bucks an hour and minimum wage was like seven. But I didn't have a work permit and they would give me just 4-5 hours a day in Chinatown. So I'd make \$20 a day. But I was so happy because I could buy my sister cigarettes, and we had a little bachelor apartment...so it was okay.

Delays in receiving work permits meant most participants struggled to make their savings stretch. Not being able to work legally meant several needed social assistance during the delay. Social discourses of *refugees as a burden on the system* was stigmatizing for participants, and many worked to distance themselves from these discourses in their narratives and in their lives. In the excerpt above, Eleheh emphasized all the restrictions on her that placed her in a position of needing social assistance.

When refugee claimants receive work permits, their Social Insurance Number (SIN) begins with a 9 to indicate their temporary status. Employers recognize this temporary number, and are frequently reluctant to offer permanent or full-time

positions to those with temporary status. Rainbow Refugee members were typically piecing together several part-time jobs, taking the least desirable nightshifts and weekends. Even those who arrive with English language skills and post-secondary education in an employable field struggled to find work that provided a living wage. Spending limited funds on housing meant several participants used food banks in order to meet basic food needs. The felt instability of uncertain status was exacerbated by living with financial instability and in some cases real poverty.

Eleheh

S: How you doing now?

I'm okay...

S: Yeah? I feel like we've probably moved through the roughest part

Totally....

S: Yeah

Yeah. If we had an ECG you would see.

S: Where is it now?

mm...its back down. Back down—here--Now we're in Canada. Thank god. I don't want to go back.

S: No, we won't. Thank you--for working through that part. So, at this point you've got an apartment and you said you were working as a cleaner and waiting for your hearing. Anything else about this time?

I tried to learn English more, and I wanted to go back to university. And the place I was working as a cleaner was so degrading to me because growing up we always had cleaners, and now I had to play this role. And sometimes they would give me flyers to go to the university and give to students. And I would remember *I used to be a student and look at me now.*

It kind of changed me a lot. I used to be more snobby, and I'm not anymore. It just totally brings you back to earth--to not define yourself by your job anymore, or your achievements. It's totally about *can you survive?* and *what's inside?* Because your job and house can be taken away from you at any second. *What do you do now?*

From that period I became more connected with what back in the day I would have called *a different class of people*, but here I was that class because I'm an immigrant. And it was such a shock because I went from having maids and cleaners to being one, and being looked down upon.

In this part of her account I heard Eleheh creating belonging that renegotiates her class identity. Eleheh narrated feeling degraded and looked down upon as a maid initially. She used a slightly mocking tone when she voiced her past-self, a member of the economic elite in her country of origin, looking down on *a different class or people*. Eleheh-narrating clearly took some satisfaction and pride in having survived the shock and hardship, and shed snobbishness. She constructed meaning around valuing herself and others for survival skills and personal qualities, rather than job, achievements, or material possessions.

Most participants took survival jobs when they first arrived. Temporary work permits, limited language skills and discrimination meant that most were doing work that did not use their education or skills. Eleheh and others struggled against losing confidence and a sense of competence in the face of devaluing of their skills.

Membership in a Particular Social Group: Seeking Recognition /Resisting Stigma

Rainbow Refugee members have joked about getting t-shirts made "Proud member of a *very* particular social group." This is a spin on the grounds on which queer and trans migrants apply for asylum in Canada. Since 1993, The Geneva Convention

criteria of *membership in a particular social group* has been interpreted by a Canadian Supreme Court ruling (A.G. v Ward) to include persecuted sexual or gender identities (Arvey, 2003; Lahey, 1999; LaViolette, 2007). A refugee claimant must convince an officer of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) of the genuineness of their lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity, and of their fear of persecution based on that identity. QLGBT claimants invest considerable effort: collecting letters from current or past lovers, friends, or family; recovering medical or police records; assembling photographs; or sifting through newspaper stories. The need to document their LGBT identity for their cases pushed interview participants and rainbow refugee members to “out” themselves as refugee claimants to employers, friends, and casual lovers. This requirement created a tension for participants between taking actions that would help their case, and acting in ways that support belonging. Great care went into deciding with whom and how to share this information in order to ask for letters of support. For the practical reason of wanting to be hired and potentially promoted, some claimants avoided the topic in job interviews and at work. Participants wrestled with fears that having a conversation with an employer about being a refugee claimant would immediately raise questions about their longer-term employability.

QLGBT claimants expressed concern about how asking for letters would impact new friendships and dating relationships. Some struggled with the decision about whether to approach past casual lovers for letters. For most, these decisions raised the uneasiness that asking for a support letter would immediately raise the issue of potentially having been used. The potential for exploitation through threats of exposure

to family or conational communities made some participants extremely cautious about discussing their claim or their status as a refugee claimant with anyone.

The Hearing: An intensified struggle for Recognition, Safety and Belonging

After a Rainbow Refugee meeting, four of us went out to toast Alana's recent successful refugee hearing. Alana recounted her experience for us.

I was so nervous—had terrible nightmares all night. Woke up shaking. I knew I had to look as butch as possible to be sure I looked like a lesbian to the judge. So I pulled back my hair, no make up. Put my baseball cap on sideways, and picked my most classic white shirt. I made sure I sat with my shoulders square and feet planted wide.

As she spoke, Alana's shoulders broadened. She set her jaw and deepened her voice. This petite, long-haired woman, masculinized before my eyes. It was a way of being of Alana's that I had seen variations of in meetings.

In this conversation, Alana reconstructed her memory of her hearing, invoking the presence of the judge, for an audience of her peers. With her words and movements Alana enacts her struggle for recognition and credibility. Alana is engaged in a struggle to make herself recognizable to the judge as a "member of the particular social group" *lesbian*. How well does a North American understanding of same-sex desire as a source of lesbian identity and lesbians as masculine fit with Alana's gender and sexual orientation? What impact does the IRB member's implicit understandings of sexuality and gender have on his ability to recognize and believe Alana?

This interaction gives a sense of how the stories that can be told about being lesbian, or any other QLGBT identity, are highly proscribed by systems like law, psychology, and medicine --as well as a sense of how people struggle and play with these limits. Alana-narrator is remembering Alana-narrated as butch with some amusement, in the process constituting a not-so-butchy lesbian or a lesbian of questionable butchiness. She is engaged in conversation with a group of us who have some understanding of the challenges of navigating people's stereotypes about queer women, and so, positions herself as an insider in this group. Where Alana-narrated is in a position of trying to conform to the social discourses of what it means to be a lesbian by Western standards, Alana-narrating is treating the need for that conformity with some irreverence.

There is a tension in how I narrate this interaction, because I want to be careful not to treat gender or sexuality as a voluntary or volitional process. We are born, live in, and form our subjectivity through gendered and sexual practices always already in place. We cannot transcend these practices. And yet I want to convey that there is effortful interpretation and communication at play. Our efforts are mediated by the power of systems of language, law, medicine and psychology. Yet, our efforts are also creative and at times tactical (Patton & Sanchez-Eppler, 2000).

Eleheh

My lawyer, he wouldn't believe that I'm gay

S: Your own lawyer?

My own lawyer wouldn't believe I'm gay. He kept saying, "You can tell me."

I'm like "*What do you want me to tell you? I'm really gay.*"

Like up until today I can'tI can't believe it.

So it was the lawyer, his intern, and we had a translator, in case. She was [co-national] and she was the worst one. She was so...like I could tell, she looked like how my mom would be so embarrassed when I'm talking about my sexuality in front of people. She kept looking down, because she was ashamed that I...like she wasn't happy that I made it, let's just say. And I was so scared of her. *What if she goes to the (country-of-origin) embassy and tells them?* I was so scared. I was so paranoid.

My lawyer had wanted me to cut my hair short and dress like a man. But I wasn't going to go in there and pretend to be someone I'm not. I went in wearing a skirt and long hair.

The process of preparing for the hearing, and the hearing itself places claimants in a web of relationships in which they must enact and be recognized as QLGBT and as refugee. Prior to the hearing, Eleheh had to work against the disbelief of her own lawyer. Eleheh and I discussed the possibility that he had done this to see how she would respond to disbelief in the hearing. Although had this been the case, he could have reassured her afterwards. She is left with the memory of being treated with suspicion by the person who represented her.

The web of relationships in the hearing room included a co-national translator, and Eleheh attuned to and was impacted by her shame and discomfort. For Eleheh the

translator's gaze and nonverbal response evoked memories of her own mother's shame. The web of relationships extended beyond the hearing room. Eleheh feared exposure and reprisal if the translator broke confidentiality—a reasonable paranoia given her experience with co-national students threatening to report her when she was in India.

Eleheh's account gives a sense of how QLGBT refugee claimants negotiate pressure, subtle and not so subtle, to conform to Western notions of sexual or gender identities. Eleheh rejected her lawyer's advice to conform, and narrated her defiance to me with some pride. Given the timing of Eleheh's hearing, her lawyer's advice to modify her appearance, as painfully stereotyped as it was, might have been prudent. The Federal Court was hearing a case involving a lesbian refugee claimant. Her "professional and attractive" appearance had been used by the board member as a reason that she could return safely and live discreetly. Between 2000-2004, Federal Court decisions pointed out the flaws in this line of reasoning. In 2008 the UNHCR produced a guidance note that advises that SOGI claimants should not be expected to live discreetly. The guidance note also cautions against expecting claimants to conform to Western stereotypes in appearance. Issues of stereotyping and living discreetly were also addressed in training that IRB members received in 2001, 2004, and 2010. These measures have reduced, although not eliminated, the chances that claimants will encounter obvious stereotyping.

The accounts of participants with more recent hearings in Canada, my own observations of hearings, and the work of legal scholars suggest that claimants face more subtle challenges in proving the genuineness of their

identity claim. Examining decisions in sexual orientation and gender identity cases, legal scholars have shown that the assumptions that adjudicators bring about sexual orientation and gender identity reflect popular cultural understandings and Western psychological discourses. Their research, along with the accounts QLGBT asylum seekers in this study, highlight potential pitfalls in the process of telling an identity narrative that is recognized and credible. In the high-stakes context of the hearing, QLGBT refugee claimants' struggle for recognition and credibility is impacted by their own prior experiences of persecution and trauma in interaction with the IRB member's implicit understandings of gender and sexual orientation. Given the challenges of obtaining documentary, even when they exist, much of the weight of evidence rests on the testimony provided by claimants in the hearing room. Claimants' safety and belonging rely on their intelligibility and recognition as gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans people by the adjudicator.

Western psychology has created a view of sexual and gender identity as an intrinsic, essential trait—discovered, expressed, and once realized, stable. The popularized *coming out* narrative reinforces this view, and provides an implicit template for identity formation from non-awareness through self-acceptance. IRB members are drawing on their implicit assumptions about QLGBT sexualities and genders that create expectations of an open claim to a stable identity, and a coherent identity narrative resembling a *coming out* or *gender dysphoria* story. However, these narratives are based largely on White Euro-American experiences, and are underpinned by Western

understanding of an autonomous self. This culturally encapsulated view of queer sexualities and genders is problematic when assumed to apply more universally.

Both psychological research and the coming out discourse have contributed to a conflation of verbal self-disclosure and open expression of an identity with self-acceptance and stability of an identity. This conflation, and the emphasis it places on verbal disclosure has been critiqued by queer studies and psychology scholars, who have highlighted ways that the coming out discourse overlooks tacit, indirect and nonverbal means of enacting queer sexualities and genders. Psychological research with diverse LGB populations has demonstrated that acceptance of an identity is not linked with verbal disclosure or openness.

Mzalendo

It is not an issue that I discuss with anyone...even here.

S: I hear lots of ways it just does not feel safe.

So....I don't know. I don't go to bars. I understand there are bars for homosexuals. I don't go. That's one of the issues that came up in my hearing. She asked "*Have you done anything to show that you've come out as a homosexual in Vancouver?*"

I said, "*No, I don't dare. I don't belong to strictly homosexuals. I'm a member of a Church, and without it I'd be nowhere.*"

I don't know, that's how I explained it and I think she got it.

Claimants are being asked to give a narrative account of a sexuality or gender identity that they have had limited experience articulating. The impacts of disavowing, denying, or submerging sexualities or genders do not disappear once in Canada. QLGBT refugee claimants may have extremely limited experience putting their understanding of

their sexuality or gender into language. Mzlendo was not connected with Rainbow Refugee during his application, and I met him for the first time at our interview. He informed me that, aside from his psychologist, his lawyer, and the officer at his hearing, I was the only person in Canada with whom he had ever discussed his sexuality. In comparison to interview participants with whom I had a prior relationship through Rainbow Refugee, Mzlendo's narrative of his sexuality was sparse. He frequently used phrasing that distanced himself from a sexual identity claim.

QLGBT refugee claimants are being asked to make a positive claim to an identity that they may inhabit only uneasily. Arrival in Canada does not eliminate the impacts of discourses of QLGBT sexualities or genders as pathological, deviant, or immoral. It is not unusual QLGBT refugee claimants to refer to their sexuality as "a problem," or to use phrases (being like that, in my situation) and intonation that suggest discomfort with identity terms like gay, lesbian, or trans. In hearings vague, evasive, or even pejorative language potentially hurt the credibility of claimants. Yet, these aspects of identity accounts are better understood as impacts of erasure and problematizing discourses on claimants' ability to speak of their sexuality or gender.

In our interview and in his hearing, Mzlendo may also have been challenged to articulate a bisexual identity in contexts where both homonormative and heteronormative expectations are at work. In the narrative of his Personal Information Form Mzlendo was very clear that although he identifies as bisexual, he was perceived as homosexual and "treated as such" in his country of origin. In contrast, the language he voiced in his hearing account "*I don't belong to strictly homosexuals*" could sound

evasive or unclear. Bisexual claimants face the challenge of narrating their experiences in a manner that satisfies expectations of stability and coherence of sexual orientation identity. Available research suggests that the acceptance rate for bisexual claimants (25%) is far lower, than for lesbian (48%) or gay claimants (46%), or claimants generally (Rehaag, 2007). Legal scholars attribute this to the emphasis placed on immutability of sexual orientation identity in Canadian refugee jurisprudence.

