Intersectional challenges : how (not) to study and support LGBTQs with a migration background

Abstract

Introduction

This article reports on a government-funded research project exploring the problems experienced by LGBTQs with a migration background living in Belgium, to guide future policies aiming to support this target group and to increase acceptance of LGBTQs within their ethno-cultural communities.

Methods

In 2019 and 2020, in-depth interviews were conducted with 22 LGBTQ individuals belonging to Moroccan, Turkish and Congolese communities in Belgium, complemented by 10 expert interviews with persons who have professional, activist and/or personal expertise in relation to this intersection.

Results

Across the three communities, several thresholds and problems were identified in relation to the acceptance of homosexuality, rigid gender roles, and intersectional experiences of racism and exclusion. To address these problems, the participants and experts cautioned against the use of "shock tactics" or a one-sided focus on culture and religion. Instead, they proposed government support of bottom-up initiatives taken within the communities, increased social and media representation, and education on sexual diversity at schools.

Conclusions

The limited acceptance of LGBTQs is not only connected to particular cultures and religions. To increase acceptance, policies should support changes from within rather than working top-down.

Policy implications

To be effective and supported by the targeted communities, future policies as well as government-funded research should involve people from the targeted communities from the start, following the principle "nothing about us without us".

Keywords: LGBTQ; migration; intersectionality; homophobia; racism; homonationalism

Introduction

In 2018, Flemish government published the results of "Samenleven in Diversiteit" ("Living together in Diversity", also known as SID Survey), a large-scale survey on the experiences and attitudes of ethno-cultural communities in Flanders, the northern, Dutch-language part of Belgium (Stuyck et al., 2018). A variety of topics were addressed, with the explicit aim to draw attention to problems experienced by people with a migration background,[1] but the research also measured their attitudes towards various forms of diversity. One finding concerned the limited acceptance of LGB[2] rights among the ethno-cultural communities included in the study, i.e., people of Moroccan, Turkish, Polish, Romanian, and Congolese origin. These specific groups were included in the SID survey because they are among the largest ethno-cultural communities, reflecting Belgium's labor migration and (in the case of Congo) colonial history (see e.g.: Timmerman et al., 2017; Nsayi, 2020).

This article reports on a follow-up project, commissioned by Flemish government, and executed by the authors of this paper, aiming to improve the

---

[1] We use the term "people with a migration background" as it is most used in Flanders to refer to people with a foreign nationality or who have one or both parents born with a foreign nationality. In 2020, 23.5% of the Flemish population had a migration background, 56.9% of which had roots outside of the EU, i.e. about 13% of the Flemish population. (source: statbel.fgov.be)

[2] Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual. We will use the acronym 'LGBTQ' (for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) as an umbrella term througout the text, unless we refer to sources using other terms, which is the case here.

acceptance of homosexuality in these communities, in particular the Moroccan, Turkish and Congolese community in Flanders, where acceptance was found to be lowest (Stuyck et al., 2018.). The aim of this project was to better understand and frame the results of the SID Survey by talking to LGB people belonging to these three communities. Based on a review of international literature and policy practices, interviews with LGBs with a migration background were meant to identify the specific challenges they faced and possible ways to address those.

There are two levels to our account. On a first, more descriptive level, we report on the findings of our empirical research, identifying problems and thresholds as well as proposed approaches and solutions. On a second level, we critically reflect on different underlying aspects of this project: the policy agenda it stemmed from and our attempts to negotiate it, as well as the critical stance of participants towards this project, but also towards us, as researchers. These two levels are closely intertwined and express our own mixed feelings about this research: on the one hand we think it is valuable in addressing the position of people at a particularly vulnerable intersection; on the other hand we think the research set-up was problematic from the start and future research should be set up differently. In our policy recommendations, based on the literature review and our empirical research, we address both levels: the needs and experiences of LGBTQ persons with a migration background, as well as aspects to consider when conducting research and devising policies concerning this population.

Theoretical framework

The key theoretical concept underlying this research is that of intersectionality. Building on the work of Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (1989), we conceptualize intersectionality as the way different (in particular marginalized) social positions mutually impact each-other. Individuals occupy different social positions, which are not fixed but which shift and

interact in varying contexts (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Taylor, Hines, & Casey, 2011).

Queer theory offers a hospitable framework to apply notions of intersectionality to LGBTQ people, as it questions the notion of fixed identity categories and is interested in the way sexuality interacts with other social positions such as gender, class, race, and ethnicity (Hall & Jagose, 2013). Queer migration research focuses on the intersection of sexual and gender diversity with ethnicity, which becomes particularly salient in a migration context. A key theme in this scholarship concerns the negotiation of Western identity concepts by non-Western migrants, leading to hybrid sexual cultures and questioning the universalizing tendencies in Western thought about sexuality (Coll-Planas et al., 2020; Luibhéid, 2005; Manalansan, 2006). This literature is critical of the tendency of policy makers to consider the acceptance of same-sex sexuality as an essential Western value and to one-sidedly impose it on migrants, disregarding their cultural values and sexual norms.

