Exclusionary moments: Queer desires and migrants' sense of (un)belonging

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ABSTRACT

Migration to Iceland has increased considerably in recent decades, and after the labour market was opened up to EU workers in 2006, migrants from countries in Central and Eastern Europe have become by far the largest immigrant group. The Nordic countries have increasingly been seen as a "safe space" for people with queer desires, and Iceland is no exception to that trend. This article discusses an under-researched area within queer migration studies: migrations from Central and Eastern Europe to a small population in Northern Europe, and their sense of belonging to their ethnic community, the queer community and wider Icelandic society. The overreaching theme of this study is "exclusionary moments," while the sub-themes relate to social class (dis) identification, shame and emotional work, and participants' sense of (un)belonging. This study is based on semi-structured interviews, and argues that shame is placed on participants through differential power structures, but also highlights participants' agency within those cultural scenarios. It applies theories of affect and emotions, and the concept of a global hierarchy of value, to demonstrate how exclusionary moments materialise in everyday settings.

1. Introduction

Despite a relatively large body of scholarship on queer[1] migration internationally, few studies have focused on migration to a country with a small population. This article highlights the "exclusionary moments" of LGPQ[2] individuals who have migrated from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and their sense of belonging within a remote Nordic country, Iceland. The term exclusionary moments is used in line with Crenshaw's (1991) notions of intersectionality to refer to those moments when exclusion occurs in particular circumstances, and when "new realities" are generated. This does not simply relate to having queer desires, or being an immigrant, and is not merely the sum of various marginalised identities, such as ethnicity, sexuality, ability, or class, but emerges when these multiple identifications intersect (Kuhar, 2009). Moments of social stigma and subordination can range from passing inconvenience to long-term repercussion, and make those who experience them feel displaced. Shame and humiliation are attached to participants in this study through differential social structures, which engender moments of exclusion that participants must navigate. Exclusion occurs, for example, through religious and governmental

institutions, as well as through the legacies of communism and the cultural attitudes toward sexual orientation in their countries of origin. In Iceland participants faced exclusion, for example, stemming from racial and ethnic stereotyping in the queer community and in wider Icelandic society, as well as homophobia in their immigrant communities. Consequently, participants often demonstrated their agency through what Hochschild (1983) terms "emotional work," to maintain connections with family members, better fit within various cultural scenarios, and attain what Butler (2004) calls "liveable lives".

Recent studies discussing issues of queer migration in Sweden have covered narratives of intimacy relating to affect and emotions in partner migration (Ahlstedt, 2016), as well as gay and lesbian internal migration and mobility decisions in connection to family ties (Wilmark, 2016a, 2016b). Studies on queer asylum seekers in Norway include an examination of sexual norms regarding immigration policy (Mühleisen et al., 2012), and the issue of translating the "genuineness" of sexuality when applying for asylum (Akin, 2016). Scholars focusing on internal migration have traditionally described gay and lesbian migration as a rural to urban phenomenon, driven by the perception that there are more possibilities and less homophobia in urban areas, and in the

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[1] Queer can refer to variety of identity markers, such as, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, transgender, and intersex, as well as gender identities and sexual practices which do not follow the dominant norm, such as genderqueer individuals and BDSM practices. More importantly for this study, queer can also refer to the process of queering migration studies, by denaturalising categories of analysis within the study of gender and sexuality, and separating the "normative" which is morally determined from the "normal" as statistically determined (Giffney, 2004), and thus relating to queer theory.

[2] This acronym derives from the self-identification of the participants in this study as lesbian, gay, pansexual and queer. However, when referring to other scholarly studies, this article will use the acronyms that appear in those studies.