As reflected in Mzlando's account, the questions of adjudicators often reflect an expectation that claimants will affiliate with and come out in local queer communities. This expectation reflects implicit assumptions in the *coming out* narrative that same-sex sexualities or gender variance become the basis of both identity and community. When treated as a universal in hearings, queer refugees can seem not to measure up. In Mzalendo's case the adjudicator understood that appearing in queer venues or participating in community events would jeopardize his belonging in the church he relies on for community. Mzalendo was able to present compelling documentation of a homophobic assault in his country of origin. He had a letter from his psychologist with whom he had discussed his sexual orientation long before making a refugee claim, and evidence of his church affiliation. The weight of this evidence, and Mzlando's testimony was clearly persuasive. However, the cultural specificity of the *coming out* narrative and the constraints against participation in local QLGBT communities have not always been recognized by adjudicators. In a recent case, a gay Iranian man's identity claim was found implausible. The adjudicator cited this man's lack of awareness of the meaning of

the rainbow flag, and lack of participation in the Pride parade his first year in Canada as evidence against the genuineness of his claim to a gay identity (Barsotti, May 2010)

The accounts of participants show that the emotions of past persecution as well as social and material contexts of queer refugees' lives can work against participation in QLGBT communities. Participating in a local queer community may or may not be a draw or priority for QLGBT refugees. Participants narrated complex dis/connections with local visible, mainstream QLGBT communities in Canada. A sense of alignment or identification with local QLGBT communities was not present for most, particularly when they first arrived. Many participants found the everyday tasks of living in a new country, culture, and language left little energy for locating and participating in queer social spaces. Some participants spoke of not knowing what to look for, experiencing queer communities as unwelcoming because of racism, or isolating due to lack of understanding of refugee experiences. Some narrated feeling alienated or exoticized by the pick-up atmosphere of clubs. Struggling financially, working several part-time jobs, and living on the outskirts of the city also constrained queer refugees' participation in local QLGBT events and communities. As Mzlendo's account showed, arrival in Canada is not always enough to create the safety needed to openly participate in local queer community events. The desire to maintain relationships with local co-national or faith groups created fears around participating in local queer community events. Given the complexity of identifying with, locating, connecting and participating in local queer communities, holding an unqualified expectation of community participation as a basis for evaluating the credibility of an QLGBT identity claim is problematic.

Although it is the claimant's membership in a persecuted social group that is the basis for the claim, the sexual behaviour of claimants often becomes a key point of evidence in hearings based on sexual orientation. This requirement created a great deal of anxiety prior to and during hearings for participants. Preparing for hearings requires claimants to mentally revisit sexual experiences that were often steeped in intense feelings of shame and fear of being discovered. Prior to hearings participants struggled with the awkwardness of asking past or current lovers for letters or to serve as witnesses. From their hearing experiences, participants described a wide range of approaches to the questioning around sexual behavior. Infrequent, but most distressing were pointed questions about sexual experiences, names and contact information of past lovers, or numbers of partners. More often, participants were asked to describe their relationships in their own terms. I have observed IRB members working to convey respect and sensitivity around questioning on sexual relationships.

The hearing process often implicitly fuses an LGB sexual identity with sexual behavior, and may place undue weight on the sexual behavior of claimants. This sexualization of QLGBT identities is attributable in part to the impact of heterosexist discourses of deviance. Claimants with limited sexual experience are at a disadvantage, and the emphasis placed on sexual relationships in hearings has worked against queer claimants. Alvaro Orozco, a young man from Nicaragua lost his refugee claim in 2007. The adjudicator in this case did not find his claim to be a gay man credible, in part because he had not taken the opportunity to have sexual relationships while living

undocumented in the United States. Surfacing and critiquing these assumptions is important to ensuring fair hearing process for claimants.

All queer claimants are working with and against culturally proscribed identity narratives in their hearings. For participants in this study who filed claims based on sexual orientation, the struggle entailed making the hidden or invisible, visible to adjudicators. Those who claimed based on gender identity, faced a slightly different struggle. For the two transwomen in this study, the challenge at the hearing was to make the inconsistencies in gender accounts coherent to the conventionally gendered.

Miriam

And three months later, I got the letter from the Canadian Embassy that they want me for an interview. I went there and had another interview with a worker and I had a translator And stillhe repeated the same question as the other officer, "I can't believe it. How you could..." {checks in with interpretor}

Interpretor: fool f-o-o-l

"How could you fool your family? You say you had problems outside, but when you are at your place your family didn't know you were transsexual?"

I said, *my family had been living with me for years and years and years* so for exampleCan I explain this part in [first language]

S: Absolutely

{discussion back and forth with interpretor}

Int: If a child stutters in a household initially he or she might not be understood, but after awhile, it's a no brainer, they understand and they don't think that their child stutters. But when they go out in public then every time she or he opens their mouth people will point out ...

M: For example my family had seen me for years how I walk, how I talk, but when I go somewhere to apply for a job and I say, "Salam."

They say, "Why does he talk like a woman?" It was very noticeable.

Claimants struggled against the limits of language to help decision makers imagine the daily realities of living transgendered. Miriam's move into the metaphorical is an example of this struggle. Here she opted to have our interpreter speak in English for her—she did this only twice in our almost 3 hours of interviewing. I remember mentally wincing at the parallel she drew between gender identity and what I think of as a speech impediment. Yet, the metaphor aptly shows how intelligibility is co-created in relationships; how movement between familiar and unfamiliar relational contexts brings new struggles for intelligibility; and how stigma interferes with the relational connections that could create intelligibility. I've since learned that many speech pathologists now regard stuttering as a variation in speech that only becomes problematic when people ridicule or refuse to listen to someone who stutters. Miriam's metaphor was apt and illustrative on many levels---and was apparently persuasive for her decision maker.

Stephanie

The thing is the hearing. It was really rough because the attitude of the person was...was different. This person was not familiar with transexualism. I could tell. The way this panel member asked questions in ways that were so direct. He was very rude.

S: Are you comfortable giving some examples?

He asked me about my parents, and he asked me "When you were in [country of origin] what did you do?"

"I worked with my father. He had a mechanics shop." I told him.

And he said "Ok, when you were a man, and you were working as a man."

And he asked, "When you were in [country of origin] were you looking for a job? Are you educated?"

He was attacking me very directly on this point. He tried to imply that I came to Canada just to have the surgery. He was talking very fast, and it was hard. I asked for a translator even though I speak English.

S: Yes, it's the safe thing to do.

It's the safe thing to do--And he wasn't that patient with the translator He was like ...{Stephanie enacts the officer drumming his fingers on the desk impatiently}. And when my lawyer was talking he was looking at the clock and saying things like "yeah, but I don't agree with you."

So there was a time when I got totally nervous, and I had trouble answering, and then I heard what the interpreter said, and I said "Ouch did I say that?"

And she said, "Yes."

"Ouch! No! I didn't mean that!"

And he said, "It's too late. I already heard it."

And I looked at my lawyer, "I didn't mean that."

And the member said, "What's going on with you—why do you have to think about what you want to say?"

Another friend of mine who was transsexual and was already accepted, she was very clear that she was accepted because the board member had been to [country of origin] and was already familiar with the situation in [country of origin].

S: For your friend, having a board member who understood the on the ground experience in [country of origin] made a big difference, because I can see how, on paper, [country of origin] looks pretty good...

There was a point where I was totally upset with this guy. He said, "How can you say to me that your life is in risk in [country of origin], when I

have here some evidence that says that the laws are changing, and you have better ways to be protected.”

At that point, I was like, “*I don’t want to seem rude, but have you ever been in [country of origin]?*”

He said *No*.

Would you be brave enough to go to [country of origin] dressed in a skirt? Would you be able to do that?

S: Good for you. What did he say?

He reserved his answer. He didn’t say anything.

S: I hear how the whole experience really rattled you.

I finished feeling like I had been to battle. I felt like I was under attack, rather than under....than being listened to. At the beginning he was very nice....very nice, and I was *yeah I’m feeling comfortable*. But then as time passed he started getting rude.

S: I don’t know if this is comforting to you or not, but sometimes when I’ve sat in on hearings, sometimes I’ve seen board members ask questions from that really attacking place, and I’m sitting in the hearing thinking *Oh no, this is not going well at all*. And then, it ends up being a positive decision, and when the board member reads their decision they use the things that the claimant said in answer to these really tough questions as points to rebut the arguments against giving a person status. Because when they write their decision they have to do that.

mmmm....I hope you’re right. At the beginning, he was like “*There is no problem with the identity of this person. It’s clear this person is transsexual.*”

He didn’t have any doubts about me being transsexual. I mean right in his hands, he had the affidavit that I had passed through the surgery. He didn’t have any problem with that, so he had to go for something else.

Stephanie had felt respected during her initial interactions with immigration officials, and raised the hearing as a sharp contrast to this respect. Her account shows

how the questioning of the board member failed to understand or recognize the history of Stephanie's trans identity. As she voiced her memory of the board member's emphatic repetition of *as a man*, her anger at the offence was apparent. She had never lived straightforwardly *as a man*. The phrase distorted her account of herself and communicated disregard for her as a trans woman. In our interview, Stephanie located the problem firmly with the board member's lack of understanding of trans genders. Where Stephanie-narrated felt increasingly nervous, desperate and under attack, Stephanie-narrating was assured and clear that the problem lay with the board member. In reenacting her hearing Stephanie voiced confronting the board member--pointing out his lack of familiarity with the situation in her country of origin for trans women, and simultaneously trying to evoke an empathic response. Could he imaginally experience, even momentarily, the threat entailed in transgressing gender? With this challenge Stephanie was working against the perceptual and imaginal limits created by discourses of binary gender to help the adjudicator comprehend the daily realities of living transgendered. Her challenge asked him to acknowledge the risk entailed in transgressing gender, and imagine beyond intersectionally constituted gaps in knowledge. As a conventionally gendered man, raised in Canada could he appreciate the difference between written law and on-the-ground experience for a trans woman in her country.

Questions of identity are usually addressed first in refugee hearings. For Stephanie, the documentation she provided from doctors and psychologists clearly left no need, or room, to question her identity. Stephanie connected with a support group

for transgender people during her waiting period, and it was through this program that she met trans others, and began exploring surgical options for continuing her transition. Working her way through the assessment process for these procedures provided evidence corroborating her trans identity that the board member readily recognized and accepted. In this way, Stephanie had done the work of gaining recognition prior to her hearing.

He didn't have any problem with that, so he had to go for something else.

Stephanie-narrating understood how the certainty of her identity shaped questioning during the hearing. Without questions of identity as a reason for exclusion, the board member raised questions of credibility and authenticity as a refugee. Her account of the hearing suggests that a trans-specific version of the refugee-as-burden or bogus-refugee-as-economic-migrant discourse may have been at work. Stephanie worked against being positioned as such in the hearing, and in our interview. She repeatedly emphasized that she started working, paying taxes and paying her own Medical Service Plan payments as soon as she was able.

Depending on when they joined the IRB members may have received considerable or very little training on sexual orientation or gender identity based claims (LaViolette, 2007). The work of legal scholars examining decisions in sexual orientation and gender identity cases suggests that the assumptions that IRB members bring about sexual orientation and gender identity reflect popular cultural understandings and Western psychological discourses (Berg & Millbank, 2009; Rehaag, 2008) Their research, along with the accounts QLGBT asylum seekers in this study, highlight

potential pitfalls in the process of telling an identity narrative that is recognized and credible to IRB members.

Recounting Trauma

Documenting and providing testimony about sexual or gender identities formed under conditions of persecution requires claimants to revisit traumatic events steeped in shame. Pervasive homophobia and transphobia exacerbate the potential for sexual abuse, coercion, and exploitation. Most participants had experienced threatened or actual sexual violence in their country of origin. Living with pervasive threat of sexual violence if they were recognized was recounted by Adil and Jamil. Coersion in sexual relationships in their country of origin was recounted by several of the men. Sexual violence or coercion during transit or in Canada prior to their application was recounted by Eleheh, Miriam, Alana, Adil, Jamil and Devon.

Psychological research on trauma, depression and episodic memory—the form of memory principally drawn on while relaying past experiences --has demonstrated clear effects of depression and heightened emotional arousal on memory encoding, and retrieval (Cleveland, 2008; Herlihy and Turner, 2007a, 2007b, Van der Kolk, 1998). Heightened emotional arousal during a fear response impacts memory encoding such that sensory elements are emphasized, and the narrative flow is often lost (Herlihy and Turner, 2007b). Trauma narratives produced in therapy are often fragmented until therapeutic work enables survivors to reconstruct an integrated memory. Emotional distancing and numbing is a common coping response—producing a very flat affect

while recounting traumatic incidents. On-going depressed mood results in vague, overly general personal narratives (Wessel, Meeren et al. 2001).

During the course of this research I have been amazed by the range of experiences of the hearing among interview participants and Rainbow Refugee members. Among interview participants, three had hearings of less than 30 minutes. They expressed surprised relief at the respect and understanding with which they were treated. Stephanie and Devon had the longest, and most conflictual hearing experiences—both lasted almost five hours. Even after five hours, Stephanie did not receive a decision before she left. Hearings in which Minister's representatives are present tend to be longer, and tend to move into a more adversarial style of questioning. Under the current policy of reverse order questioning, claimants are cross-examined first by the Minister's representative, then the board member, and last, their own counsel. This process requires claimants to face the most challenging cross-examination first.

Refugee board members may or may not have awareness and sensitivity to the subtler impacts of mental state on a claimant's capability to produce a coherent narrative (Cleveland, 2008). Rousseau, Crepeau and colleagues' (2002) analysis of transcripts suggest that defensive responses to trauma narratives by adjudicators can have counterproductive effects on hearings. Guidelines for special procedures for claimants who are vulnerable due to trauma are in place. When used these have the potential to reduce the likelihood of retraumatizing claimants. I have witnessed a wide

range of approaches to eliciting and responding to the trauma narratives of claimants: some deeply sensitive, some coolly bureaucratic, and some brusque and suspicious.