The simplistic opposition between Western tolerance and non-Western homophobia, using acceptance of homosexuality as a benchmark for integration (Huijnk, 2014), is part of what Jasbir Puar (2007) criticized as "homonationalism". Homonationalism is a tendency to consider LBGTQ rights as an essential part of one's own (mostly Western) national identity, in contrast to other (mostly non-Western) countries and communities which are presented as uniformly homophobic. Puar's research focused on the U.S., but her analysis has been applied to many other Western countries, including the Netherlands (Mepschen, Duyvendak, & Tonkens, 2010) and Belgium (author), where Muslims are often the designated culprits for LGBTQ-negativity.

While the binary opposition of the West as LGBTQ-friendly versus non-Western countries as homophobic is problematic, research does show that the position of LGBTQs with a non-Western migration background living in Western countries is particularly vulnerable. On the one hand they often struggle to accept their sexuality and reconcile it with cultural or religious identities (Bakker & Felten, 2019); on the other hand, when they come out, they are often met with opposition from family members (Felten & Bakker, 2015). Therefore, LGBTQs with a migration background often have to negotiate different sets of values in relation to sexuality. From an intersectional point of view, however, it is important to emphasize that these negotiations do not only relate to their cultural background: identity negotiations are highly individual, related to different social positions and identities, and adjusted to specific contexts.

One recurrent tension LGBTQs with a migration background are confronted with, is the perception of homosexuality as a Western form of deviance, leading to cultural marginalization within their ethno-cultural community (Abdi & Van Gilder, 2016; Espín, 1999). Beside such forms of exclusion, LGBTQs are also often confronted with xenophobia (Szulc, 2019). Caught between two forms of oppression, LGBTQs with a migration background often choose to strategically stay in the closet in certain contexts (Chikwendu, 2013; Fisher, 2003; Cense & Gansevoort, 2016). Based on the life stories of LGBTQs with a migration background living in the Netherlands, Cense (2013, 2016) disentangles the complex interplay between sexual and cultural identity, which differs across cultures but also families. The LGBTQs she talked to often had to take some distance from their family to attain self-acceptance, also negotiating their position in relation to cultural and religious values.

In terms of religion, the specific position of Muslim LGBTQs in Western countries has been the subject of a lot of research, with authors like Rahman (2010)

highlighting their precarious intersectional position in having to deal with both homophobia and islamophobia. Muslim LGBTQs use a variety of strategies to live and express their multiple and intersecting identities, varying between silence and agency (Siraj, 2012; Yip, 2004). It is important, in this context, to not consider homosexuality and Islam as mutually exclusive, which further marginalizes LGBTQ Muslims (El-Tayeb, 2012; Jivrai & de Jong, 2011). In Flanders, research on LGBTQs with a migration background is limited but most of it has also focused on Muslims. Based on ethnographic research, Peumans (2017; 2018) describes how LGBTQ Muslims negotiate different moralities of gender, sexuality, and kinship. They recognize the importance of family and community, at times using silence to avoid conflict, while also developing their LGBTQ identity and disclosing it in certain contexts and to certain people.

Non-Muslim LGBTQs with a migration background have hardly been studied in Flanders so far. (Anonymized for review) has included LGBTQs with a variety of cultural backgrounds in their research on diasporic LGBTQs, which confirmed the importance of cultural backgrounds but also of migration histories. First generation migrants felt freer to explore their sexuality than second and third generation migrants, who experienced more support but also more social control from their families and ethno-cultural communities in Belgium. Moreover, the importance of specific cultures and religions was put into perspective as LGBTQs shared very similar experiences across a wide range of cultural backgrounds (Anonymized for review).

This ties in with international research, which connects the problems experienced by LGBTQ people with a migration background to a host of factors. Religion often does play a role, as all major religions condemn homosexuality (Duyvendak, Bos, & Hekma, 2010; Roggemans et al., 2015). While religion does take

up a central symbolic position in debates on homosexuality, it is but one of many connected factors. In fact, religion is closely tied up to tradition and the maintenance of cultural norms and values, which becomes particularly important in a migration context. Religion is also connected to family ties, procreation, and gender norms, which are closely guarded in a migration context to maintain the community (Duyvendak et al., 2010).

Acknowledging the precarious position of LGBTQs with a migration background, in recent years many initiatives have been taken to support them. While we cannot discuss all these initiatives in-depth, we will briefly sketch some approaches taken in Belgium and neighboring countries with a similar ethno-cultural and migration context. In Belgium, most initiatives stem from small-scale civil society organizations, mostly relying on volunteers. ShoufShouf is the only Flemish organization targeting this group, primarily organizing support-group meetings in Antwerp. In Brussels, the Belgian capital, there are several associations supporting LGBTQs with a migration background. The most prominent organization is Merhaba which aims to both support and empower LBGTQs with a migration background, and to create a more hospitable social environment through talks, dialogues, and trainings (www.merhaba.be). While several other organizations in Flanders and Brussels are also partly working on this intersection, for instance by offering expertise and training or organizing social and cultural events, overall, this is a very small and fragmented field, working without a lot of government support.