process have skewed the focus towards larger cities (Weston, 1995; Knopp, 2004; Wilmark and Östh, 2013; Jennings and Millward, 2016). Some studies have, nonetheless, stressed that other migration trends and destinations are possible (Gorman-Murray, 2007, 2009; Waitt and Gorman-Murray, 2011; Lewis, 2012). Studies have also shown that gay couples tend to migrate to high-amenity and dense regions regardless of tolerance, while lesbian couples tend to migrate to regions that are not as dense or rich in amenities but are more tolerant, and that lesbian couples are more likely to have children (Cooke, 2005; Brown and Knopp, 2006). An under-researched area in queer migration studies in Northern Europe, thus, relates to transnational migration from CEE to the Nordic countries, and more specifically, migrants' resocialisation into a small population such as that of Iceland. The vast majority of immigrants in Iceland come from countries in CEE, yet, based on the outreach undertaken in the course of this study, social participation and visibility of LGBTQ+ immigrants from CEE seems disproportionately lacking. This paved the way for the research questions: How do migrants with queer desires from the CEE experience exclusion, and how do they find a sense of belonging within Icelandic society, their ethnic community and the queer community? This study applies approaches involving affect and emotions to engage with participants' mixed feelings of queer commitment (Hall and Jagose, 2012), and also highlights the dynamics of intersecting positions, making uneven power relations visible.

There are no simple explanations when enquiring about motives for queer migrations, as they are as much economic as they are a search for sexual freedom (Binnie, 2004). None of the participants in this study initially migrated to Iceland in search of greater opportunities for sexual citizenship. But some stated that they decided to extend their stay in Iceland because of their ability to produce a self that was more in line with their sexual orientation, and because they enjoyed better legal status and social welfare. This is in accordance with the findings of Stella et al. (2017) in their study on LGBT migrants from CEE in Scotland. Thus, while participants in this study were initially motivated by economics, sexuality played a role in their long-term decision-making. Consequently, it is important to recognise contradictions inherent in neoliberal processes, make visible the class dimension of sexualities and examine them critically (Binnie, 2013).

Queer knowledge production and sexual politics in CEE has been described by Mizieliñska and Kulpa (2013) with the concept of "knotted temporality," which describes the appropriation of the Western hegemonic discourses of "secularism," "gay rights," and "progress" into cultures in the CEE, while stigma is attached to CEE countries through notions of "nationalism," "homophobia," and "backwardness". Thus, thinking beyond "centrism" is fundamental to the ongoing efforts to decentre Western sexualities. This article does not seek to reproduce notions of the East lagging behind the West, but rather, to put into context how lived lives of transnational migrants from CEE materialise in the Nordic context, and demonstrate how their migration is contributing to the ongoing process of decentring Western sexualities. The article begins by discussing theoretical perspectives relevant for this study, then addresses the Icelandic context and methods, before moving on to the specific findings and concluding remarks. The overarching theme of this article is exclusionary moments, as this seemed, in many ways, to be the thread that tied the sub-themes together. The three sub-themes relate to issues of social class (dis)identification, shame and emotional work, and participants' sense of (un)belonging.

2. Theoretical perspectives

A theoretical discussion relating to the "othering" process and racialisation is pivotal when referring to LGPQ migrants' experiences of residing in Iceland. The geographical boundaries of Said's (1979) notions of the "Orient" or the "other" have shifted throughout history, but the concept itself has remained more or less consistent. The gradation of Orients has been termed "nesting orientalisms" by Bakić-Hayden

(1995), and describes a pattern that classifies Asia as the most "Eastern" or "other," followed by the Balkans, and then Eastern Europe, in a hierarchical construction aimed towards the West as the centre. Herzfeld's (2004) "global hierachy of value" has a similar disposition, where a universal value has been attached to one's "culture," which is then ranked and "othered" according to the gradient of nesting orientalism. Moreover, there is a tendency to isolate and essentialise features of specific groups or cultures, and make those thoughts and practices seem unchangeable and especially true for that group compared to others (Bakić-Hayden, 1995). Racialisation has always involved a consolidation of biological and cultural arguments; nonetheless, "old" racism has mainly been based on "blackness". But as racism has increasingly been regarded as socially unacceptable, "new racism" revolves more around how socially defined groups are systematically categorised with regards to culture, religion (Harrison, 2002), and ethnicity (Brah, 2000), where some groups are further seen as incompatible with modern society, and where the idea of separate races is still prevalent the wider societal discourse (Bauman, 2000). The concept of a global hierarchy of value frames participants' experiences of racial and ethnic stereotyping within the Icelandic context in many ways, especially with regards to generalizations of socio-economic status and "backwardness".