Peer and Group Support

For those claimants that accessed Rainbow Refugee, the group became an important source of practical and emotional support. The group meetings, and web of relationships created in the group, helped claimants learn ways to navigate the challenges of the refugee system and settling. Group meetings create a space in which each claimant can come to see their individual experiences as part of a larger collective struggle. At one meeting a man from a Middle Eastern country explained that he was afraid to tell the border official that he was gay. "I am shy." His explanation created an opportunity. The facilitator began with a gently humorous "Are you sure you mean shy? In this group you are not a shy person at all. But I understand what you mean about feeling afraid to say you are gay." This drew out a discussion about words for the feelings that arise when we talk about being queer or trans. In straightforward language this facilitator guided people to talk about where those feelings come from. The dialogue invited people to explore ways that persecution and oppression create shame and fear that silences.

People's relief in meeting others going through the application process was palpable. The group becomes a liminal community of belonging, at a time when they are dealing with exclusions and potential future rejections. People feel comfort in

having a regular place where they are able to be open, and not stigmatized as QLGBT and refugee.

Participation in the group counters some of the isolation claimants' experience. I remember a conversation about crying at hearings as a great example of the power of the group to create greater acceptance of the range of emotions people experience during the application process. A new member asked, "Is it alright to cry during the hearing?" Someone had told her that it was better not to show emotion at the hearing. The discussion that followed was lively. A man who had been granted Convention Refugee status the year before said he felt it was important to show your emotions during the hearing. "How else is the judge going to know you are afraid?" Several others reassured her that they had cried in their hearings. Facilitators and members shared practical advice for handling intense emotions in the hearing room: Bring a cup of water; Its okay to ask for a minute to collect yourself; Take a deep breath before you answer each question; Every hearing room has a big box of tissue on the table where the claimant sits. This last fact created lots of laughter.

Experienced group members play an important role in mentoring and motivating newer members in the process of becoming effective self-advocates. Devon has continued coming to meetings. I have seen him very enthusiastically coach others. "This is your application. This is your life. It is up to you to do the work and be prepared. We can help you, but it is up to you do the work. Yes, it is humiliating asking for letters. Put your shame aside. Ask. This is about protecting your life" After their hearings, members share their success stories, inspiring hope, and providing

practical strategies for preparing evidence. In this way the group creates a space in which experienced members are valued for their expertise. Their mentorship is invaluable in easing sometimes paralyzing anxiety and guiding applicants through a bewildering application process.

Through dealing with members' challenges Rainbow Refugee members have developed a collective coping strategy of treating the requirement to prove an LGBTQ identity with *ir/reverence*— heartfelt advice mixed with healthy doses of humour. Devon's advice to put shame aside and ask for letters is an example of the heartfelt. Bawdy jokes along the lines of "So sir, let me show you just how gay I am!" are the irreverent. Usually the experienced members, like Devon and Jamil, move the group into the irreverent, and the others are quick to play along. The heartfelt includes listening, one-on-one or in small clusters, to members tell their story until they can say what they need to say out loud.

Group facilitators played a role in tailoring the mentorship from experienced members to the particular situation of each new claimant and serving as cultural intermediaries. I observed facilitators encouraging experienced members to share their experience, and then opening a discussion about how the new member may have a different experience because of the social or legal context of their country of origin, or relative in/visibility and privilege in their country of origin. At one meeting one of the facilitators asked questions that helped a butch woman who is from a racialized minority in her own country talk about how she was targeted because of her appearance. The facilitator stressed the importance of helping the IRB member

understand how visibly stigmatized she would be in her own country as a racialized, masculine woman.

The group involves participants in dialogues about intercultural communication—such as the meaning and importance of eye contact. At times the group role-played examples of working with an interpreter to help claimants gain experience moving between interpreter and IRB member as audience.

There is a tension for group facilitators and the group as a whole in working within a system that is inconsistent, unpredictable, and sometimes unjust. This tension surfaces in the questions people bring to the group. One of the challenges facilitators and experienced members negotiate is meeting people's need for information without overwhelming them with details and anxiety. Facilitators worked to providing sufficient information to give members a sense of what to expect. At times, answering questions about options if a claim is rejected felt counterproductive. When members spiraled into a series of "what if" questions months before their hearing, I or one of the other facilitators would narrow the discussion *I think we are getting ahead of ourselves. For now, let's focus on your next step.* At each gathering group members are dealing with the possibility of rejection while holding onto hope.

Recognition Conferred

Eleheh

I was prepared for days of trial ...or I don't know. It was just 20-30 minutes.

They said "Welcome to Canada." One of them asked me what I wanted to do.

I said I wanted to go back to university.

They wished me luck. It was amazing....it was amazing...

S: mmm after everything you had endured. Do you remember what it was like hearing those words?

Oh yeahI was really happy

S: Huge.....hmmmm

These are happy tears.

S: mhmm, tears of joy. Good to feel them.

Sarah

We had to wait after the intermission, then she came back and then even my lawyer didn't know, but he had a good feeling about it.

She said "Yes I grant you....."

Everybody clapped, and I cried.

S: I bet. Oh yeah after such a long, long, time.

Yes, twenty some years..... since 1987...long long road...adventurous long road

S: So yes...tears make sense

I should write a book

S: A book, okay?

No {laughing}

S: If you were going to do that...

The States would come after me {laughing}

S: They can't get you now. If you were going to do that, what do you think you might title it?

My lifeMy life as a closeted gay woman for twenty some years. The life of a closeted gay woman--how it feels...the things that people go through ...one of the lucky ones.

S: I hear yes, one of the lucky ones, but you used the word adventurous... you took some risks.

Some risks worth taking and some risks I didn't want to take. And what that feels like...horrible. It's so muffled...you can't say a thing

"Is that your friend?"

And I say, "yes"

"Why are you with her so often?"

Don't talk about sex don't talk about anything closer than friends

In the same moment that Sarah was remembering the relief and joy of gaining recognition as a Convention Refugee, she connected with memories of living with the insecurity of living without status in the US, and working to cover her sexuality. It has been almost four years since she gained status, and voices of felt security and felt insecurity, and the muffled voice of a self-as-closeted-gay-woman are all very present in our interaction. Recognition conferred the right to stay, to dig into the settling in process without being held back by the fear of being forced to leave, yet, unsettled selves remained prominent voices in the post-decision accounts of QLGBT refugees.

Rebuilding Lives

QLGBT migrants negotiated safety and belonging as they engaged in the daily work of rebuilding lives: obtaining housing, work or income, healthcare. This work

occurs initially in parallel with the application process for inland asylum seekers. During this time claimants negotiated the contradictory requirements of working to belong while remaining temporary. Post determination, with status as a Convention Refugee, and eventually permanent resident, negotiating safety and belonging becomes a less contradictory project, with a longer-term horizon. Yet, participants' accounts show that they continue a dialogical negotiation of feeling safe and unsafe, belonging and unbelonging.

Sarah

Even though it was still stressful and I had to do the whole process, it was good. I was issued a work permit as my first legal things and my SIN. and you're accepted to the country so...I'm happy about that.

S: You remember getting those documents and feeling ahhh some relief?

That I don't have to do it backdoor. Since I got a SIN--- its all legal. I don't have to be afraid if they check on me the next day. So it's good. I was working at [retail outlet]. I was legal and happy. In the States when they asked me about the past, or how I came to the States I had to lie because you're afraid. You don't want to give it away.

But here "I'm a refugee." I tell them (co-workers).

"How come you are a refugee? There's no war."

"There are a lot of other reasons to claim refugee. You wouldn't understand."

S: That's how you handled it?

Even now, I work with a lot of immigrants Indian Punjabi, Russian, all kinds of immigrants, and there is still some teasing there, but I try and ignore it. I couldn't be bothered, because I'm legal---I don't care. "I can report you for harassment."

S: That's true...

Back in US I can't do that, right? They can report me. I can't report them. Here, "Yeah....I can report you—so shut up."

S: And I hear a sense of...

I'm proud! I don't care. *I'm a refugee!* And with some people I say *I'm gay*--with friends. It's different at work, its gossip, gossip, gossip, busy bodies. I don't have to tell them. But with others, if they ask, I tell them. It's just a normal thing.

I don't advertise. There are still closed-minded people. At work they make jokes about gay people. They say, "Good morning, Sir."

They call me *sir*. I just laugh about it. They're not close friends anyway.

Sarah contrasted the insecurity that pervaded interactions in the States, where she lived without status for over fifteen years, with the relief and security of having permanent legal status as a Convention Refugee in Canada. As she enacted composite conversations with imaginal co-workers her words "*I tell them. I don't care*" reflected the stigmatizing potential of them seeing her as a refugee. With the security of permanent legal status, she voices pride that overrides that potential stigma. Because she comes from a country that is not typically "refugee producing" her open claim to being a refugee raises further questions. She deflects and evades these questions in a workplace where she experiences "teasing" gender harassment. Sarah describes her approach to appearance as "I want to look nice, a little butch, not butch butch" and being called sir is uncomfortable for her. She contrasts her approach at work where she deflects attention away from herself, with her straightforward approach with friends. These interactions give a sense of the complex negotiation of safety and belonging Sarah engages in as part of her everyday interactions, as well as the repertoire of relational practices she uses in these negotiations.

Im/possible Past Present Future Selves

Jamil

If I was still in [my country].
 If I were not in Canada.
 I don't know if I would be alive today.
 If I wasn't here.
 I don't know what state I would be in.

Honestly, If homosexuality was accepted in [country of origin]. If I could live the way I wanted to in [country of origin], I would now make a statement, that I would have never made a Refugee claim in Canada, and I'm saying this because of some of the experiences I've had here.

Jamil's narrative held both feared and longed for selves in his country of origin.

Participants' accounts held hypothetical past selves that had been left behind, and longed for selves living an imagined, but not yet possible, future in their country of origin.

Eleheh

...and its hard. First you're in school and then you think, *What's next?* In the end I'm just trying to keep myself so occupied so I won't think about being an immigrant. I don't like not having anybody, but at the same time, I can't go back home because my own family doesn't understand. They think you can just choose to be with a man. I mean how convenient would that be.

After all the things I've been through, and a normal person would say "*yeah looks like you're successful. You have goals in life, good career, good pace to live....*"

But for my parents it's "Come back home." If it's not with a guy and you're not getting married it doesn't mean anything.

"I'm not a copy of you. Don't try and make me something I'm not. Look at your marriage. Would you call it successful? Are you happy?"

Society makes you go through these stages. They make you play a role. I don't want to play a role, or live for someone else.

But then life here becomes so hard that I'm like, *I went through all of that, and survived all of that, and because of all of that hardship, made this country such a perfect haven, that when I got to it, I was a little disappointed.*

Because you think you're going to...like my parents, were always really comfortable, and then all of a sudden I had to take care of myself, and my sister too-- its really hard. And try to go back to school. It's just really hard. *All of that for what?*

S: Your disappointment was very strong...

I think that's why I try to like study science. I try to distract myself and think about something greater is out there—that you can discover. It's not such a waste of effort to survive. At least you can make a contribution to humanity through science. If you feel like you can't live for yourself, at least live for a cause--so that keeps me going.

S: And it sounds like science in particular. Can you tell me what it is about science?

I think evolution of humanity is like...look at us. Like from before the average age of a woman or of a human was 32 or 34, now we can live up to 100. And you have all this medicine and technology --Its not really based on a religion. Your comfort of your everyday life is based on technology and things that you use everyday. Technology kind of enables us to have another channel, to have a different world. It's such an infinite multiverse, and we're so consumed with man-made fear and hate and segregations

S: So I hear that science is a way to get away from that for you in some ways.

And the people I hang out with they kind of share that with me. And I feel like I belong. Like most of my friends are 60-year-old guys--physicists or

computer scientists or researchers at work. So I don't know. It makes me happy.

Several participants, like Eleheh, narrated creating an idealized notion of life in Canada, and then experiencing profound disappointment and even disorientation when the struggles of settlement proved harsh. Eight years after arriving the disappointment was still present for Eleheh, and this voice came into contact with her voiced hope and passion in her belief in science.

Participant renegotiated meaning in their lives through their careers, faiths, and other projects that fulfilled their values. In the process, they often created connections and belongings in sometimes in unexpected ways. Eleheh created meaning through her hope in science, and connection with colleagues. Jamil voiced passion for working with marginalized youth. Mzalendo is in the process of building a career using the law to create greater economic justice. Devon created a faith-based group for QLGBT people and allies. The group has become a small, QLGBT positive group to practice his faith. Through his community work he is creating meaning for himself, and important connections among people in his communities.

Queer migrants who settled with the support of Rainbow Refugee have created community events, spaces and groups in which they can engage in cultural or faith practices with other QLGBT people: Latin drag and dancing nights at queer clubs, gay cricket teams, social/support groups for practicing their faith. Several participants joined queer social/support groups for queers of colour: Salaam for queer Muslims and friends or Trikone for queer South Asians. In doing so, they created connections for other refugee claimants to follow.

Living With/Working Through Traumatic Memories

Eleheh

I can't tell you how much my mind races back and forth from different experiences I have. Sometimes I just see myself hanging...and I can't believe. And these people are just so consumed with things. And then I get so mad sometimes. I get angry *why did all this have to happen to me* and I can't even express my anger.

...like sometimes I'm at work, and suddenly I remember something. I thought I have no idea of it happening...or this and that. And I really don't know how to deal with it...

S: It floods you really fast?

Yeah it really just overwhelms me and I don't talk about it. I don't talk to anybody because I don't trust anyone. Like at work I have benefits, but I just can't go because my name and I'm just so paranoid...Like I'll lose my job for sure.

S: No, you won't.

But they would put some other name on it. They would start treating me different.... I'm going to have a smoke.