In contrast, in neighboring countries such as the Netherlands and the UK this field is much more elaborate, with larger scale players and more structural activities. Particularly notable is the 2018 Dutch initiative "Verandering van binnenuit" ("Change from within"), which brought together several organizations and a wide range of

expertise. The action involved talks across the country engaging volunteers with a migration background, aiming to stimulate change from within the different ethnocultural communities in the Netherlands by focusing on equality, emancipation, and self-sufficiency (www.movisie.nl). More generally, initiatives in this field work on two levels: on the one hand supporting and empowering LGBTQs with a migration background, on the other hand aiming to create a dialogue around (homo-)sexuality in communities with a migration background. These mostly work bottom-up, harnessing initiatives and voices from within, avoiding imposing Western views, involving people from within the communities, and looking for partnerships with other organizations. In view of the limited Belgian research and actions on these topics, our research was inspired by this Dutch initiative.

Methods

Based on the insights drawn from international literature, the *aim* of our research was to gain deeper insights in the lived experiences of LGBTQs with a migration background living in Flanders, Belgium, to guide future policies supporting these groups. Listening to their personal stories, we wanted to better understand their experiences at the intersection of sexual and ethno-cultural minority positions. As mentioned in the introduction, this study was intended to supplement the insights gained in the SID survey, a large-scale quantitative survey measuring experiences and attitudes in several ethno-cultural communities in Belgium (Stuyck et al. 2018). The current research was different in being qualitative in nature, and in prioritizing the perspective and experiences of LGBTQs with a migration background themselves.

The *methodological orientation* of our research was inspired by feminist epistemologies which consider knowledge as "embodied", i.e. encapsulated in a specific

social, cultural and historical context, and created in the interaction between researcher and research participant (van Stapele, 2014). Findings are intersubjective and positional as they are influenced by shared or divergent identities and social positions (Bornat, 2004). Feminist research ethics also emphasize a caring relationship between researchers and participants, researchers aiming to accurately represent the participants' perspectives and reflecting on their own position (Bell, 2014). This approach also highlights the agency of participants, and the way they give meaning to reality (Harraway, 1988).

As to *method*, we used in-depth interviews, which are particularly suited to explore sensitive topics (Bryman 2004) and are often used in queer research (Plummer, Kong, & Mahoney 2002). We interviewed two groups. First, the research process was guided by ten *expert interviews*, conducted between August 2019 and May 2020. The experts were persons who have professional, activist and/or personal expertise in relation to the intersection between ethnicity and sexuality, for instance by working for a civil society association supporting LGBTQs with a migration background, by having done research on this topic, and/or by being an LGBTQ person with a migration background themselves. These experts were consulted before and during the project, giving both general advice as well as recommending the best way to recruit participants. These expert interviews were used to contextualize and complement the interviews with the participants, which constitute the core data.

Second, we interviewed *LGBTQ participants with Moroccan, Turkish or Congolese roots* living in Flanders or Brussels. These specific groups were determined in the research contract with government, the rationale being that these were the three groups showing the lowest acceptance of LGBTQ people in the SID survey (Stuyck et al., 2018). The invitation to participate was distributed widely. Online, a project website

was built, and the link was spread through email and social media, using both our personal accounts as well as those of relevant associations. The second author also made a profile on dating apps, indicating she was a researcher looking for participants, inspired by research on this target group (Shield, 2017). Offline, flyers were spread during events, in bars and in LGBTQ meeting places. Using a snowball technique, after their interview the participants were also asked to invite others. Despite the combination of recruitment methods, it was very hard to find research participants. Partly, this is due to the invisible and heterogenous nature of the research population, which moreover is stigmatized, something all research in this field is confronted with (Peumans, 2018). Some potential participants were hesitant to be interviewed, while others objected to the government policies guiding the research, which also came up during the interviews.

The final *sample* constituted of 22 people: ten with (partial) Moroccan roots and one with roots in the neighboring country of Tunisia; nine with (partial) Turkish roots; and (only) two with Congolese roots, this group proving to be the hardest to reach but also the most critical of the research. In terms of ethno-cultural identity, most participants were part of the second or third generation of migration, or they had parents with different ethno-cultural backgrounds. The participants varied in age between 19 and 50, with most participants being in their twenties. Both in terms of ethno-cultural identifications and in terms of gender and sexuality, they were extremely diverse. Despite this diversity, the sample is not representative for the broader group of LGBTQs with Moroccan, Turkish and (particularly) Congolese roots living in Belgium, as it is a small non-random sample – which is the case in most qualitative research on these topics.