This article addresses various forms of exclusionary moments, and thus, a theoretical deliberation of social class as it relates to structure and agency is relevant. The concepts of inclusion and exclusion are often related to social identities, and have important structuring effects with regards to why, how, and where particular boundaries are formed (Anthias, 2001). Within the European context, exclusion is often regarded as a lack of social integration and social cohesion, which is perhaps just another way of describing poverty and its effects (Berkel, 1997). Bourdieu (1990) applied the notion of *habitus* to describe how something that is socially constructed, such as a person's social class (as well as one's ethnicity and sexual orientation), can appear to be inevitable and natural, and the ways in which the social is incorporated into the self while the self is constituted in social relations. The identity assigned by society might not be the identity people would want to claim for themselves, and they might seek to avoid social spaces where they are so designated (Skeggs, 1999). Personal agency, whether it is understood as free will, resistance, or a sort of mediating relationality (Kockelman, 2007), is always negotiated within the matrix of power, and often emerges as a political privilege within the gaps of regulative norms (Miller et al., 2006). Participants in this study expressed their agency in various ways, for example, as resistance to exclusionary processes and to their assigned identities, and this will be highlighted to some extent.

Exclusionary moments are in many ways governed by shame and humiliation, and a brief discussion of theories relating to gay or queer shame is thus applicable. According to Sedgwick (1993), queer identity and queer resistance are rooted in experiences of shame, because shame generates conceptual understandings and linkages between identity and performativity. Lui (2017) discusses how the two streams of thought which have previously tackled gay shame either focus on assimilation to the dominant society to reduce shame in queer subjects, or on embracing shame in order to repoliticise the queer subject through the approach of antinormativity. However, both models produce shame as a localising object attached to a single subject, and thus, do not conceptualise shame as a movement and circulatory process between bodies. Emotions, such as shame and humiliation, are thus neither innate nor merely imposed on stigmatised subjects through social structures, but are created through this capacity to "affect and be affected" (Blackman and Venn, 2010, p. 9). Notions of shame arose in the analysis of the interviews; participants were not asked directly about these feelings, but some did mention them in connection to exclusionary moments in various social situations.

Contrasting exclusionary moments are moments of inclusion, or a sense of belonging. Baumeister and Leary (1995) have maintained that

a need to form social attachments and find a sense of belonging is a fundamental human motivation, which has multiple effects on cognitive processes and emotional patterns. A sense of belonging often directly links to one's level of civic engagement, and is also important for both positive identity formation and for individual psychosocial well-being (Heath and Mulligan, 2008). Yuval-Davis (2011) has maintained that a distinction is usually made between the politics of belonging and the individual's sense of belonging, but as Anthias (2013) and others have noted, the arenas of the political infiltrate all parts of social life, including orientations, values, feelings, and networks and resources, so a clear distinction between the two is impossible. One's belonging comes into question both through the migration process, as well as through the continued process of "coming out" with regard to one's sexual orientation or gender identity, and thus, plays a significant role in participants' daily lives.

3. The context and methods

In the last twenty years, migration to Iceland has increased considerably, and currently the proportion of immigrants stands at about 10.6% of the population (Statistics Iceland, 2017a). The vast majority of immigrants live in the capital area in and around Reykjavík, but that is also where the bulk of the population lives (Statistics Iceland, 2017b). Assuredly, the largest immigrant group in Iceland hails from Poland, making up 38.8% of the total immigrant population, followed by Lithuanians (5.2%), Filipinos (4.5%), Germans (3.3%), and Thais (2.9%) (Statistics Iceland, 2017c). Iceland is part of the Schengen agreement and the European Economic Area, which implies free movement of persons, capital, goods and services within the EU and EEA member countries. Consequently, the Icelandic labour market was opened up to EU workers in 2006, and people from these countries are given priority in acquiring work permits, compared to people from other parts of the world (Bissat, 2013; Skaptadóttir, 2015). But as Binnie (2004) has highlighted, the migration process is rarely straightforward for queer migrants, even if legislative provisions are in place.