S: Have a smoke, and when the interview is done, I'm going to give you some ideas of places to go where there wouldn't be records linked to your health insurance number or your workplace.

I just can't. I get so nervous when I think about it. It just reminds me of when I was in jail and they were torturing me, and they play good cop bad cop and it fucks you up really bad....I don't know.... My head is spinning

S: Ok let's just pause...Can you name some things you see in the room

It's just that I haven't talked about this.

S: Yes... so can you name some of the things you see in the room?

He he he {Eleheh laughs and shrugs off the request}

S: No, I'm serious....Can you humour me?

We have the same technique in computer science. We distract the system with other traffic.

S: mmm. This is a little different than distraction. It's bringing you into the present.

mmm like right now I'm looking at you and your back is kind of faded into the background.

S: Yeah right now you're kind of flooded with memories, and this isn't about distraction from the memory, it's about bringing you mentally and physically into the same place in the present. So if you can tell me a few things you see in the room. Humour me....

Yes...Your mac lap top

S: Tell me about it.

13 inches.756 processor. 2 gig ram

S: You're good.

I'm guessing...

S:...no you're bang on.

As Eleheh recounted the impacts of being in jail, I saw Eleheh's eyes glaze and become unfocused. I was reassured that she was able, and willing, to let me know that she was feeling dizzy, and moved into a resourcing technique that can be helpful for grounding. Eleheh is used to grounding herself and brought herself back into the present relatively quickly. I found it interesting that a woman who turns to science and technology to create meaning and hope, used a computer to bring herself back from the edges of dissociation.

Eleheh survived imprisonment and torture in her home country. As an international student in India she lived through repeated violent homophobic assaults. On her way to Canada, she endured the violation of being sold into the sex trade by agents. In Canada, she survived homelessness for a month, and struggled as working poor for years. Eight years of living in Canada have given her enough safety to return to university, complete a degree, fall in love, marry, divorce and start dating again, establish and excel in a demanding career, and explore art and music again. She does survival and more, daily.

Our interview shows the enormous effort and energy living with the impacts of trauma requires. For Eleheh, feeling like a "*crazy person*" has become another potential stigma—one that constrains her from seeking additional help. For now, she is doing the work of containing memories, and taking care of the charged emotions they evoke on her own. After our interview she got out her guitar, made a stiff drink, and played. She channels her feelings into both music and painting. She was also willing to reach out by email for support in the weeks after the interview.

Eleheh's account raises the importance of enhancing access to trauma counselling services as part of settlement services. At present much of the psychotherapy available to refugees who have survived torture or other traumas is provided by underfunded not-for-profit agencies. In Vancouver, the health clinic that serves refugees has one psychologist on staff who has a specific mandate to offer trauma treatment. She described feeling like the proverbial drop in the bucket.

Complex Un/Belongings

Mzalendo

S: I can hear lots of ways it would not feel safe for you to go to a bar and then go to your Church

That is my dilemma actually. How to bridge the gap between my spirituality and the physical desires.

S: mmmm

It's unbridgeable....it's a tough bridge to cross.

S: I hear a subtle but important difference there. The first thing you said was it's unbridgeable. The second thing you said is it's a tough bridge to cross...

...Yeah...I think the latter is more correct.

S: mm. Do you have a sense...If you were going to take a step or two on that bridge, what would that step be?

Well...first of all it's a confusing state to be in...because ...again, from a religious point of view you cannot have a sexual relationship with someone you are not married to. And since you cannot, from my perspective, marry someone of your own sex, then it is a very tough situation to be in. So the only thing you can do is go against your own consciousness, go against your own spirituality, and risk approaching a man. I mean *How do you even start? How do you even start?...*so it is easier to talk to a woman, than to talk to a man.

I know there are sexual sites out there. But that is not something I can do. Personally.

S: Mmm your religious beliefs tell you ...

No...absolutely

S: And I hear that your religious beliefs and your community are incredibly important to you, so that does make it a tough bridge to cross. I'm wondering about....you said you're aware of bars, and you're aware of online sites. Are there other ways of meeting people that you're aware of, but maybe haven't tried yet?

In [East Africa], there's a website for [East Africans] within [Africa], and I understand that there are bars in [East Africa] for that purpose now...but uhhh...I'm not in [East Africa]. The only person I know with the same or full blown sexual orientation who goes to bars is a Kenyan Somali. Do you know what I mean by a Kenyan Somali?

S: No, maybe you better explain that.

There are Somali people-- some live in Somalia, some live in Kenya. So we call them Kenyan Somali.

S: So they are Kenyan nationals, and culturally they are Somali?

Everything about them is Somali. Their language. They are 99% Muslim like their brothers in Somali. Same clan...you need to understand their culture. When the British came, they arbitrarily set the borders. You find an uncle who is a Kenyan and an Auntie who is Somali....basically they are the same people.

So this particular person I know is a Kenyan Somali. I got his contacts from the [African] website I told you about. He's in [Canadian City]

So I emailed him one day and his response...I could deduce from his response that he is scared and skeptical. He wanted to be sure first that I wanted to talk to him as a friend and not to disclose who he is.

Being a Muslim is a no go zone, being a Somali makes it even harder, and then being a Kenyan confuses it even more.

So, he just replied very tersely "Who are you?"

I replied back....He kept quiet. My deduction was *he's scared*. He doesn't know. Especially when he discovered I am in Canada. He's not sure whether I'm not a spy, so to speak, out to expose him and reveal him in his community. So, it is THAT TOUGH.

S: So your efforts to reach out and connect with one other person, all that suspicion and fear got in the way...

Yeah...It's that repressive...So that is the cultural background against which you should be speaking to. Especially for anybody from Africa, the cultural background is critically important.

Exploring the possibilities of bridging the distance between his religious beliefs and his sexuality, Mzalendo voiced the tension between living his religious values, and living into his desires. Long silences elapsed as he reflected on the possibilities of bridging these. His desire to connect had taken him to an online space for QLGBT Africans, but fears of exposure in the physical world worked against the two men meeting. Mzalendo contextualizes his struggle in the dynamics of diasporic communities and the on-going impacts of colonialism.

Mzalendo raised these examples in response to my queries about the subtle difference between an impossible and a tough bridge to cross. Stopping with the impossible would have left us with one kind of story. This story would have overlooked the creative efforts Mzalendo had made to connect, and left a simple story of living in on-going state of exile from his sexuality. All of the participants had made efforts to connect with and participate in networks where their sexualities and their cultures or faiths would be recognized and reciprocated. Adil connected with Salaam, a national group for Queer Muslims and friends that holds events for all of the major Muslim holy days, holds social events, and participates in a larger North American network of Queer Muslim organizations. Jamil and Devon connected with a Vancouver social/support group for Queer South Asians. Eleheh participates in political organizing among her co-national community and has connected with a significant queer network within this group. Miriam has maintained connections with the other transwomen she met in transit.

Faith and cultural practices were sources of comfort for many of the participants as they waited for their hearings, and continue to be part of their belonging practices. Eleheh reads classical and contemporary poetry from her country of origin and incorporates verses into her paintings. Jamil and Devon both maintained small prayer spaces with incense, flowers and pictures of hindu dieties in their apartments. Adil spent the day before his appearance at the refugee board at a local mosque. Alana became active in a local QLGBT-affirming church. Church members attended her hearing, and she has walked with them in Pride parades.

Queer Un/Belongings

Jamil

This is what was going through my mind. I'm not that gay boy who is living in the dark who is living in the closet. I want to come out. And I want to come out openly and freely, so I'm networking with these people. I'm trying to understand and see what gay people are like, because to me being gay was always bad--like *I am bad, and I am dirty. I am sinful.*

And it was like *wow-- These people are so happy to be who they are.* It was different.

I think I was just observing gay people in the first couple months. Then I just I began to adopt the qualities in them in me, to be part of the community, to be part of it.

S: So what kinds of things did you adopt?

Lifestyle, clothing, drinking, dancing, shopping, dating, looking nice... these things. I just had to fit in.

I think still, to this day, when someone looks at me, they don't only look at me as--I consider myself very Canadian now--not everyone does—but, in my mind I am a mainstream Canadian gay guy. However, when people look at me they look at me as an immigrant. They look at me as someone who came to here....I mean there's politics there definitely, but I definitely

think that I am in the community. That I am part of it. It took a long time to feel that way. I didn't always feel that way.

S: Can you remember any of the significant moments in becoming part of a mainstream Canadian gay community...

I was getting hit on by people, and I would think *WOW!* And people would make comments...and I just love the attention they gave me. I just loved the attention they gave me....*Guys are after me. I am being recognized for who I am.*

In [South Asian Country], I never ever ever ever never not even one. Zero zero zero *Never* had a guy buy me a rose or a chocolate or anything like that. Like when I was in [South Asian Country], if a gay guy wanted to connect-- like if someone was driving, they would put you in the back seat. They would take you somewhere and they would really look down on you. They would look at you like you were a dirty creature. They just want to get off by you and they have no feelings for you. No cares towards you, they just look at you as something they can have to get entertained and get off.

Here, it's love and everything. Someone buying you a flower. Taking you to a nice restaurant, because of who you are. I think that's attention. That's love. Love is really unique and weird, because... for someone to be comfortable with me, especially with who I am, was a big shock to me.

Jamil narrated some of his renegotiation of un/belongings in his relationships with men and a gay community in Canada. He narrated a process of moving from observing to taking up the practices of a "mainstream Canadian gay guy." He voiced a past-self encountering people who seem happy with who they are, and in these interactions started revising the meanings of his sexual self as dirty and sinful. He narrated his belonging as a "mainstream Canadian guy" as a conflict between how others see him, and his felt sense. He speaks of this belonging in a manner that is qualified, then confident, then tentative. He acknowledged how the view of others who will always see him as an immigrant impinges on his claim to belonging.

Jamil sets up a stark contrast between the emotional impact of encounters with men as sites of un/belonging in both his country of origin and Canada. He narrated feeling degraded and objectified by encounters with men in his country where homophobic surveillance made these encounters shaming. Attention and encounters with men in Canada become relational links to a larger "mainstream gay community." I hear two voices interlayered in his narration of these relationships. One voice is surprised and flattered by the attention and the romance of dating openly. I interpret this as a past-self re-enacting the newness and strangeness of the experience. The second voice is self-reflexively exploring how he has changed through these encounters. His words "for someone to be comfortable with me, especially with who I am" speaks to the relationality of belongings and the affective impact of comfortable co-presence.

Devon

So then I moved to [Canadian city]. Now you are actually living here. You're a student here. You're working here. You have a life. This whole new world has opened up to you.

The rest of you--the career you, the Indian you--a person is made up of so many parts--the rest of you are in their 30s along with you. Have grown up along with you. That sexuality part of you, the gay part of you, is still in its infancy. The awareness isn't there...I may have gotten a little experience, but it's a very slow growth. So that's why I call it stunted growth

In [Canadian city] I had the full-fledged legal papers. I'm a student on a student permit. I already know the process. I got my student work permit over time. So now you have legal papers. So now you're going to school. You're having your education--so educated you is very involved in daily life. But this whole world has opened up to you...

And during the time that I moved here—2003, there was a lot of debate going on in parliament whether to legalize same-sex marriage. So coming from a place where your living in fear, and here they are in parliament talking about whether to legalize same-sex marriage. It's a whole fucking new world--and you're like a kid in a candy shop.

And I'm telling you, that sexual you, that's still in its childhood stage, you ARE a kid in a candy store. So you're actually out checking out all the cruising spots. *Oh look they have gay cinema! They have an adult bookstore with gay stuff.* I did go to all those places. I wanted to see for myself. It's not like I was going to these places all the time, every weekend or something. I went once, twice. I was curious. It's a whole new world. So it really was I'm a kid in a candy shop *Oh look so many men.*

But I'm not out yet. That fear in me is still there. Plus now I'm going to school. I'm still not out in [the city]--but I'm a kid in a candy store.

Plus I don't have that many friends. I have a limited life. I wasn't hanging out with people. Half my time my weekends, I'm alone finding something to do. Fine so I'm alone, I get to explore that part of me

But the fear is so deeply rooted in me, I can't just overnight come out *What will people think? They're talking about it in parliament. Such a drama.* There's so much debate, and in a debate there are people for it and people against it. And you hear it all. And you see --people are still really conservative here. You know there's so much stigma attached to it.

I met this guy in one of these cruising places. It wasn't love. It was lust. I can very honestly say I'm not a saint

S: None of us are.

But you live and learn. This guy wanted to have unprotected sex. I've never had...I'd had unprotected sex one time years ago when I didn't know any better. But this guy wanted to have unprotected sex. As I said, you're a kid in a candy shop open to all kinds of new experiences.

S: ...go with the flow...

He said he wanted to have unprotected sex. He initiated the topic. He did everything. I just never said no. I just went with the flow. I'm not exaggerating when I say kid in a candy shop...

S: Mmhm, I can very much identify with that wide-eyed feeling of ohhh, even just moving from a smaller town to a city that kid in a candy shop feeling. So I can imagine it being even more intense for you

Yeah...your sexuality is not at the maturity level yet to say, *"Wait a minute. I don't know you."*

S: It's such a hard thing to talk about in the moment as well

Yeah, so your sexuality is at this childlike stage. You make mistakes and you grow.

I never said *No*

HE never said *"I'm HIV positive but I still want to have..."* We had sex a total of four times. Not within the same week. Over a couple of months. It's not like we'd keep in touch, became friends, wasn't like that. We'd bump into each other at a bar, or the cruising place, and I would see the same guy that attracted me. We had chemistry. But he never pursued me as a person. It was just sex with me and I never pursued a relationship with him. I guess after the first time. It kind of became the norm with him. Once you've broken that barrier...it kind of became the thing we did.