The interviews were *semi-structured*, which allowed us to address the same topics with all interviewees while leaving room for their own perspectives (Bryman,

2004). The interviews were conducted by the second author and started with an exploration of the participants' self-identification in terms of sexuality, gender, and ethno-cultural background. Then, the dialogue focused on three questions relating to intersecting identity characteristics, visualized on a topic sheet: What helped me? What hindered me? What do I need? The interviewees were asked to address these questions in relation to a number of issues and fields of life: their ethno-cultural community, their family, other people such as friends and colleagues, the LGBTQ community, government and civil society, media and culture, and society at large. At the end of the interview, several hypothetical policy options were presented, based on the literature review as well as expert interviews.

Participants were interviewed between December 2019 and May 2020. They were extensively briefed before the research, and they signed an informed consent form specifying under which conditions their data could be used, as approved by the Ethical Advisory Committee for Social and Human Sciences at (university blinded for peer review). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using NVivo, in a first round identifying and thematically coding all relevant passages in the transcripts, and in a second round establishing connections between these themes, distilling the main themes, experiences and needs.

Shifting to the second, more critical level of this paper, it is important to also reflect on our own *positionality* as researchers. Both authors are insiders-outsiders, as queer researchers without a (non-European) migration background (see e.g. Voloder & Kirpitchenko, 2014). On the one hand, as queer researchers we were eager to magnify the voices of a group of LGBTQ people that was largely absent in Flemish research and policies on sexuality and migration. At the same time, we were acutely aware of our privileges as white, highly educated people with a European background. In line with

feminist research ethics, the second author, who conducted the field work, was forthright in addressing these power imbalances in the interviews and opening space for critique, which many participants and interviewees appreciated while simultaneously remaining critical of the power dynamics. They wondered what the participants would gain from the experience, doing the emotional labor of recounting their negative experiences but not seeing any improvement in their situation. This also explains why it was so hard to find participants for this research, many people being frustrated with having to talk about exclusions without seeing any real changes. One expert, Nyiragasigwa Hens, talks from her own experience:

> Perhaps I'm a bit too negative, but what you often get is that you're asked to share your expertise with a group of white people, so they can make changes, but the white group doesn't change. So they ask someone of color to talk about intersectionality, to give all that information, but that white group of people stays in their seat and they don't do anything with that information.

We will return to these issues in the discussion and recommendations.

Results

The analysis of the interviews disclosed several overarching problems, which came up in interviews with participants belonging to all three ethno-cultural communities. For this reason, but also more fundamentally because we oppose the a priori connection of problems to ethno-cultural backgrounds, we chose to report the results across the three groups rather than for each group separately. This allows us to highlight the mechanisms underlying patterns of exclusion. After identifying the main problems experienced by the participants, we discuss possible policy approaches and solutions. Throughout this section, we remain on the first, more descriptive level of our analysis, while in the discussion we return to the second, more critical level.

Problems and thresholds

The acceptance of (homo)sexuality

A common thread across all interviews is that sexuality (in general, not limited to homosexuality) is seldom explicitly addressed in the families and ethno-cultural communities of the participants, which leads to a very limited awareness of and discussion about sexual and gender diversity.

Homosexuality is even more taboo, which is often connected to culture and religion. Many participants struggled to reconcile their sexuality with their religious beliefs, resulting in different outcomes. Some took a distance from religion, such as Sam[3] (Turkish, trans male):

> I am Muslim myself, but I don't really deal with religion anymore, because it depresses me just to think about it: 'It's not accepted, I will go to hell'.[4]

Others did manage to reconcile their sexuality and religion, for instance by studying the statements about homosexuality in religious texts such as the Quran. Many are critical about the double standards and hypocrisy they encounter in religion. For instance, Hakan (Turkish, male) is upset by the fact that adultery is often condoned: "So that's OK, but the fact that I'm gay which doesn't hurt other people is a problem." While often critical

---

[3] All participants indicated on the consent form whether they preferred a pseudonym or their real first name to be used. To maintain anonymity, we do not provide their age, but we do mention their gender identity and ethno-cultural background.

[4] The interviews were conducted in Dutch, English or French, and all non-English quotes have been translated by the authors.

of organized religion as an institution, many participants found support in their personal religious experiences.

Even though participants and experts acknowledge a tension around religion, many state that there is no intrinsic opposition between being LGBTQ and being Muslim (the predominant religion in our sample). The poor acceptance of homosexuality is not limited to specific ethno-cultural and religious communities, and religion is not the only explanation for the lack of acceptance. Maryem (Moroccan, female), among others, points to a lack of knowledge of and contact with LGBTQs:

> People just don't know any better. I think *that* should be addressed. (...) It should be talked about, otherwise it's going to stay this way.

Honor, and "what people will think" is another key element many participants mention, such as Tarik (Moroccan, male):

> Learning that your son or daughter is gay, it's a dishonor to the family, to the neighbors: "How will the neighbors react, how will you be treated". (...) Perhaps [the parents] will accept it, but they will fear the judgement of others.