The queer community in Iceland is small, consisting mainly of friendship circles and formations around various social groups, such as Samtökin '78 (The National Queer Organisation); the queer choir; and various sub-groups relating to specific issues of: youth, trans, intersex, etc. At present, there is one official queer nightclub located in Reykjavík, and queer people (supposedly) gain the most visibility during the festivities of Reykjavík Pride. The Nordic countries have an aura of gender equality (Pétursdóttir, 2009) accompanied by ideas of being a "safe space" for queer people (Ellenberger, 2017). Nonetheless, Samtökin '78 conducted a survey in 2014, which noted that 80% of respondents had experienced marginalisation or prejudice in relation to their sexual orientation or gender identity (in locations such as schools, bars and clubs, as well as at family gatherings) and about 70% in their place of work, in the previous three years (Bjarnadóttir, 2014). So it is clear that issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are still as relevant in Iceland as elsewhere.

The findings presented here are based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews with LGPQ migrants from the CEE that took place in 2014 and 2015. Three of the interviews were with couples, while six of them were individual interviews. Seven out of twelve participants identified as cis-women, one as a genderqueer woman and four as cis-men. Participants' ages range from 27 to 38 years old at the time of the interviews, and all of them are first generation immigrants of white ethnic origin. The interviews were carried out in English except one which was in Icelandic, and took place in participants' homes, at library cafeterias or via Skype, lasting between one and two hours. Six of the participants lived in various parts of Reykjavík, while five lived in smaller villages around the country, and one had moved back to her country of origin. Some participants had a university degree, but none was directly applying that education in their current work. All the participants had full-time employment and/or studies, working in fish

factories, health care and social services, catering, or in the tourism industry. Some participants mentioned that although they were now in working-class employment, their earnings were considerably better than in their country of origin, even when taking into account high living expenses in Iceland. Participants were located through friendship connections and social media groups, applying snowball sampling along with convenience sampling. As I do share some commonalities with the participants, regarding issues such as, gender and sexuality, social class and a sense of (un)belonging, a mutual understanding was generated in some cases, but my positionality as an ethnic Icelander and an academic researcher provided me with privileges. During the interviews, participants were asked about their experiences concerning the migration and integration/resocialisation process, ethnic stereotyping and homophobia, work, family, and friends, and their degree of "outness" with regards to their sexual orientation. Other topics of discussion included their sense of belonging in Icelandic society, their immigrant community, and the queer community. LGPQ migrants in Iceland do not fit the "ethnic" model of LGBTQ+ identities, as is discussed by Sinfield (1996), because their affinity to other LGBTQ+ migrants usually did not surpass their national identity, and in the interviews they often discussed a general lack of connection to a queer community in Iceland and elsewhere. The interviews were analysed first with open coding, and then focused coding with the assistance of the program Dedoose, to identify relevant themes and potential meaning (Esterberg, 2002). Three prevalent types of exclusionary moments, discussed below, were carved out, in connection to: social class (dis)identification, shame and emotional work, and sense of (un)belonging. As Iceland is a microstate, with a population of about 348,450 inhabitants (Statistics Iceland, 2018), and as some participants were not entirely "out" in terms of their sexual orientation, recognisable details are withheld as much as possible and pseudonyms are used throughout.

4. Social class (dis)identification

The concept of social class relates to participants' experiences in various ways, for example, in connection to deliberations about how Poles inhabit the immigrant "other" within Icelandic society (Guðjónsdóttir and Loftssdóttir, 2016), and how this othering often extends to other CEE countries. It is important to bear in mind the heterogeneity of countries in CEE, and that Poles are not representative of these countries as such. But in Icelandic public discourse, discussions concerning Poles are frequently essentialised and projected as representative of all migrants from CEE. This relates to the fact that Eastern European states are often approached as Europe's "internal others" (Kalnačs, 2016). Regarding the labour market, immigrants from countries with relatively lower wage levels and higher unemployment rates often took on low-paying jobs in Iceland, mainly in the construction industry or in services and production. The construction industry is male-dominated, while Polish women seem to be concentrated in a few low-skilled and low-income occupations, such as care or cleaning work. This brings them little prestige, and places them in a rather disadvantaged position within society (Napierala and Wojtyńska, 2016). Following the economic collapse in 2008, when many lost their jobs, foreign workers had significantly higher unemployment rates than ethnic Icelanders and had further difficulties re-entering the work force when economic recovery took place (Wojtyńska & Skaptadóttir, forthcoming). Nonetheless, authorities in Iceland tend to equate employment and language fluency with integration (Innes and Skaptadóttir, 2017).