A couple of months went by. He came up to me on a Friday night in a crowded bar. *"I have something to tell you. I'm HIV+ I thought you had a right to know."*

And he said it had been bothering him. He was feeling guilty for not having disclosed it to me earlier. This is how he told me. This line word for word...It is difficult to say...I'm going to put it out as explicitly as crude as it sounds, as he told me on a Friday night in a crowded bar *"I tried not to cum in your ass each time, but you have such a sweet ass I couldn't help myself."*

You can do that one time. But four times—over a couple of months. And not tell me your positive. If you didn't infect me the first time, you surely did the second or third.

And he didn't tell me he was sorry. The word sorry was never there. It was all stated as a matter of fact. That's how I was told. After hearing that my brain froze up...I just needed to get out.

Devon's metaphor of "a kid in a candy shop" conveys the naiveté, excitement and desire he felt as he started finding and participating in gay sites in Winnipeg. The metaphor captures how the silence about sex he had learned under conditions of persecution and erasure, meant Devon had limited experience verbally asserting needs and wants during sex. Feeling isolated and unsure of how open he was prepared to be, his efforts to participate and belong in gay sites were made alone. In his careful account of the encounters that resulted in him becoming HIV+, I hear Devon's efforts to deal with and contain anger, blame, and guilt. He acknowledged his role with *I did not say no*. His anger does not come through until he talks back in a hypothetical dialogue with the man.

In our joint interpretation session, Devon and I spoke about how he is racialized as exotic in gay cruising settings. At the time, he was isolated, eager to belong, and excited about the opportunity to explore his sexuality. Any and all attention was welcome. More familiar and critical of this dynamic now, he is able to deflect or reject the kind of attention he does not want. In the period between his hearing and receiving his Permanent Residence card Devon shared with me some of his struggles to move from hooking up for sex, to dating with a longer-term commitment in mind.

I was avoiding getting too close during the application. I learned to fuck and go. After I knew I could stay, I discovered I didn't know how to do anything else. I have to learn how to fuck and stay.

The tension of needing to simultaneously settle and not settle worked its way into the efforts of QLGBT refugee claimants to form relationships. For Devon the uncertainty of his status worked against getting close or sustaining a relationship during

his application. He also found fear of exploitation as a refugee held him back from getting close. Being evasive or disappearing when men tried to get close became a pattern.

Dis/connections with family and home

Jamil

The journey never stops at one juncture. It just continues. I have had two years now. I am sending them money whenever I can. I am even paying for my sisters' education because my parents could never afford any of these things.

I have come out to my sisters. The only time I had one problem was ...She has a profile on high5.com and I have a profile on high5.com and we are friends on that profile and we have each other as a contact and one day she was browsing my profile in front of her friends and showing them. And in my profile it said man seeking man and one of her friends made a statement to my sister, "What's wrong with your brother? That's creepy! Why does he say man seeking men? Oh, that's creepy"

Anita wrote me an email saying, "*I was showing your profile to my friends. Can you remove that?*"

To me, I see myself as a father to my sister because I am doing things that a father would normally do. And I was very very hurt. I cried. I came home and drank all by myself.

And I called my older sister, and she called my younger sister. "Why did you talk to him like that?" And later [younger sister] sent me an email and apologized.

And you know I did remove that from my profile, because I said "For YOU, I'm ready to make that sacrifice. I will remove this profile, but you must promise me you'll finish school. And I want you to show the family that you're the next person who can graduate--because you have gone through a lot of hardship too." And I did remove it.

But then she said "You shouldn't have removed it! You shouldn't have removed it!"

And I did have a guilty conscience. *Yeah, I shouldn't have removed it.*

But in her email, I saw her innocence. Like it is not her fault that her friend is making fun of me in front of her. And of course she likes me, that's why she gets embarrassed. Otherwise, she wouldn't care. So yeah I see that it's not her fault and it's just the society that she's in.

These are my siblings.
We were together since birth.
We'll be together to our death.
We are attached by a thin thread.
And it is a thread that stretches wherever we go.

I remember standing at the sink brushing our teeth and my brother says "I swear on this bar of soap that you one day will settle down and marry a woman."

And I laughed. "It will never happen. That isn't what I want. I swear on this bar of soap, it will never happen. That is not my idea of settling down."

If I wasn't gay, I would still be in [county of origin]
I would have my family all together in one place.

Jamil cups his hands together, creating a small circle
But because I am gay and I am here, we are scattered

He flares his fingers apart and stretches his hands apart in opposite directions

If my parents had been stronger roots for us,
Had been able to hold us together
His hands form the roots of a tree

We would have been able to grow
He stretches his arms into a trunk and long, parallel branches
and stay together.

Participants narrated on-going efforts to rebuild or sustain connections with their families as they settled in Canada. Hybrid geographies both facilitated and complicated

their efforts. Jamil narrated how he has sustained and renegotiated his relationships with his siblings through online interactions. In this part of the excerpt he voiced two selves: a very proud provider, and a gay man working against exclusion and stigma in his relationship with his siblings. As provider, he describes covering his sexuality as a sacrifice he is proud to make. As a young gay man, he was deeply hurt by the exclusion, and conflicted about having changed his profile. He situates his sisters' reaction in larger social prejudices to help him accept and forgive the injury.

Jamil narrated negotiating recognition of his sexuality with his brother as he recounted the conversation by the sink. He conveys how memories of the everyday intimacies of home life can be imbued with the tension of exclusion. Jamil is creative and irreverent when he works against this exclusion. These conversations provide exemplars of the complex and shifting meaning-making participants engaged in around family and home. They renegotiated current relationships with families, while also recounting memories of home as complex sites of un/belonging.

Jamil narrated an (im)possible-self-at home with his siblings. He, and other participants, narrated glimpses of a future that could only be if they had not needed to leave. He moved into enacting his metaphor of the tree, and the separated branches as he makes meaning of having to live apart from his brother and sisters. I understand his move into the metaphorical and movement, as an effort to work beyond the limits of words to convey his loss and sense of uprootedness from his family.

Un/Settling

For queer refugees in this study settlement entailed the sometimes contradictory projects of engaging with the refugee determination system and rebuilding lives. In their efforts to create safety and belonging in their lives, QLGBT migrants accessed the refugee determination system. Making a claim entails a twofold struggle for recognition for QLGBT asylum seekers. To gain protection, they must be recognized as both lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender and as a refugee. Seeking recognition as a refugee entails working with and against stigmas of refugees as illegals, as bogus, and as burdens. Seeking recognition as QLGBT entails working with and against dominant identity narratives of queer sexualities and trans genders.

In order to make their case, QLGBT asylum seekers must act in ways that feel contradictory with their sense of belonging. The documentation requirements of the Refugee Determination Process place QLGBT claimants in the position of needing to out themselves as refugees and as QLGBT to gather evidence. Enacting self-as- QLGBT and self-as-refugee claimant in these interactions increases the salience of unbelonging in relationships at a time when belonging is tenuous. Here tactics of hiding and covering that had been necessary for survival in home countries and during migration, become counter-productive.

Recognition as refugee conferred protection, and the possibility of safety and belonging. Years after the decisions were made, participants narrated the moment of receiving recognition as Convention Refugees with immense relief, releasing the tension of years of instability. The risk of persecution in their home countries, precarious migrations, and the uncertainty of the application inhibited the ability of participants to

imagine their futures. With status, participants could start to imagine possibilities for livable lives. The meanings they made of relationships, jobs and careers, and home changed, becoming more complexly patterned both across time and throughout social space. Meanings were renegotiated from meeting short-term survival needs, to longer-term possibilities and hopes. Meanings were renegotiated to incorporate longer-term possibilities, and the shifting salience of migrant/refugee, racialized, ethnocultural, sexualities, genders, faith, and class self-identities. In these ways participants narrated patterns of settling.

The residuals of years of living under threat and then in uncertainty remained present in the narratives of queer refugees. For some, survival tactics necessary under persecution remained patterned ways of being. Seeking out/avoiding others complicated efforts to establish new relationships. Felt-memories of instability were salient and alive even as participants narrated ways they were more settled. Remembered or relived traumatic memories created in-the-present fears and vigilance, triggered or heightened by microaggressions, threats, or violence encountered as immigrant, racialized, and queer/trans people. Queer refugees voiced hypothetical selves living im/possible alternative lives in their country of origin. In these ways as participants narrated settling, they simultaneously narrated living unsettled.

CHAPTER 7

Discussion

This inquiry co-constructed accounts of queer refugees' context of exit from their countries of origin, their migrations, their application, and their efforts to rebuild lives in Canada. Settlement is a long process, unfolding complexly over years. Possibilities for settling are conditioned by experiences that precede and fall outside of settlement as defined by current policy and practice. Queer refugees engagement with multiple intersectional oppressions in their country of origin, their migration, and application process shape and curtail possibilities for safety and belonging while settling in Canada.

By beginning with country of origin accounts, participants and I have created a view of social conditions that propel queer migration. QLGBT refugees' engagement in settlement is profoundly shaped by experiences of exclusion, threat, and violence in their home-countries. Persecution, stigma and erasure interact, dispersing surveillance, threat, and violence along relationship networks. Relationships with classmates, neighbors and family were sites of exclusion, threat, and violence. Under these conditions, participants experienced traumas that were imbued with relational betrayals, and linked with a shamed identity. Dispersed surveillance and threats in these networks moved participants from homes and hometowns, to larger cities and eventually to emigrate. Negotiating safety and belonging under these conditions produced survival patterns of dis/avowing transgressive desires, trying on/distancing from available

identities, seeking/avoiding similar others, conforming/escaping, and imagining im/possible futures.

A dialectic of desire in tension with fear and shame mobilized QLGBT migrants to cautiously seek out and connect with similar others. Participants' ability to safely participate in relationships and local queer cultures was complexly and intersectionally constituted. Marked gender non-conformity, membership in marginalized racialized, political, or religious groups or prominent families heightened surveillance and threat for some. Interconnected local and transnational networks both on and offline, brought QLGBT migrants into contact with possibilities that existed beyond their borders. Through these connections, they were able to imagine livable lives elsewhere.

Along with other western nations, Canada is using increasingly stringent measures to curtail irregular migration and screen out potential asylum seekers. Intersectional im/mobilities constrain who is able to leave, how people migrate, and options for permanent status. Migration restrictions combine with the relative obscurity of human rights and refugee protection for queer people to create situations in which queer migrants pursue more apparent, but sometimes irregular, social or economic means of migration. Complex migrations became precarious for some, creating conditions rife for exploitation, violence and (re)traumatization.

These complex and precarious migrations works against safety and belonging for queer migrants in both their application process and settlement. In their applications, mixed and irregular migration trajectories can undermine their credibility as genuine refugees.

The efforts of QLGBT people to create safety and belonging propel them out of contexts of persecution and towards potential places of belonging. QLGBT asylum seekers have worked against forces of erasure that hide the possibilities and means for

living with safety and rights. Leaving without awareness of refugee protection based on sexual orientation or gender identity, queer migrants pursued more apparent migration means. While on these mixed migration paths, the relative obscurity of the refugee protection for SOGI based persecution, in interaction with migration restrictions, placed queer asylum seekers on trajectories that created the potential for exploitation, violence, or a slide into “illegal” status. The recalibrations of identity that occur as migration brings people into interaction with new social networks and communities further contribute to complicated and extended migration trajectories.

The paths of queer migrants in this study did not conform to expected paths of refugee flight. In their struggle for recognition and credibility in the hearing process QLGBT claimants are working with and against highly constrained, culturally situated narratives identity and of refugee flight of as they recount often traumatic experiences. Applicants struggle with and against these narratives to make the hidden, visible, or for trans claimants in this study the inconsistent, coherent. Recognition as a refugee confers protection, creating possibilities for safety and belonging. But this protection requires claimants to openly enact their sexuality or gender and refugeeness. Interactions with officials become intensified struggles with and against the stigma of a queer or trans, refugee, and racialized identities. This tension runs through the quotidian work of making a refugee claim.

As they rebuild lives, queer refugees are navigating safety, belonging and exclusion across multiple communities, engaging with a matrix of oppressions of racism, xenophobia, heterosexism and transphobia to do so. During their application and

settlement queer refugees are negotiating safety and belonging across multiple communities. Accounts of getting oriented in the city, house seeking, job seeking, and building relationships in Canada show the complexity of these negotiations.

The accounts of QLGBT migrants tell of daily acts of survival and defiance, both ordinary and extraordinary, in their countries of origin. Their migration accounts speak to the profound inequities of mobility, and the lengths people go to create safety and belonging in their lives, incurring risks and harms in the process. The accounts of queer asylum seekers portray their struggles with and against the protective and exclusionary possibilities of the refugee system. Through out their application QLGBT refugees are negotiating contradictory demands to enact and document identities as QLGBT and as refugee that may work against creating safety and belonging in their new social relationships. This negotiation is further complicated by the fact that QLGBT refugee claimants in Canada are living with uncertain status and financial instability, while making their first steps towards rebuilding lives.

Representing Queer Settlement Accounts

It would have been perilously easy to reproduce transnational versions of the “Coming out” story from the accounts of queer and trans migrants. In these stories, our heroes would move from initial non-awareness into an awareness of being different in their home countries. The move to the West would be framed as an inevitable and necessary step towards finding themselves and community. The heroes would arrive naive and then make friendships, explore sexual experiences, and find a welcoming community that would allow them to fully embrace their LGBT identities. Who would be

served by a homonationalist celebration of sexual and gender liberation in the Great Gay North?

This globalized coming out narrative would obscure important complexities to problematic effect. Neocolonial discourses of progress and development invite those of us in the West to see our own countries and cultures as the standard for QLGBT rights, and to engage in othering entire countries and cultures as less developed on a presumed path towards QLGBT rights. Post-colonial queer scholarship points to the dangers of an emerging queer liberalism that reverberates with neocolonialism (Ahmed, 2003; Puar, 2007).