Among others, Winnie (Turkish-Chechnyan, female) emphasizes the strong community ties and networks of communication, which is why discretion is so highly valued:

> Because many communities, the Turkish community, the Chechnyan community, they are strongly connected. If someone hears something about someone, everybody knows it in one way or another.

Gender norms and roles

While the focus of the interviews was on sexuality, beliefs and norms about gender often emerged as an underlying factor influencing attitudes on homosexuality. Many participants commented on the strict gender roles in their culture of origin and on the

different treatment of men and women, with a particularly protective or even controlling attitude towards girls and women. Participants of different genders and cultural backgrounds were also frequently confronted with the expectation to marry and have children.

> Every time I visit my aunt or grandmother, the same issue comes up: "When will you find somebody? When will you bring someone home?" (Hakan, Turkish, male)

Particularly for women, these gendered expectations lead to social control and limited freedom of movement:

> Among women, particularly when you're young and live with your parents, there is no question of staying out until two at night. (Amian, Tunesian, female)

Several participants note that the way they look and act is closely monitored. For men, the pressure to conform to conventional norms of gender expression is even stronger, which was also observed in international research (El Feki, Heilman, Barker, 2017). This relates to the concept of toxic masculinity, which was raised by several participants; a strong attachment to traditional notions of masculinity connected to dominance (Barker & Scheele, 2019). Not conforming to stereotypical notions of masculinity, then, often leads to homophobic slurs.

Intersectional experiences

While the limited acceptance of sexual and gender diversity was identified as a key problem in all the interviews, the participants also emphasized that this is not the only issue they are confronted with, and that this issue should not be isolated. Many expressed the feeling of not really belonging anywhere: not in their ethno-cultural community, not in the LGBTQ community, and not in the ethno-cultural majority in Belgium.

"Not really belonging anywhere" and navigating between different communities is a common experience expressed in the interviews. One coping mechanism to navigate multiple identities is "code switching", literally adapting one's language but also adapting one's self-presentation across different contexts, where their identity traits have different connotations:

> The fact that I'm gay, or queer, is not necessarily something positive. It is positive for the white community because they think: "Look, a Muslim queer woman, welcome!" But if I walk in the street in a country where queers are not accepted, and I'm gay bashed, then it's something negative, then I belong to the white gays. So those intersections run across my body and my veins. (Racha, Moroccan, female)

Overall, the central issue addressed in this project – limited acceptance of LGBTQ people in ethno-cultural minorities – is not the key challenge our participants encounter. As people of color, they feel marginalized in Belgian society at large, including the LGBTQ community in which belonging to an ethno-cultural minority and being LGBTQ tend to be seen as mutually exclusive. Homophobia is often perceived to be connected to non-Western cultures, but as many participants and experts stress, the acceptance of LGBTQs is not perfect in Belgian society at large, either. As confirmed by the SID Survey as well as large-scale European research, the closer LGBTQs come to people's everyday lives (for instance, if one's child would be gay or lesbian), the lower the acceptance, across all populations (Stuyck et al. 2018; European Commission, 2015 & 2019). In that sense, participants and experts consider the expectation of absolute acceptance of LGBTQs in migrant communities to be hypocritical:

> First you should ensure that Belgium effectively accepts LGBTQs and that everything is OK here, before you expect that from newcomers. (Kubra, Turkish, female)

In essence, most participants and experts object to the way that negative attitudes towards LGBTQ's are consistently and one-sidedly connected to culture and attributed to ethno-cultural minorities.

Ethno-cultural and racial exclusion

The participants also highlighted other forms of exclusion and discrimination. Although it was not the focus of this project, racism consistently came up throughout the interviews. Many said that they experienced much more discrimination based on their cultural roots and skin color than on their sexual orientation.

> I'm a black woman. And that's why I say: I have other worries beside my sexuality, because the first thing people see is my skin color, they don't look beyond that. (...) It's not that it stops me, but it's something I always carry with me. It's always there, on my shoulders. (Valérie, Congolese, female)

Various participants pointed out that their skin color often leads to the assumption that they could not possibly be LGBTQ.

Participants often experienced incidents of racism and micro-aggressions. For instance, some stated that they are consistently underestimated based on their appearance: "People assume I can't speak Dutch, or they are shocked that I study, that kind of thing." (Kubra) Renting a house is also a challenge for many; Hind (Moroccan, female) mentioned that she used another first name when she called to inquire about an apartment for rent:

> Even if I would speak perfect Dutch, that wouldn't matter. I really heard this: "Where do you come from?" "I'm from Belgium." "We don't rent to foreigners, goodbye."

Based on these prejudices, many participants felt they had to prove themselves much more than others. Thus, Onur (Turkish-Kurdish, male) said he must continuously

prove to people that he's not a "strange and angry Turk". He describes how he feels when he is perceived as a "good" exception to the rule:

> A friend of mine has super-Flemish parents, they like me a lot and I like them. But one time they said: "You're a *good* Turk." How do you respond to that? I know it's well-intentioned, but that's not a compliment.