Although migrants from CEE potentially fit the visual image of an ethnic Icelander, having roots in CEE can also be linked to somewhat humiliating ethnic stereotyping. Consequently, some participants wanted to distance themselves from their co-nationals or hide their nationality in some way. Kacper (cis-man, 28 years old) had lived in Iceland with his partner for about a year when the interview took place. He has a university degree, but worked part-time in the catering

industry along with some of his co-nationals. He elaborated on the notion of disidentification (Muñoz, 1999) from his co-nationals:

> I have a bad connection with people from [his country of origin]. (Interviewer: why is that do you think?) I think I have difficulties with people who come here mainly for financial reasons. Because they complain about everything. […] They are happiest when talking about what is on offer in Bónus [a low-cost supermarket], or how much they spent at the [country of origin] shop. But of course, I also have good friends from my country, but they are interested in things like the culture or nature, and I also want to make connections with people outside the [country of origin] community.

Kacper's exclusionary moments could be described as intersections of social class belonging, educational levels, generational gap as well as reasons for migrating to and residing in Iceland, which created distinctions between localised ethnic belonging. Social class intersects strongly with national identity, and in the process, produces different sets of cultural and social migration practices (Pawlak, 2015). Moreover, those who are ashamed of their co-nationals in some way may resist being identified as CEE representatives, and often strongly criticise CEE world-views. Shame further plays a vital role in class distinctions between Poles in London, as the behaviour of the lower class affects the overall reputation of Poles living outside of Poland (Garapich, 2016).

Mole et al. (2017) have noted that the resocialisation of heterosexual migrants from CEE in London does not necessarily result in changes in attitudes towards homosexuality as such, but rather, that they become aware of the fact that homophobic comments and public utterances, which would pass without a comment in their home country, are less likely to do so within the UK context. So instead of adopting a more tolerant attitude, they learn to "perform" tolerance towards lesbians and gays. This echoes what Piotr (cis-man, 36 years old), noted in connection to co-workers in his place of work:

> There were some ladies from [his country of origin], women who are around forty or fifty who were cleaners, and one was talking to me. I said something like, because my boyfriend this, or my boyfriend that, and she became kind of confused. She said okay, but I think she wasn't really comfortable with hearing that, she really didn't know how to respond to that and answer me. So I feel that many in the [country of origin] community are against that, but they are also changing, as they see how the Icelandic people react. Also, I was somewhere once with my boyfriend, and we were holding hands, and we heard swearing behind us, "fucking gays", and then later I heard that they were speaking [his language], and you know, I talked to them, do you know what they said? Yeah well, it really doesn't translate.

This quote shows exclusionary moments with regards to social class, gender and sexuality, as well as illustrating verbal abuse. Mole (2017) discusses how migrant women from CEE tend to be somewhat more tolerant towards difference, while still not being able to engage meaningfully when it comes to sexual orientation. Equality legislation in the UK, according to Valentine and Harris (2016), can lead to the "privatisation of prejudice" rather than actual change in attitudes and engagement with difference. An enforcement of controversial views of political correctness may only push prejudice into the private sphere. On the other hand, Stella et al. (2017) have noted that the existence of policy and legal frameworks are important in sanctioning and preventing homophobic aggression; whether superficial or meaningful, it contributes significantly to the everyday well-being and security of LGBT migrants. Both Kacper and Piotr made use of their agency within these circumstances mentioned above, through disidentification with the ideology of their co-nationals as well as by challenging cases of heteronormativity and homophobia.