Asylum issues thus exemplify how homonormativity—queer complicities with dominant neoliberal, imperial, nationalist, racist and heterosexist logics—generates acute dilemmas where queer migration is concerned. Yet, asylum also makes plain that these issues have to be addressed. Quite simply, queers facing violence and persecution demand justice and transformation. (Luibheid, 2008, p 180)

Conducting this research and advocating with Rainbow Refugee has placed me in regular engagement with these acute dilemmas. Advocating and researching with queer refugees in the contexts of Canadian and transnational migration systems as well as the local and globalizing QLGBT rights movements raises questions for which there are no easy answers: how to speak about persecution without othering cultures or countries as monolithically homophobic; how to write about the shifts and realignments in identity that occur with migration, without reifying Western QLGBT identities as modern; how to

represent the traumas that occur under persecution and precarious migrations without fueling a politics of rescue (Puar, 2007).

While presenting the accounts of homophobic and transphobic persecution in participants' countries of origin I have worked to avoid portraying any country or culture as monolithically homophobic or transphobic. Juxtaposing the home country accounts of participants provided a sense of the range and complexity of homophobic and transphobic persecution. In any one country the terrain of persecution must be understood as complexly constituted by religious, medical, legal, cultural, and political discourses and practices. No country is exclusively homophobic, and spaces or practices of acceptance frequently co-exist alongside those that exclude or punish. Louis George Tin, the French scholar and activist who presented the recent declaration to decriminalize homosexuality to the UN general assembly (January 2009) recounted this example during a public lecture (2008).

People ask me "What is the best place in the world for queer people? Possibly Brazil—it hosts a Pride celebration of over 3 million –the largest in the world. And if you ask what is the worst place in the world for Queer people? Possibly, Brazil—it has the highest number of homophobic murders in the world.

A similar paradox exists in South Africa, where same-sex marriages are recognized, and yet human rights organizations report that "corrective rape" of lesbians largely goes unpunished (The Guardian, March 12, 2009).

Further each individual migrant's engagement with homophobia or transphobia is co-constituted by their social positions of gender, race, faith, region, and class among others. I have heard Bogota described by one man as a great place to be gay, and by another, who spent ten years on the move within Columbia trying to escape death threats, as a terrifying city to be gay. The first was protected by his affluence and a supportive family, the second was vulnerable due to being rural and poor.

The accounts of queer refugees draw attention to the complexity of social forces currently shaping manifestations of homophobia and transphobia. Conditions of persecution, pervasive stigma, and erasure constrain possibilities for existence, making day-to-day living dangerous and difficult. Yet, people who transgress normative gender and sexual practices manage to survive, gather, and organize in the face of these adversities. Local possibilities for queer sexualities and trans genders exist as critical challenges and alternatives to heteronormativity. Queer studies scholars informed by post-colonial theory are documenting the tensions and productive possibilities that occur with the networking of the local with the transnational. In valorizing the courage of QLGBT refugees, I did not intend to present migration as the only courageous possibility. For each person that migrates, many more remain and those that persevere extend the horizons of the possible in their own countries. In Mzalendo's words, "I admire their guts."

The accounts of QLGBT migrants only hint at the possibilities for social transformation that exist in their countries of origin. These possibilities were present in the people who respected and valued participants, in the practices of resistance like

coded language, and in gathering places on and offline. There are further possibilities for transformation that did not make their way into participants' accounts. Efforts to challenge and change discriminatory laws and practices are underway internationally, regionally, nationally and locally. Queer refugees include people who were actively involved in organizing in their countries of origin, and were targeted for persecution specifically for this reason. Refugee protection is a critical safety net for those who are persecuted as sexual or gender dissidents as a result of their organizing efforts.

Because the process of settling was the focus of this research, I did not elaborate on the possibilities for social transformation in other countries. The organizing of QLGBT groups and movements within and across borders were just on the horizons of awareness of most participants in this research. This awareness typically came after leaving, through on-going contacts and online research. For this reason, I highlight the importance of international links among QLGBT, human rights and social justice organizations in this work.

In presenting this research I have been challenged to explore the interconnections between mobility, sexualities and genders without creating a teleological connection between moving to the West and open acceptance of a QLGBT identity. The Coming Out discourse invites this interpretation. I tried to interrupt this interpretation by presenting interactions in countries of origin that facilitated shifts in identification. Accounts touched on practices of transformation arising in the transnational interchange of Queer and Trans movements. Participants' efforts to seek safety and belonging in their own countries catalyzed movements prior to leaving their

countries that were as significant to their identification as their international migration. The desire for safety and belonging mobilized, and movement among communities shapes identity formation by opening new possibilities for identification, and constraining others. I also presented interactions that demonstrate the challenges that remain in Canada. As they rebuilt lives in Canada, queer refugees in this study were confronted by heterosexist, homophobic, and transphobic exclusions and violence. Their accounts draw attention to ways that these threats and exclusions were intensified and complicated by racism and xenophobia.

Queer refugees accounts convey the polysemia of home and family. Migrants in this study did not grow up with an unproblematic sense of belonging in their families, homes, or countries of origin. These relationships were neither straightforward relationships of safety and belonging, nor entirely hostile. I have worked to avoid the trope of family, home, and home country as natural places of belonging (Ahmed, 2003; Fortier, 2003), while also acknowledging the very real feelings of loss and disconnection from home and family.

Border-crossing is a ubiquitous metaphor in Queer Studies, and the transgressive possibilities of traversing borders, mobility and the margins are celebrated. These accounts demonstrate the importance of understanding mobilities complexly, and the productive possibilities that arise out of mobilities. For QLGBT migrants in this study virtual interactions opened up possibilities for both identification and physical mobility. In attending to new mobilities it is critical not to overlook the very real exclusions to mobility that continue to exist. The impacts of national borders on people's lives are

both diminished and intensified under conditions of transnationalism. In celebrating border crossing and the possibilities for complex and fluid identities that these create, it is critical not to overlook the profound losses that occur with dislocation, and emotional distress that feeling “out of place” can create.

Strengths and Limitations

I selected a method that allowed me to work closely with participants to co-construct accounts of queer refugee settlement in Canada. I engaged in an iterative reading and listening process that interprets the dialogical meaning-making process at work in the interviews to answer the question “How do refugees making claims based on sexual orientation or gender identity persecution engage in settlement?” Returning to participants to discuss interpretations of meaning

The fact that I have involved participants from a number of different countries of origin in a single study is a strength with limitations. I have used this plurality, juxtaposing the accounts and then highlighting both patterns and contrasts, to bring out the multiple meanings one process or event can have. To protect the confidentiality of participants I have had to omit their nationality from the text of their narratives. As a result, some of the local and specific cultural detail is lost. This necessary omission creates the risk of homogenizing heterogeneous communities and populations. I question how much value there is in naming a participant as coming from a country in the Middle East, or Africa, or South America. These are regional categorizations that obscure as much as they clarify. Providing no geographic reference risked creating an

undifferentiated group of participants from “other” countries, and problematically constructing this other as uniformly homophobic. Through conversations with participants, and my own experience of living and working in tightly networked communities I knew that the combination of nationality and one or two other personal details might be enough to make someone identifiable. Writing in ways that provided enough specificity to situate the account, while maintaining enough ambiguity to protect confidentiality was challenging. In doing so there is a risk that I have reified the categorization of extremely diverse communities. It is important that the interpretations not be read as representative of Queer Middle Eastern Refugee experiences, for example. I have worked against this through my choice of method and in my writing, but am aware of the potential danger.

This inquiry produced accounts of settlement situated in a particular time and place, thus findings must be understood in the context of the timeframe and location of the study. This is particularly critical for findings regarding migration trajectories and the application. All participants became Convention Refugees at different times between 2000-2009. Migration controls, refugee laws, policies and practices are marked by both foundation and flux in this period. One, Eleheh, applied before Canada’s Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) came into effect in 2002, the rest worked within the system created under IRPA. Participants and I co-constructed accounts drawing on our perspectives of first-person experience and an advocate-in-progress, and from these perspectives may not be aware of the ways that queer refugee settlement were enabled and constrained by the legal and policy terrain. As part of the interpretation process I

consulted legal and policy literature and highlighted these to situate claimants' accounts in the changing terrain of migration law, policy and practices. Key changes relevant to participants' accounts included the implementation of the Safe Third Country Agreement in 2004, the implementation of reverse order questioning, failure to implement the Refugee Appeal Division, and Federal Court decisions refining decision-making on sexual orientation cases. Scholars with legal and policy training may be able to identify constraints and influences that we missed. The refugee system in Canada is poised to undergo significant reform over the next year. The application and salience of findings from these accounts to queer refugees settling under these new conditions will shift. I discuss potential shifts in the implications section.

The fact that participants were interviewed at different points in their settlement process undoubtedly shaped their accounts. Eleheh had been living in Canada for eight years post-termination when I interviewed her. Only a month had passed between Stephanie's decision and our last meeting. The reliance on retrospective accounts and this variability should be taken into consideration in any discussion of the research. Dialogical interpretation of retrospective accounts elaborates the meaning-making processes engaged in during narration, and thus holds past, present, and possible future meanings—it cannot capture in vivo and in the moment patterns. With a longer time-frame and resources in place for supporting participants in their application process, a longitudinal study following participants from making a claim through several years of settlement would be a worthwhile approach.

Variability in participants' engagement in the joint-interpretation process was necessary for both pragmatic and ethical reasons, and yet this created unevenness in the depth and nuance of accounts. For participants who had the time to devote to the process, our conversations brought to our awareness meanings and nuances in their story that would not have emerged otherwise. I also have greater confidence in the interpretations I have made in dialogue with the participants. However, the process is a lengthy and demanding one for the participants.

Interviewing in English, sometimes with an interpreter, constrained the inquiry, and potentially underattended to critical aspects of the settlement process. Interviewing in English co-constructs an account in the language participants are using in their efforts to settle. All participants were working in English as a second or third language in their daily lives and for the interview. For interviews all participants were offered the option of working with an interpreter. One, Miriam, worked with an interpreter on "stand-by" consulting with her throughout the interview, but typically spoke English for herself after clarifying questions or vocabulary. Two of the nine participants, Devon and Mzlando, were educated in English and thus arrived in Canada fluent. Only Miriam arrived with no English language capacity. Others moved from very low or intermediate proficiency on arrival to current high proficiency over the course of their time in Canada. Having English or French language capacity prior to arrival is typical of Asylum refugees in BC, with 94.7% of those arriving (2004-2008) with at least some capacity (Welcome BC, 2010). Prior English or French language capacity is atypical of overseas applicants, with only 28.9% arriving with this language capacity

(Welcome BC, 2010). The eight Inland applicants and one overseas applicant involved in this study are therefore not atypical in their range of language proficiency among Inland claimants, but are atypical of refugees as a whole.

Working with people who arrived with some English language proficiency potentially overlooks or under attends to struggles faced by those with no language capacity on arrival. In English Canada, all of the tasks of settlement require engaging in English, and become exponentially more difficult for those without English capacity. Dependency on friends or service providers is intensified. Social networks are constrained. People's sense of competence, safety and belonging are all negatively impacted when they are struggling to understand and be understood. Working in a new language is exhausting, and particularly so in the early months and years of language learning. All claimants struggle to make themselves understood in the application and hearing, and I have seen that claimants with little to no English have much greater difficulties. They must rely entirely on their interpreter, and are working to interpret and respond to questions without the benefit of background knowledge of Western cultural repertoires. These issues related to limited English capacity were raised by Eleheh, Stephanie, Alana, Miriam, Adil, and Jamil, but were perhaps not as prominent as they would have been if more participants who had no language capacity on arrival had been included.

Interviewing in English provides a sense of relational interactions and identities as they are constituted in English, but does not engage any of the participants' first language cultural repertoires. Given that self-identities, episodic memory, and emotions

are constituted and enacted in and through language, it is important to recognize the constraints this placed on the accounts participants could construct in our interviews. Engaging participants' first language cultural repertoires in addition to English would allow participants to draw on a much richer range of repertoires. This approach would enhance understanding of participants' negotiation of relationships across language and cultural groups. However, given the resources for this study and range of languages among participants, this was not possible in this inquiry. A future study with multiple, bilingual interviewers and multilingual recruitment procedures would address these limitations.

Implications for Scholarship

Psychology of Migration, Integration and Settlement

Migration and settlement is a profound interruption in the life-course, which entails loss of all familiar, and creates both the opportunity and obligation for the reciprocal processes of reconstitution of self and social relationships. For survival migrants, settlement also entails the work of trauma recovery. In their settlement QLGBT survival migrants are navigating safety and belonging across multiple community memberships. By building lives that deviate from normative life paths, engaging with a matrix oppressions to do so they have stretched the bounds of the possible. Understanding this process has important implications for how psychotherapists and the discipline of psychology understand and work with the intersectionality or co-constitution of identities as well as core mental health constructs like acculturation, and stigma and trauma. In this inquiry I have co-constructed

relational accounts of settlement with queer refugees in Canada. This approach contributes to psychological work on migration by reworking settlement from an interactional to a relational process, contending with some of the complexities of transnationalism, and creating an understanding of the dialogical negotiation of these complexities.

Queer survival migrants' migration trajectories bring them into interaction with a variety of cultures' sexual and gender practices, with systems built on two genders, interimbricated with communities or systems with more fluid understandings of gender and sexuality. In their movements, QLGBT migrants encounter both the rigidity and flux in discourses of sexuality and gender, in momentary events like pronoun slips, and in the daily fact of living in exile. These accounts speak to what is at stake. For refugees-- survival. For all those who live lives that deviate from normative gender/sexualities intelligibility and recognition impacts people's day to day ability to function, access basic human rights, material, and social resources. It impacts our ability to form relationships, to live without fear and shame, in short, the ability to live livable lives.