Being "good", in this context, implies acting or looking like Flemish people without a migration background. As hinted at above, these experiences extend to the LGBTQ community, where prejudices and racism are equally prevalent. For instance, Mostafa (Moroccan, male) refers to bad experiences in certain LGBTQ bars as well as on dating apps, where he was either sexualized and fetishized or, if he showed no interest, the object of racist insults.

To counter these forms of exclusion and racism, many participants state that a broad process of decolonization is necessary. They see a need for a greater consciousness about the Belgian history of colonization and migration, to connect the challenges in the present with the atrocities of the past.[5] Particularly for the Congolese community, there is a strong need to recognize the process of occupation and exploitation, based on racism and violence, and to acknowledge white privilege and the persistence of colonial stereotypes about black people. Such an acknowledgement of colonial history would help to understand the distrust of the Congolese diaspora towards Belgian government, including the Flemish government which commissioned this research. It would also help to put the attitudes of migrant communities in perspective, as these stem in part from European values spread throughout the colonial era. Finally,

---

[5] Belgium colonized the area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1885 and 1960.

it cautions against one-sidedly imposing Western values in relation to gender and sexuality on migrants, which would be a replication of this colonial process.

Approaches and solutions

While most of the problems concerning the intersection of gender and sexual diversity with race and ethnicity discussed in the previous section are familiar from international and Belgian research, our main aim was to also explore potential approaches and solutions to these problems. Some approaches came up spontaneously throughout the interviews, while others were explicitly proposed for discussion by the researchers at the end of the interview.

"Shock tactics"

Perhaps the most evident approach for policy makers, following up on the SID Survey disclosing a lack of acceptance of LGBTQ issues in particular communities, would be to set up a campaign targeting these communities. Throughout the interviews, however, most participants and experts warned against using what many called "shock tactics", forcing people to talk about homosexuality in a confrontational manner. Instead, the following approach is prioritized by experts: introducing the topic of homosexuality in more indirect ways instead of directly addressing it, and not connecting it (only) to religion, but rather opening a broader discussion about identity, gender, and sexuality. Accordingly, Mostafa questions the obligation to come out:

> That really does not work for us. I think: "Just let it seep in slowly." We have needed years to accept or realize who we are ourselves. Our family, our peers, they also need that time.

Others affirm that the idea of coming out, a key part of the western narrative of LGBTQ emancipation, is not the preferable strategy in all cultural contexts. The findings in this research thus confirm earlier research and community initiatives suggesting an indirect approach (e.g. Aftab et al., 2013; Nahas, 2005).

Most participants are critical of the suggestion to use an information campaign to create a dialogue around sexual and gender diversity, one of the concrete policy tools discussed at the end of the interview. Creating more visibility for LGBTQs with migration roots, for instance through a poster campaign featuring same-sex couples of color, could be good to support LGBTQs but it would likely be perceived as a provocation within their ethno-cultural communities. Similarly, flyers would probably not be read or raise resistance. Many experts are critical of the tendency to one-sidedly impose the Western model of LGBTQ identity and emancipation as the only valid one, which they consider as a very "colonial" attitude. For instance, Nyiragasigwa Hens, one of the organizers of the first POC Pride in Flanders, stated:

> We must be very careful not to impose things. (...) We must work from within. Everybody has their individual trajectory, sometimes it's a collective trajectory, but you should never say "that's how it is" and impose that – because then you're the colonizer again.

Beside not addressing LGBTQ issues too directly nor one-sidedly imposing norms, a related recommendation is to start from a broader discussion on gender and sexuality. For instance, experts Mark Sergeant and Thomas Demyttenaere from Sensoa, the Flemish expertise center on sexual health, think it is best to first create more sensibility around sexual and gender stereotypes, questioning the strong norms around femininity and masculinity, which can help to reduce negative attitudes towards homosexuality.

If "shock tactics" are generally considered to be the wrong approach by the participants and experts, creating respect and empathy is seen as the best approach:

> Showing understanding for the fact that the person in front of you is a human of flesh and blood. They just have another story, other luggage, other views, and we have to learn to accept that. (Anastasia, Congolese, female)

According to Alex (Moroccan, non-binary), more knowledge of and contact with different communities could foster a sense of shared humanity leading to mutual understanding. Instead of highlighting differences and divisions and imposing Western ideas of emancipation, focusing on connections seems a better tactic. Jaouad agrees that creating connection and empathy are the best way to work towards acceptance of LGBTQ themes:

> You can give as much information and create as many campaigns as you like... People have to get in touch with each other, so I think we should rather set up campaigns to bring communities together.

The role of religion

The participants recognize the important role of religion in attitudes on LGBTQ people, but they emphasize that this is not limited to Islam, as Christian religion (which is important in the Congolese community) has equally problematic views on homosexuality. More fundamentally, many interviewees think that attachment to religion is so strong that it is not the best starting point to talk about the acceptance of LGBTQ people.