5. Shame and emotional work

Shame is here predominantly viewed as a group-based emotion which relates, for example, to histories of imperialism, colonialism (Ahmed, 2004) and other institutionalised forms of structural inequality. How that materialises in everyday life is discussed by Munt (2007), who argues that we should accept shame and its role in our attachments, disattachments and self-identifications as a shape-shifting instrument that transforms feelings such as fear and vulnerability into hate and disgust, while projecting these feelings onto those marked as the "other" in society. The participants all grew up in societies and cultures shaped by Christian values, although many of them did not consider themselves to be religious today. The circulatory effects of shame, as well as the capacity to affect and be affected, is evident in participants' narratives of being forced to leave the church, as well as their accounts of practicing faith independently of the church, on account of their sexual orientation. Kacper talked about his Catholic guilt, and stated that if he entirely ceased to believe in God something bad would surely happen to him. Grigore (cis-man, 27 years old) had come to terms with religion and sexuality though his own reasoning. He notes:

> The church says that it's a bad thing [to be gay] but it doesn't hurt anyone. As I see it, you finally have this authentic feeling inside of you, and you can feel that this is love, and that there is nothing wrong with it. When there are so many bad people doing bad things in the world, it just doesn't make any sense to me. I have come to the conclusion that, I'm just going to live here with my own personal moral compass and it works for me.

Religious institutions were commonly discussed as spaces of exclusionary moments in the interviews. The Roman Catholic Church has, for example, been inextricably linked to Polish national identity and as a result, its conservative views on sexuality have been accepted without question (Szulc, 2011). Zdanevicius (2011) maintains that the best way to bridge the gap between policy and practice in Lithuania, is to advocate for lesbian and gay knowledge, which in the post-Soviet context would entail a sustained challenge to the dominant heteronormative "truth" and the cultural production of social institutions.

Some participants noted that their views and practices concerning their sexual orientation were already moulded long before they migrated to Iceland. This relates to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, and how histories of something that is socially constructed, such as a person's identifications, can appear to be inevitable and natural. As Justina (cis-woman, 35 years old) remarked: "it's still hard for us to be okay with who we are, it's like, sometimes I would like to kiss her [wife] goodbye when she drives me to work. But I never do, because, I feel a bit like, ashamed". This was both assumed to be inappropriate as well as a potentially dangerous act in their country of origin, and was thus not part of their everyday practices in Iceland. The shame response is of vital importance to produce social order and conformity, because through it people internalise ideas, cultural discourses, norms and expectations, and in many cases, punish and discipline themselves if they fail to live in accordance with them. In other cases, shame may promote resistance rather than conformity, and people who do not call out racist, homophobic, or sexist comments might even feel shame if they did not do so (Sayer, 2005). Critical deliberations of various stereotypes, in order to point out their essentialising tendencies can, nonetheless, be a challenging procedure, as it is seen as going against the social pressure of "getting along" with others. As Ahmed (2010) has explained, it blocks smooth communication between individuals, and in the process makes those who speak out the "kill-joy" in a specific situation.

Browne and Ferreira (2015) have discussed how incidences of exclusion not only remake a place, for example, as homophobic or tolerant, but also remake the person who experiences them as unacceptable or acceptable. Marlena (cis-woman, 29 years old) and Eliza (cis-woman, 31 years old) got married a few years ago, after having

been a couple for several years. They have a young daughter and, in many ways, represent a rather normative family unit. Nonetheless, they have experienced blatant and overt prejudice from their immigrant community and immediate family, as well as some naïve remarks from Icelandic co-workers. They expressed themselves quite openly about their family situation:

> My mum always asks me when I'm going to get married and find a husband, even though she knows we are married and that we have a child together. Yeah, and when we went for a visit to [country of origin] we are not allowed to sleep in the same room, and then there is a problem cause our daughter is used to us sleeping in the same room. We were just supposed to hide. […] But you can't be angry with them, because it's the Soviet way of thinking, back then everyone had to be healthy and sporty and even those with glasses got bullied.

Some exclusionary moments are more decisive than others, while this one contains, for example, feelings of shame and humiliation, it also requires a physical removal to maintain the heterosexual norm. This quote is an example of the legacy of communism within CEE, and further relates to the global hierarchy of value as the Soviet way of thinking is, in many ways, seen as out of place in the Icelandic context. Mole (2011) has noted that in many post-communist states, the "traditional" was equated with the "normal", and strictly defined in heterosexual, Christian and national terms, as traditional sexual and gender roles were seen as "an important aspect of the nostalgia for "normality"" (Watson, 1993, p. 472-3).