Inherent tensions exist when conducting research acknowledging the social and discursive production of genders and sexualities, while respecting human experience of these identities as meaningful. Dialogical self theory addresses this tension by providing a view of multiple and mutable genders and sexualities that encompass the relational, affective/emotional and material reasons that gender and sexual identities matter. As participants recounted events, they bring voiced selves and others into being. Past and imaginal others come into emotionally live contact with past, present and possible

future selves. Using a dialogical approach interpreted the relationship among voices, and the dialectic between narration of events, and the reflexive evaluation that occurs in the retelling. Listening for this dialogical negotiation helped me understand the relational patterns participants brought to their engagement with the refugee system and settlement. It is this intersubjective meaning making that goes on in interactions that selves are continuously revised, and the potential for change exists. Thus, this approach recognizes the relational tactics and agencies people use in their struggle with and against pre-given sexualities and genders.

Queer Migration Scholarship and Queering Migration Scholarship

Patterns of queer migration are complex and varied, and refugee claims represents only a portion of queer and trans migration. I focused on refugee claims as a particular form of QLGBT survival migration, but this is far from the only route taken by QLGBT people seeking safety and belonging. There are many more QLGBT people who leave contexts of persecution, and settle in Canada or elsewhere, using other migration means. Because of the wide range of alternate migration routes QLGBT survival migrants must resort to, there are queer experiences of being international students, live-in-caregivers, exotic dancers, or temporary foreign workers that have been largely overlooked within migration studies in Canada. Investigating queer survival migration challenges researchers to work both within and outside of the categories and questions provided by policy makers. Migration scholar Oliver Bakewell (2008) argues the benefits of beginning from a policy irrelevant stance. My research interest in queer migration had a very personal starting place, one quite naive to the laws, policies and practices

that impinged on and facilitated my own mobilities. I have come into learning policy and law as someone learning to be an effective advocate with queer survival migrants. As such, this research creates accounts situated in a fairly local manifestation of transnational forces, and works both with and against policy categories. I have stretched the definition of settlement to include the work migrants do to create safety and belonging, investigating ways that “pre-settlement” phases of persecution (context of exit) migration, and application shape possibilities for safety and belonging.

Implications for Practice and Social Justice

Enhancing Access to Refugee Protection

This inquiry highlights the importance of creating accessible and viable refugee protection for those facing sexual orientation or gender identity based persecution. Currently the right to asylum is being undermined by asymmetrical migration restrictions and punitive measures that produce people as “illegals.” Ordinary citizens from the Global South, women, gender variant, and HIV+ people are disproportionately impacted by these restrictions. In this context accessing protection entails risk and challenge for all survival migrants, and particular risks and challenges for queer survival migrants.

Participants pursued ir/regular means of migrating and obtaining status, in part, because seeking refugee protection from homophobic or transphobic persecution did not occur as an option to them. Even participants who experienced intense violence and threats did not necessarily frame their experience as persecution. Nor did they know that the option to make a refugee claim based on sexual orientation or gender identity

existed. The slow and still contested recognition that queer and trans people are holders of human rights occludes the possibility of refugee protection for those facing homophobic or transphobic persecution from public discourse. Putting this recognition into action, in policies and practices, internationally and nationally is critical to creating meaningful access to refugee protection.

Participants courted precarious migrations in part because they did not know that the option to make a refugee claim based on sexual orientation or gender identity existed, and the safety needed to speak about their fears help was not apparent through mainstream channels. A critical step in making refugee protection accessible for people facing SOGI persecution is creating accessible information and support. The potential points of access to information about refugee protection for homophobic or transphobic persecution have increased since 2007. QLGBT asylum advocacy groups now have an online presence. Although it should be cautioned that online presence does not necessarily translate into accessibility of information given censorship, language, and computer access issues. Informal connections, often QLGBT networks on or offline, connected participants with NGOs or lawyers who raised the possibility of refugee protection. These connections provided trusted points of contact for accessing information about refugee protection.

The dialogue and work needed to create meaningful access to refugee protection for people facing homophobic or transphobic persecution is underway. International refugee protection and QLGBT NGOs are working to create access to protection for asylum seekers overseas in some countries and greater safety during the time that they

wait. Lives would be saved if overseas offices of the UNHCR would review and extend their practices to offer better protection to QLGBT asylum seekers. The office in Ankara, Turkey is reported to be in the process of reforms designed to enhance the safety of QLGBT asylum seekers (Grungras, Levitan, & Slotek, 2009). Very recently, and for the first time, the UNHCR held a roundtable discussion focusing on protection issues for LGBTI (Lesbian Gay Bi Trans and Intersex) asylum seekers and refugees (UNHCR, October 2010). These are critical initial steps in exploring and promoting measures that would facilitate access to refugee protection by QLGBT people facing persecution.

In Canada, in both Ontario and BC, refugee claimants are now provided with a resource list that includes the cities' QLGBT community resources at the conclusion of the eligibility interview. Inland claimants potentially access appropriate information and support far earlier in the process as a result. Just this summer, for the first time, a claimant came to Rainbow Refugee immediately following his eligibility interview because the CBSA officer pointed out the group on the list. In BC the resource list was implemented through First Contact, a Red Cross initiative that has the participation of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Canada Border Service Agency and a large number of NGOs and community groups including Rainbow Refugee. All of these changes potentially create greater access to refugee protection for those facing homophobic or transphobic persecution.

I caution though that even with these measures, accessing appropriate support and information remains a challenging process: the exhaustion and confusion of getting oriented in a new city, in an unfamiliar language overwhelms; stigma and fear hold

people back from attending a group or speaking openly; the very tactics that helped people survive persecution can undermine efforts to connect. For this reason, each potential point of contact needs to be attuned to the survival tactics and social conditions of QLGBT asylum seekers.

Un/Convention(al) Accounts of Queer Refugees

The refugee determination process, implicitly and explicitly, evaluates applicants against expected trajectories of refugee flight and Western narratives of LGBT identities, coming out, or gender identity dysphoria. Yet, for reasons and in ways explored in this inquiry, the migration trajectories and identity accounts of queer asylum seekers may not meet these expectations. Having fled persecution, queer refugee claimants' potential for safety and belonging is constrained when they do not conform to conventions. By re-examining these assumptions in relation to knowledge constructed through refugee claimants' accounts, I aimed to create alternative understandings of how the unconventional accounts of queer refugees make sense.

All refugee decisions are complex, and SOGI claims are some of the most challenging for adjudicators (LaViolette, 2009). The decision-making responsibilities adjudicators hold are enormous, and these accounts convey only some of the complexities and pressures board members face. The hearing interaction brings refugees into interaction with adjudicators functioning in a bureaucratic system with sometimes conflicting priorities of rights protection and security protection (Rousseau, Crepeau, Foxen & Houle, 2002; Rousseau & Foxen, 2005). Adjudicators are stretched to understand across language, culture, class as they listen to accounts of traumatic

events(C. Rousseau, Crepeau, F., Foxem, P. , & Houle, F. , 2002; C. Rousseau & Foxem, 2005; C. c. Rousseau & Foxen, 2010). In SOGI based claims, they are asked to make judgements often with little physical evidence, and conflicting country condition information. In the face of this complexity, they are operating with less formal guidance than other types of claims. The UNHCR Guidance Note (Nov 2008) on Refugee Claims Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity is a preliminary step towards providing this guidance. Efforts to revise these and formalize them into a binding guidelines is an important part of enhancing refugee protection.

I highlighted some of the assumptions that undermine fair decision making in hopes that future training with decision makers will address these more subtle assumptions. Canada is, at present, the only country to provide training for decision makers that focuses on SOGI decisions. In the most recent training (May 2010), legal and human rights perspectives were well presented. Effective training on SOGI decisions would also give adjudicators an opportunity to surface and reflect on the implicit, often culturally encapsulated, assumptions they may bring about queer sexualities and trans genders. Bridging intercultural understandings of transgressive sexualities and genders would enhance fairness in refugee hearings. Perspectives grounded in the lives of queer refugees, that reflect the social, psychological, and spatial complexities of their experiences, would enhance this aspect of the training. By exploring the interaction of systemic persecution, stigma and erasure, this inquiry provides insight into the how these impact claimants ability to recount their lives in the context of the hearing.

Juxtaposing detailed narratives with problems identified in existing literature and cases helped identify some of the discourses that implicitly shape refugee determination for QLGBT claimants. Presenting participants' accounts and our joint interpretation gives a sense of how some claimants have negotiated the struggle for credibility that occurs in the hearing. A dialogical understanding of this struggle highlights the relational and mediated agencies queer migrants bring to their engagements with the refugee system. However, this analysis does not constitute evidence of the pervasiveness or impact of these assumptions. A study design that focuses on the application process, and incorporates written refugee decisions of both positive and negative cases, would allow more in-depth exploration.

Upcoming reforms to the refugee system raise considerable challenges for queer asylum seekers. One of the most worrisome is the creation of an interview with an official, set to occur only fifteen days after the eligibility interview. This time frame, and the process of giving their first account to an officer in a bureaucratic context is potentially unfair and retraumatizing. Unless significant steps are taken to connect claimants with support in this short time, many will be arriving at the interviews without benefit of counsel. Many claimants will not be comfortable enough to speak about parts of their lives that are steeped in shame and fear, and yet critical to their case (Cohen, 2001). We are very concerned that LGBT refugee claimants will be unfairly prejudiced by these interviews. Given the time frame, many will arrive at interviews without having been assessed for potential vulnerability. Many QLGBT claimants have experienced sexual violence or family violence. Both of these types of trauma are associated with

high levels of shame and memory interference. A recent study by the British Journal of Psychiatry examined factors contributing to difficulty with disclosure for refugee claimants during Home Office interviews (Bogner, Herlihy, & Brewin, 2007). Those who had experienced sexual violence reported shame and higher dissociative symptoms, and these were associated with greater difficulties with disclosure during interviews. The vast majority of claimants who experienced sexual violence reported that they did not fully disclose significant events during their initial interview.

Implications for Settlement Support

This research grew out of recognition of the critical potential of queer refugees' accounts to speak to a challenge that Rainbow Refugee was encountering in its community work, and that is articulated by queer migration scholar Eithne Luibheid (2008) in *Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship*.

Most scholarship, policymaking, service provision, activism, and cultural work remain organized around the premise that migrants are heterosexuals (or on their way to becoming so) and queers are citizens (even though second-class ones). Where do queer migrants figure in these frameworks and activities?

(p.169)

This inquiry provides a view of how queer refugees engage in the settlement challenges faced by all migrants, and insight into the particular complexity of meeting settlement challenges while negotiating belonging and safety across multiple communities, and in engagement with multiple oppressions. Participants created and accessed diverse forms of social, emotional, and instrumental support: ethnocultural community networks,

faith communities, QLGBT community networks-- on and offline, along with employers and colleagues and settlement support agencies. Participants assembled their own support networks often in a piecemeal or ad hoc way. What would settlement support attuned to the experiences of queer migrants including queer refugees and survival migrants look like? Efforts to create support QLGBT immigrants and refugees settling in Canada may best be directed at raising awareness, addressing exclusions, and building the capacity among the communities and sources of support participants discussed in their accounts.

Attuned settlement support requires creating awareness and dialogue among QLGBT service providers around immigration and refugee issues, anti-racist anti-oppression work, and intercultural understandings of sexualities and genders. Simultaneously, it requires work within settlement support organizations addressing heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia, and expanding awareness of the ways that settlement challenges are experienced and met by queer migrants. In a study of Vancouver settlement organizations O'Neill & Sproule (In Press) found that settlement service providers lacked awareness of settlement challenges for QLGBT newcomers. Many of the settlement workers interviewed thought that sexual orientation or gender identity were irrelevant to settlement. Others believed that working with QLGBT clients required highly specialized knowledge. The investigators raised concerns that QLGBT migrants would not feel safe in these organizations and would not receive adequate support.

Formal province-wide capacity-building programs exist in Ontario (www.positivespaces.ca) and smaller collaborations are occurring in British Columbia. Rainbow Refugee has contributed to these efforts through presentations and workshops. Participants' accounts from this inquiry, when used in capacity building work, can create emotional resonance and a contextualized understanding of the struggles and strengths of queer refugees during settlement. Excerpts from this research have been piloted in knowledge exchange workshops that brought together QLGBT community services providers, Settlement and Multicultural Service organizations, and mainstream community service providers. Working in small groups with these accounts encouraged reflexivity and dialogue among workshop participants.

Mental Health: Trauma Prevention and Healing

The complex and relational trauma histories of participants points to the importance of enhancing mental health supports for QLGBT refugee claimants. The home country accounts of QLGBT migrants name the range, severity and particularity of traumas that occur through the interaction of persecution, stigmatization and erasure. Traumas were imbued with relational betrayal—family members, classmates, teachers, and religious communities targeted participants for surveillance and violence. Migration accounts showed how exclusionary migration regulations placed participants in jeopardy of further coercion and violence as they sought status. Settlement accounts raise the issue of the impacts of recursive traumatization. Past violations reverberated through felt-memories, heightening the fear and shame associated with a slur, put-down or threat. Notions of Canada gay haven, a queer utopia or benignly multicultural can

perilously invite us all to presume that trauma ends on arrival for refugees. This inquiry draws attention to the importance of addressing oppressions in workplaces, schools and communities in Canada as part of the trauma prevention agenda for those of us working in mental health in Canada.

CHAPTER 8

Reflections

In the same month that I presented the proposal for this research I attended the funeral of a former Rainbow Refugee member. Enrique Villegas arrived from Mexico with his partner. In the inconsistent manner of the Refugee Board, his partner was granted Convention Refugee status while Enrique was denied. After exhausting temporary visa options, he returned to Mexico City. He was working and studying with the hopes of reapplying with sufficient points as an independent skilled worker. On April 12 2007 he was found stabbed in his apartment in Mexico City. In the days prior to his murder he had texted friends about a man he had recently met. They were going to dinner. Enrique was unsure about the man. The police ignored this lead, attributed the murder to drug gangs without any real evidence, and closed the investigation.