> I have experienced that if you want to talk about religion, you get a lot of angry people. That's understandable because their religion is their support. (...) I would rather emphasize openness, "Everybody is welcome", because that's really... You should talk about it: "It's in the Bible, it's in the Quran, it's in the Thora: God is merciful and open, he accepts everybody." (Valérie)

One of the concrete approaches discussed in the interviews is to work with religious bridge figures, prominent and trusted religious people who would talk more positively about LGBTQ themes. This proposal got mixed responses, but most participants agreed that it was not a very realistic option. For instance, Hakan said that it would be virtually impossible for an imam to talk about homosexuality during the Friday prayers. However, Mostafa thinks religious figures can play an important role outside the context of churches and mosques: "That's what we miss, a religious figure, it doesn't necessarily have to be an imam, but just someone who says to young people: 'You can be yourself and still practice your religion.'"

The role of government

Many participants are skeptical about the role government can play in creating more acceptance of LGBTQs within migrant communities, as they are wary of top-down interventions: "We're not keen on that. We are conducting our own struggle, and I think it can only lead to something if it comes from within. (...) It's also very paternalistic, to tell me how I have to behave." (Mostafa) Most participants agree that government should rather support bottom-up initiatives and rely on people within the communities. For instance, Anastasia thinks that government should partner up with organizations instead of trying to impose certain approaches: "Instead of thinking: 'That's the way it should be done'. No, go and listen to what should actually be done." The experts also agree, for instance Mark Sergeant of Sensoa: "This kind of social change is not initiated by government; government follows changes that are initiated in the population."

Changes from within

Kubra, like many other participants, sees most value in bottom-up initiatives "from the inside":

> I am very sensitive to things that are fake. An initiative is worth much more if you know that the people who worked on it did not do it because they had to, but because they know what they're doing (...) It's "by them, for them", so to speak.

This of course requires that changes take place from within, and most participants do indeed observe gradual changes:

> Emancipation doesn't work if I take you by the hand: "Come, let me show you...". No, no, that doesn't work. However well-intentioned, that doesn't work. (...) It has to come from within yourself. And I see that several seeds have been planted all around and they already start to sprout. (Mostafa)

Civil society organizations and experts can play a key role in connecting these changes from within with official government institutions, by collecting experiences and evidence within communities. Expert Aïda Yancy, working in the Brussels RainbowHouse, explains how this works in her organization, and how this should also be replicated in research:

> You need to hire people from communities who are peers, who have the knowledge about the culture and all those aspects linked to origin, as they say in Flanders, while also having the knowledge of all of the LGBTI situation.

To Yancy, changing attitudes towards LGBTQs and empowering LGBTQs with a migration background can only happen under the guidance of people belonging to these very groups. Perhaps the best way to capture the recommendation to work from within is the slogan "nothing about us without us", which was explicitly quoted in or implicitly underlying all the interviews within this project. This strong underlying theme concerning social change and emancipation can also be found in various previous research and policy recommendations (e.g. Bakker & Felten, 2019).

The role of the LGBTQ community

As discussed above, many participants do not perceive the LGBTQ community (including LGBTQ associations as well as bars and clubs) to be very welcoming for people of color. For instance, LGBTQ events are generally very public in Flanders, which creates a threshold for people who are not out of the closet. Moreover, the focus on parties and alcohol can also constitute a threshold for religious reasons. Most relevant to the current project are experiences of exclusion and racism.

To remedy these shortcomings, the participants see a need for specific organizations in support of LGBTQ people of color and with a migration background, in particular the most vulnerable ones, asylum seekers and refugees as well as people in acute crisis situations. The current organizations targeting this population in Belgium are mostly socio-cultural associations staffed by volunteers, who are not trained nor paid to support people in such precarious conditions, so more structural support is needed.

In this context, several participants and experts refer to Merhaba, the Brussels-based organization focusing on the well-being and resilience of LGBTQ people with a migration background. This organization is rooted in diasporic communities and has built up expertise over the years, so they are well-placed to address sensitive issues while considering cultural differences. One of the methods they use are empowerment trainings, to make LGBTQ people more resilient. A number of participants refer to the importance of visibility for such organizations, as the target group has to know they exist, but at the same time participants emphasize the need for discretion, for people to be able to inconspicuously attend meetings.

More generally, the participants express a need for safe(r) spaces for LGBTQs with a migration background, to share experiences with like-minded people who

understand and respect their cultural background. The term "safe(r) spaces" is used in this context to refer to settings which may be safer than others, but which never offer complete safety for all participants. These may be associations, locations, and events specifically and exclusively catering to LGBTQ people of color and with a migration background. Alex says that is the only place where you can be yourself:

> Then you don't have to mind your words to avoid people being hurt, you don't have to twist your experiences in a positive way. You can be yourself and if something bothers you, you can tell people: "Urgh, this is what I experienced", and people understand you, you don't have to give a ten-minute background story.