Strategically managing information that participants told their parents was often discussed in the interviews, while some participants noted that they went to great lengths to sustain relationships with parents and siblings in their home country, even if they had faced humiliation or hostility on account of their queer desires. They engaged in emotional work to communicate and reach out to their families via Skype, phone calls, and somewhat regular visits. As Weston (1991) has noted, lesbians and gays may feel alienated from their biological families, and thus often create their own families of choice (quoted in Ryan-Flood, 2009). This was true, in many ways, for the participants in this study, but none of them discussed having been completely rejected by parents or siblings, although their degrees of "outness" varied somewhat. This exercise in agency was nonetheless somewhat gendered, as the women tended to be more in contact with their parents and family than the men.

6. Sense of (un)belonging

"Home" is not a question of where one originates or of fantasies of belonging, but rather the way a space of belonging is sentimentalised, as in the expression "home is where the heart is". Consequently, addressing notions of being-at-home can only be done through affect and questions of how one fails to feel, or feels (Ahmed, 1999). Most participants made somewhat regular visits to their country of origin, and some spoke with a sense of pride about the place where they grew up, but mainly those who came from major cities. Some discussed how it was, in many ways, difficult to find a sense of belonging in Iceland due to the language barrier and cultural differences, while Piotr stated that: "when I'm going to Iceland, I think of it as my home. I know that I have a home in [country of origin], I have a family there. Always when I'm abroad, for one or two weeks, I'm always happy, seriously, I'm always happy to be back here in Iceland". Yuval-Davis (2006) has noted that a sense of belonging is about "feeling safe" as much as it is about emotional connections, and that feelings of belonging are connected to one's position and the amount of power one holds within specific groups.

As Gorman-Murray et al. (2008) have noted, the experience of exclusion that members of marginalised groups often encounter tends to increase one's need to belong to a social group. This relates to the ambiguous position of a couple who mentioned that they would have

liked to expand their circle of friends, but had difficulty doing so, because within their immigrant community they felt excluded by homophobia, and in the queer community they were disregarded as foreigners. Adrijana (genderqueer woman, 33 years old) had frequented the local LGBTQ+ club in Reykjavik and met people who were regulars there, mostly gay men and some transgender individuals, but next to no lesbians. She subsequently re-examined her sexual orientation, which had previously been bisexual but was now pansexual. Another participant said he felt that the LGBTQ+ community in Iceland was non-existent, stating that he had some gay friends but other than that he "had not really encountered a real community as such". Further, several participants had no, or at least very limited, connection to the queer community in Iceland, and did not particularly relate to LGBTQ+ organizations' struggle for equal citizenship rights, in Iceland, or in their country of origin. Zuzanna (cis-woman, 38 years old) had lived in Iceland for more than ten years, and described her impression of the queer community in this way:

> I feel as though there are just a lot of small groups within this community, which are not open or inclusive. I know there is an office [The National Queer Organisation] and that someone works there, but I have called once or twice to ask about things like the partnership laws and such, but they didn't seem to have that information, and told me to call Alþjóðahús [International House] which deals with immigrant issues, but that was many years ago.

Zuzanna had more or less given up on making "new" connections in the queer community; she was in a relationship at the time of the interviews and thus did not find it as urgent. Lewis (2016) has noted that newly arrived migrants often experience tension between where the gay community wants to place them and where they themselves seek to be placed. Some participants had minor contact with their ethnic community, but due to the small population of Icelandic society, many ethnic groups do not have a well-defined community as such. Others discussed closer connections to other immigrants in Iceland who were not from their country of origin, but, for example, who also spoke the Russian language.

Making connections with ethnic Icelanders seemed to be somewhat of a struggle for many, as Icelanders were usually willing to chat, for example, if you met them at a bar, but then an "invisible wall" came up at some point. Ethnic Icelanders have usually had their circle of friends since childhood, and seemed to the participants to be very sceptical of new ones. Lena (cis-woman, 28 years old) had lived in Iceland for some years, had acquaintances at work and was in a relationship, and discussed her experience of making friends with ethnic Icelanders as follows:

> I'm not really close with a lot of Icelandic people, I have found it a bit more difficult than having friends from other countries. In some sense, I feel like there is an invisible wall, it is possible to break through it, but it is difficult, you need a lot of time to climb this wall, ha-ha, and to have like a peak at the other side.

Exclusionary moments relating to connecting with ethnic Icelanders were commonly discussed in the interviews. In this quote, the emotional work that migrants have to perform in order to make meaningful connections with ethnic Icelanders is also evident. This "wall" between ethnic Icelanders and migrants also reflects shifting cultural notions of whiteness and racialistation. Loftsdóttir and Jensen (2012) have noted that within the Nordic counties, local understandings of national belonging are to a large extent based on racialised notions of whiteness. Histories of imperialism, colonialism and racism are rendered invisible and insignificant in the present and seen as a foreign import, which is an affective interpretation of the nation and its history (Loftsdóttir, 2017). Certain populations can nonetheless become racialised, and in the process move in and out of the category of whiteness (Fox et al., 2012). Migrants from CEE hold the privilege of fitting the Icelandic national imaginary of whiteness, but as othering further depends on

language fluency, cultural familiarity, and racialised notions of the global hierarchy of values, procedures of othering continue. Participants in this study lived their life in Iceland, participated in transnational practices, experienced numerous exclusionary moments, yet saw it as their home in one way or another.

7. Concluding remarks

This article bridges a gap in queer migration scholarship by discussing LGPQ migrations from CEE to Iceland, a remote Nordic country with a small population. The study sheds lights on the uneven power dynamics that LGPQ migrants experience, by highlighting their exclusionary moments and the way those processes produce new realities (Crenshaw, 1991), as well as how emotional work (Hochschild, 1983) works as a moral mediator in order to maintain connections with family members and make new ones with ethnic Icelanders. I have shown how participants navigate amongst identities of nationality, class and sexuality in different social settings, destabilizing these categories, while also actively working to avoid being labelled as a migrant from CEE or an LGPQ person, in order to avoid social stigma associated with those groups. Methodological implications of intersectionality in this study relate to what McCall (2005) has defined as an intracategorical approach to complexity and intersections, in which social settings of oppression are observed and a transgression of boundaries occurs (Fotopoulou, 2012).

The findings are, in some sense, in line with what Stella et al. (2017) discuss in their study, where participants searched for normality and liveable lives (Butler, 2004) in a material sense, along with a more uninhibited expression of their gender and sexuality. Binnie (2013) and others have argued for discussing issues of social class within sexuality studies, and this approach was significant to this study, in that it de-centres the myth that people from CEE are a homogeneous group of people, and indicate that class dimensions are also imperative to LGPQ migrants. The findings further suggest that becoming a "transgressive" queer might depend on which group has the social capital or socio-economic means to go against the norm and disrupt the status quo (Beasley, 2005). The participants in this study lacked the social capital of native queer Icelanders, and were thus less likely to be involved in queer activism. Within a geographically isolated population in Northern Europe that has somewhat tolerant attitudes towards queer desires, the queer community has become diffused, consisting mainly of relatively closed friendship groups, and shunning the formation of a broader subculture and queer residential spaces. The findings show that participants experienced exclusion and marginalisation in various ways, but nonetheless, some acquired a sense of belonging within the wider Icelandic context.

Associating participants' experiences with the concepts of nesting orientalism, global hierarchy of value, and racialisation was also imperative to project a paradigm of reduced cultural value. Racial and ethnic stereotyping within Iceland (Loftsdóttir and Jensen, 2012), as well as a nostalgia for normality concerning sexual and gender roles within CEE (Mole, 2011), contributed to affective feelings of shame and humiliation for some participants. Their experience of multiple marginalisation potentially prevents participants from going against the norm and pointing out cases of racialisation and homophobic abuse. However, people in a more privileged position are more able to do so on their behalf, and in the process strive towards a more inclusive society. Inclusion should be sanctioned though equality legislation, but also has to be more active though meaningful engagement with difference and an unbiased view of diversity on an individual level. Being aware of the ethos and experiences discussed in this article can assist in that quest, while noting that LGPQ migrants, and immigrants in general, contribute substantially to the overall economic growth of society, as well as bringing expanding multiplicity and vitality to their host culture. Inclusion should thus not be a privilege assigned to some, but a basic right for all.

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