As I am completing the manuscript, Rainbow Refugee members are helping a man decide how to respond to a deportation order. Of the eight Sri Lankans attending Rainbow Refugee over the past two years he was the only one who was rejected. He did not find Rainbow Refugee until two weeks before his hearing. His computer and English literacy were not as strong as the others, and limited his ability to find the group and participate in QLGBT events. The IRB officer who decided his case did not believe he was gay. The border services officer deciding his Pre-removal Risk Assessment (PRRA) believed he was gay, but argued that his experiences of assault and extortion by police were "isolated incidents." This man's PRRA was decided amid

the turmoil of 76 Sri Lankan Tamil men arriving by boat off the shores of British Columbia. Media coverage intensified the discourse of “bogus refugees” as “queue jumpers.” He was not granted a stay of deportation despite the fact that his request for Leave for a Judicial Review of his PRRA was still pending. This series of decisions may result in a man being sent back to a country where he has already faced repeated assaults and extortion by police, and where a ten-year prison sentence exists for homosexuality. Sri Lanka has retained this vestige of its British penal code, and in 1995, its parliament voted to extend the sanctions to include women.

While exploring options, I contacted a friend who is working for a humanitarian organization in Sri Lanka. I wanted to learn more about what on the ground supports might be there if this man were deported. She was skeptical that Sri Lankans would be accepted as Convention Refugees based on sexual orientation. *Things are changing here. There is a flourishing community here... even a small Pride celebration.*

I agreed. This is what the eight successful refugee claimants had described as well. Although I am not sure that flourishing would be the word they would have used. Queer people do manage to live discreetly, and manage to connect with others in public places like Mount Lavinia beach, certain pubs, and parks. Organizing is going on. But, we have also seen very clear evidence of a pattern of police abuse and extortion. The Sri Lankans attending Rainbow Refugee describe being approached by police, taken into custody, beaten, and in some cases sexually assaulted, and then forced to pay a bribe to be released. Police officers then return each month to demand more money,

threatening them with exposure or arrest if they do not pay. Both queer organizing and this pattern of abuse co-exist.

My friend concedes. “I see, it is low-level, not state level abuse we’re talking about.” The distinction is clearly important to her, as someone trained in the discourses of International Organizations and Human Rights. The conversation helps me understand the challenges of making the complexities of on the ground homophobic or transphobic persecution understandable. I was struggling to make the hidden and unreported visible and recognizable. Unlike refugee claimants, my safety is not at stake—my investment in bridging the gap is more distal. Yet, her skepticism rattles me, and I am distressed by her disbelief. My friend is savvy and supportive of queer rights. She is able to make the connections that bridge our two sets of knowledge about the situation for queer people in Sri Lanka. She continues “How protected people are is likely a reflection of the networks they have—and that would depend a great deal on their class.”

I stretch to understand her perspective too. She deals with the suffering caused by years of civil war on a daily basis. Perhaps assaults and extortion by police are low-level by comparison. In the sense of who gives the orders, scale, and visibility they certainly are, and yet, the impacts on people’s lives are powerful. Livable lives are jeopardized whether the violence is mass or targeted, televised or hidden, state-ordered or state-condoned.

My greatest challenge during this research process has been sitting down to write when the immediate work to be done feels pressing and the stakes high. Yet,

when I can sit down in my chair, silence my phone, and ignore online distractions, the writing has felt important. The importance for me lies in bringing QLGBT migration issues into dialogue with the people and organizations that shape QLGBT migration rights and settlement at multiple levels: local, provincial, national, and international. I have been encouraged by the dialogues sparked at conferences and meetings where I have presented work in progress. Traction is building.

Languageing embodied experience of sexualities and genders, of dislocation and relocation, of power and oppression is a dance with the impossible. I have struggled with this impossibility in this research. Participants engaged in this struggle as they relayed their accounts. Words come soaked with meanings we needed to wring out, unravel, and untwist. Power charged silences created tensions we strained against to understand and convey embodied experience. I have presented the accounts created and shared with me, presenting the struggles, courage, vulnerabilities and strengths of participants. Crossing borders and pushing boundaries, queer refugees in this study stretched the limits of the possible. Their accounts hold their knowledge of how to survive, resist, and creatively engage, as we came to understand it in dialogue. I presented these accounts as exemplars of some of the ways that people who live transgressive sexualities or genders have used mobility to survive, and the meanings they have made of this process. If these accounts moved you to try to understand their lives, if they have caused you to question, if they have ignited your own courage, our efforts have been rewarded.

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Appendix A

In Canada Refugee Determination Process

1. Initiating a Claim

At a Port-of-Entry Asylum seekers arriving in Canada initiate their claim at a Port of Entry (a land border or airport). Typically they are screened first by a Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officer for admissibility, and then referred to a Immigration officer for eligibility screening. For asylum seekers making a claim at a Port of Entry, both admissibility and eligibility are screened before they leave

Inland If already in Canada, asylum seekers present at an office of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). After basic admissibility criteria have been checked, they are typically asked to return on a separate date for their eligibility interviews.

Admissibility Asylum seekers identity documents are checked and they are questioned. Questions screen for serious criminality, involvement in war crimes, or armed conflict. At a Port of Entry asylum seekers and their belongings may be searched. Asylum seekers entering Canada may be detained if their identity cannot be verified or the officer believes they present a potential security threat.

2. Eligibility Interviews

CIC determines whether asylum seekers are eligible to have their claim heard by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). Questions cover issues such as: identity and travel documents, education and employment history, date of birth, family members, marital status, immigration status anywhere, their route to Canada, criminal record, grounds for the claim, previous refugee claims, and previous removal from Canada.

Most asylum seekers are found to be eligible to proceed with their claim. Eligibility criteria screens out those who: are Convention Refugees in another country of legal residence; have a serious criminal record; are considered a security risk; are making a second claim in Canada within 90 days of prior departure. Under the Safe Third Country agreement between the USA and Canada (in effect since December 2004), asylum seekers coming from the US who present at land borders are ineligible to make a refugee claim in Canada. There are some exemptions to Safe Third Country exclusions, for example, for unaccompanied minors, stateless persons, and asylum seekers who have a family member living in Canada. Currently, Safe Third Country exclusions are not being applied at airport Ports of Entry or inland CIC offices.

Eligibility interviews are conducted by immigration officers and interpretation is provided either in person or by phone. In policy, the eligibility interview is intended to be non-confrontational and focused on eligibility criteria,

not the merits or credibility of the refugee claim itself. A recent study conducted by Canadian Council for Refugees (November, 2010) suggests that officers differ widely in their adherence to these guidelines and their approach. Detailed notes are taken during the eligibility interview. These notes are presented at the hearing for questioning.

As part of the screening process, fingerprints and photographs are taken. A physical description is recorded. Claimants must surrender their passport and any travel or national identity documents. Certified true copies are provided. A conditional removal order is issued that will only go into effect if the claimant receives a negative decision at the refugee hearing.

3. Filing a Refugee Claim

Once found eligible, an asylum seeker is officially designated a refugee claimant, and their case is referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). At the end of the eligibility interview claimants are provided with a number of documents including a Personal Information Form (PIF) and instructions for completing a medical exam. Claimants may be given contact information for organizations that provide assistance with PIF preparation and other support such as assistance finding shelter. In British Columbia Red Cross First Contact provides 24 hour phone information and referral service for refugee claimants staffed by multilingual volunteers. Since 2008, this phone number has been provided to claimants at the end of the eligibility interview.

Personal Information Form (PIF) Refugee claimants have 28 days to complete and submit their PIF. If the 28-day deadline is missed the claim is considered abandoned. This form asks for personal details such as places of residence, work history, family members. Claimants also provide a brief narrative outlining their claim. The narrative must be written in English or French.

Claimants have the right to seek legal counsel for assistance with PIF preparation and their case at their own expense.

4. Accessing Health, Social and Legal Services

Interim Federal Health At the end of the eligibility interview claimants receive instructions for a medical exam. This exam must be completed prior to submitting their PIF. When claimants submit their PIF, they receive Interim Federal Health that covers basic health care.

Social Assistance and Work Permits Refugee claimants are eligible for social assistance based on current provincial rates. Once they have submitted their PIF they can apply for a work permit. The work permit usually takes 3 months to process, but can take much longer.

Legal Representation Ideally claimants have legal counsel for preparing their PIF and representation at their hearing. In practice, access to effective legal representation is constrained by claimants' financial means. The number of unrepresented claimants has increased markedly in British Columbia since 2007, and are currently estimated to be around 50% (UNHCR, 2009). The success rate

for unrepresented claimants (14.7%) is substantially lower than the success rate for claimants with representation (54.9%) (Government of Canada, 2009)

In British Columbia refugee claimants are eligible for legal aid. However, current demand for legal aid exceeds the funds available. Unlike legal aid for criminal or family law, government funding levels do not vary with the number of cases. In 2007-8, Legal Services Society in BC implemented a number of measures to allocate these limited funds (UNHCR, 2009). Refugee claimants are screened for both financial need and the relative strength of their case. Currently refugee claimants from Mexico, Honduras, and Columbia are screened using a form and interview that assesses whether they have sought state protection and pursued relocation within their own country prior to seeking refugee protection in Canada.

5. Preparing for a Hearing

The time between the eligibility interview to the hearing has stretched from 12 months to 22 months between 2006 -2010. Refugee claimants must reapply for legal aid for hearing preparation and representation ten months after submitting their PIF, or when they are notified of a hearing date. In practice this means claimants may have little to no contact with their lawyers between PIF preparation and hearing preparation. Some claimants are able to gather evidence and documents independently or with the assistance of a settlement organization or Rainbow Refugee. Others rush to gather documents after reapplying for legal aid and meeting with their lawyer for hearing preparation.

Claimants are advised in writing of their hearing 2-3 months in advance. The claimant or their representative receives a letter specifying issues to be addressed in the hearing. All evidence must be submitted in either English or French to the IRB twenty days prior to their hearing.

6. The Refugee Hearing

Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), an independent agency staffed by governor in council appointees, is responsible for making decisions on refugee claims. Hearings operate under rules of administrative tribunals—meaning they follow legal procedures and rules of evidence, but are less formal than courts. Refugee hearings are private; the claimant can give consent to observers to attend. Observers sign a confidentiality agreement.

A single board member presides over the hearing and makes the decision. Hearings begin with a brief introduction of the purpose. The interpreter and claimant are asked to verify that they understand each other. If interpretation is provided by phone sound checks of microphones are conducted. The claimant is asked to stand and swear or affirm to tell the truth. The PIF and other documentation is entered as evidence. A representative of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration reviews claims prior to hearings. The Minister's representative may provide written observations to the adjudicator or elect to attend the hearing and cross-examine the claimant. Currently, the order of questioning begins with the Minister's representative, followed by the board member, and then the claimant's representative. If the claimant is presenting

witnesses they wait outside until called in for questioning. After the representative concludes questioning the Minister's Representative provides observations. The claimant's representative provides a final summation.

Hearings are generally scheduled for four hours. Typically, a break is taken at some point, and claimants are usually told that they can ask for a break if needed. Four hours is generally adequate, but hearings can go longer particularly if interpretation is needed and a Minister's representative is present. Adjudicators are required to give a written response that thoroughly presents the reasons and evidence for their decision. To prepare this, they may take notes on a computer throughout the hearing, and the entire proceedings are recorded.

Issues of identity of the claimant are addressed first. Claimants must provide evidence that they are who they say they are, and that their claim to a particular sexual orientation identity or gender identity is genuine. Subjective and well-founded fear of persecution is addressed next. Questions pertaining to country conditions, past experiences of persecution, evidence of persecution against similar others are asked. Claimants who have travelled or lived in other countries or did not make a refugee claim immediately on arrival will be questioned on their reasons for not making a claim at the first opportunity. Claimants may also be questioned about whether their own state authorities are capable of providing protection, and whether relocating within their own country would be possible.

When possible, adjudicators provide a decision in person at the conclusion of the hearing, sending the written decision later. When this is not possible, the claimant waits to receive the written decision in the mail. This typically takes a few weeks to a month. Service guidelines provide for a maximum of three months. In very rare cases claimants have waited much longer.

7. Post-Determination

Positive Decisions Once granted protection as a Convention Refugee or Person in need of Protection, a refugee has up to 180 days to apply for Permanent Residence in Canada. The current wait for Permanent Residence status is six months to a year. The code on the back of the Permanent Residence card includes letters indicating that the holder of the card is a Convention Refugee.

Negative Decisions At time of writing rejected claimants have no right to appeal a negative decision. Although the 2002 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act provided for a Refugee Appeal Division this division was never implemented. Three procedures potentially follow a negative decision. At any point in their application refugee claimants could make an application based on Humanitarian and Compassionate consideration. H&C decisions evaluate whether applicants have substantial ties to Canada, and would face hardship if they could not stay in Canada. Filing an H&C does not prevent deportation. All refused claimants have the option for a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA). A PRRA decision, made by the a CBSA officer, examines only new evidence unavailable at

the time of the hearing, and considers whether the claimant might face risk of cruel treatment or serious harm if returned. Less than 2% of PRRA applicants receive a positive decision. In the case that there has been an error of law, a claimants lawyer can apply to have the case reviewed by Federal Court. Federal Courts are not required to hear the case. None of these constitute a merits based appeal.

Appendix B



The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL- MINIMAL RISK RENEWAL

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Maria Buchanan	DEPARTMENT: UBC/Education/Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education	UBC BREB NUMBER: H07-00963
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:		
Institution		Site
UBC		Vancouver (excludes UBC Hospital)
Other locations where the research will be conducted: Participant observation will be conducted in Room H of The Centre-A Community for LGTB people and their allies Interviews will be conducted at locations convenient for participants including private offices in the LGTB Centre, the YWCA, or UBC counselling psychology department		
CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):		
Sharalyn Jordan		
SPONSORING AGENCIES:		
N/A		
PROJECT TITLE:		
Coming (out) to Canada: A Critical Ethnography of QLGBT Migrant Settlement		
EXPIRY DATE OF THIS APPROVAL: May 6, 2011		
APPROVAL DATE: May 6, 2010		
The Annual Renewal for Study have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.		
Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board		
<hr/> Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair Dr. Ken Craig, Chair Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair		