

EXPLORING MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND MULTIPLE OPPRESSIONS : The Experiences of Refugees in Canada: Exploring Intersections of Sexual, Gender and Cultural Diversity

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this research project is to explore trajectories of migration among refugees¹ within the intersections² of diverse sexual, gender and cultural identities³ currently living in Toronto and Montreal. This exploratory study will incorporate a qualitative research design in order to examine experiences of migration, the refugee determination process and integration and settlement services in these two cities. The objectives of the research project are to generate new knowledge that will support current and future refugee initiatives in Canada and contribute to the development of adapted research, policy, and practice within mainstream and gender/sexually diverse organizations. As a small, exploratory study, this project is seen as a first stage effort to gather information in order to support the development of a larger application for funding to expand the participant pool and address issues in other locations across the country.

COMPOSITION OF THE PROJECT TEAM

1. Chair

- Shari Brotman, Ph.D., Associate professor, School of Social Work, McGill University (Quebec)

2. Co-researchers

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3. Collaborators

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¹ As defined by the 1967 Geneva Convention Protocol, the term ‘refugee’ mainly refers to ‘convention refugees’; displaced persons who have received protection from another country based upon a fear of persecution or lack protection because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside of the country of his/her nationality and is unable or unwilling to return to his/her country of origin. Our definition of ‘refugee’ includes ‘convention refugees’ living in Canada because of persecution due to their gender and/or sexual orientation, as well as gender and sexually diverse ‘convention refugees’, entering Canada due to other reasons. We will also include gender and sexually diverse refugee claimants.

² The concept of intersectionality acknowledges the existence of distinct categories of oppression (due to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc), but argue they can not be essentialized and separated out from each other. Therefore, multiple oppressions are experienced simultaneously. We intend to focus on refugees who simultaneously experience oppression due to their sexual, gender and cultural identities.

³ Refugees who are from diverse sexual and gender identities are those who do not define themselves as heterosexual, and therefore self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, trans-gendered, trans-sexual, queer (LGBTQ), or men who have sex with men (MSM) and women who have sex with women (WSW). This includes possibly self-identifying as belonging to the LGBTQ community. Refugees inherently have diverse cultural identities, and are not from the dominant Canadian culture. This includes possibly self-identifying as belonging to a particular ethno-racial community.

4. Graduate students

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5. Research assistants

- Edward Lee, Doctoral student, Project Coordinator
- Jonathan Youster, Master's student, research assistant
- Luis Suarez-Benton, Master's student, research assistant
- Ainsley Jenicek, Undergraduate student, research assistant
- Nathalie Lemoine, graphic artist and layout – community zine

6. Community participation

- Sharalyn Jordan (Rainbow Refugees)
- El-Farouk Khaki
- Asif Kamal (SOY)
- Leonardo Zuniga (SOY)
- Rachna Contractor (Among Friends)
- Suhail Abualsameed (SOY)
- Roberto Jovel (OCASI)
- Amelie Waddell (Ethnoculture)
- Alan Wong (Ethnoculture/Multimundo)
- Alexis Musanganya (Arc-en-ciel Afrique)
- Philippe Humuza (Arc-en-ciel Afrique)
- Joelle Sfeir (Ethnoculture)
- Shelley Lim
- Shamini Shomasumdrum
- Meissoon Azzaria (CCR)

DETAILED RESEARCH PROGRAM

UPDATE

To date: 14 interviews completed in Montreal, 14 interviews completed in Toronto
Main focus of work has been data analysis and checking findings with advisory committees

October -December 2009: Data Analysis

Bi-monthly meetings between Ed and Shari; Meeting of Advisory committee members in November regarding outcomes; Undertake analysis of interview data, development of coding structure and validity check with community members and meeting with members of both advisory groups individually; Development of knowledge exchange documentation and events (zine, participation in workshops and presentations listed below); Follow-up communication based upon meetings held in August-September with the Canadian Council on Refugees, the Table de Concertation sur les réfugiés et immigrantes in Montreal and

OCASI in Toronto for discussion of potential dissemination opportunities, knowledge exchange activities and the promotion of support services to queer refugees; Community and academic presentations: Ethnoculture (October 3); SVR meeting (November 15).

December – February 2010 Data analysis and KT planning

Refinement and translation of Community Zine, completed process for receiving consent to use photos; Final report draft completed February 2010

Submission of applications to present at the following conferences accepted: ACFAS (May, 2010), Metropolis (March 2010); Rainbow Health Ontario (March 2010)

March-August 2010

Dissemination of report to members of Advisory committee who volunteered to fully edit the document will begin March 1 (final report to be completed March 31, 2010).

Continued work on Knowledge Exchange Strategy (queer refugee communities and their advocates) and Target Audiences for Professional Training (preliminary suggestions of specific target of settlement services and mental health providers); Prepare papers for journal submission: Refuge, The Canadian Journal on refugee issues (May, 2010); Canadian Review of Sociology (June 1, 2010 special issue on sexuality, sexual health and sexual rights)

Ed continues to work on his doctoral thesis on the issue of glbt refugees, he has applied for grants to undertake this work (SSHRC, Vanier Scholarship) – notification to be received in April. Ed will also participate in the Refugee Summer Institute at York University held in July.