Such spaces are important to avoid the micro-aggressions or more explicit forms of racism participants experience, and the lack of understanding they are confronted with in mainstream LGBTQ spaces. Sharing experiences with people who occupy a similar intersectional position offers refuge from daily life frustrations.

These safe(r) spaces need to be organized from within the community, again following the motto "nothing about us without us". Even if organized with the best intentions, activities originating outside the community may feel unsafe. Nevertheless, outsiders can contribute as allies, as long as the needs and sensitivities of the target group are prioritized. Expert Nyiragasigwa Hens expresses the need for allies who explicitly position themselves as anti-racist:

> We also need white allies, we need each-other. Perhaps white people need to demine the field for us, that's also very important.

Representation and visibility

Another issue arising in the interviews concerns the lack of visibility of LGBTQs of color and with a migration background. While the social and media visibility of both LGBTQs and people of color is slowly improving, LGBTQs with a migration

background remain almost completely invisible.

At the social level, there are hardly any public LGBTQ figures of color, people in important social positions which could act as role models in the community. Many participants feel that people of color are always assumed to be straight. Participant Jaouad is one of the most visible queer people of color in Flanders, and he explicitly intends to initiate a conversation about sexual diversity:

> The fact that I'm super visible creates the change, and I'm aware of that, that families also talk about this: "What if our child is homosexual? What if our child is lesbian? What if our child is trans?" I know that such conversations are already happening, people talking to their children about this.

The participants also name a few other visible LGBTQ people of color, such as a former Mister Gay Belgium candidate Abdellah Bijat and politician and senator Fourat Ben Chikha, both of whom publicly speak out about homosexuality, ethnicity, and religion. However, common people, including some of our participants, also play a public role, such as Hind, one of the few openly lesbian Flemish women with migration roots:

> I never intended to become a role model, but I do try to be myself and to be true to myself. I think we should be able to do that. And if some people can find support in that and if I can help young people in a similar situation, it's all worth it.

The lack of social visibility of LGBTQs with a migration background is also reflected in the media. Like many others, Hind misses intersectional representations: "You need a pool of people which is sufficiently diverse, so all of society feels represented." Getting in touch with sexual and ethno-cultural diversity through media may be the first step towards greater acceptance within ethno-cultural communities. It may also support self-acceptance, as Onur states regarding a TV report on the struggles of a young white gay man he watched: "I feel so underrepresented. (...) I need to see

people like me, who look like me, as a role model or just to show: 'Yes, we also exist and we also have our struggles, we also want to be accepted.'"

However, the participants think that media portrayals of LGBTQs with a migration background should not reduce them to their problems and their background. Hopeful and positive experiences do exist, and they need to be more visible as well. In non-fiction, they should be allowed to talk about other issues beside (parts of) their identity. For instance, Jaouad expresses his frustration to always be portrayed as "that Moroccan gay man" in the media:

> I'm often asked to talk about gender and sexuality, but it's always linked to: "Because you didn't have an easy time either." […] I need to have more courage to say: "Listen, I have a theater production on this, I have a book, I have my music. You can listen to those, I'm here to talk about something else".

In relation to fiction, expert Raf Njotea, a black gay screenwriter, talks about the lack of TV characters whose narrative is not determined by their identity and their minority status. Children's television, in particular, is seen by several participants as the ideal place to address gender and sexual diversity for a broad audience. To realize this, diversity in production teams is also necessary, as Raf Njotea highlights: "The people behind the screen are at least as important as the people on screen. You can tell different stories and you tell stories differently. (...) The more diverse your writer's room or editorial team, the more this will reflect in the programs you make."

One of the hypothetical initiatives discussed with the participants is to use life stories to create more visibility and understanding for the position of LGBTQs with a migration background. This proposal was very positively received and can be applied to different fields, not only media but also socio-cultural and educational work. The idea is to let people at this intersection talk about their experiences, both positive and negative. These stories can offer support to other people with a migration background who

struggle with their sexual and gender identity, but can also stimulate empathy in the broader population, which helps to destigmatize the theme and reduce discrimination (Felten & Taouanza, 2018). Hakan agrees: "Not just for people who don't know gay people but also for gay and lesbian people themselves. Then you hear how it went for others and sometimes you think 'Actually, it went quite well for me.' Yes, I think you can learn a lot from it." However, the participants believe that such life stories should be produced according to the principles "nothing about us without us" and "for us, by us", instead of being used in government campaigns which would have a limited impact and be dismissed by ethno-cultural communities feeling targeted.

School and education

The participants unanimously agreed that young people and schools should be mobilized to improve the acceptance of sexual and cultural diversity, as young people are still forming their values and can also help to spread insights to their parents and wider community. Valérie thinks children should be exposed to sexual diversity from kindergarten and throughout their school career, to be informed and warned against myths and prejudices on sexual diversity, as she herself had to look for that information on her own, an experience shared by many participants.

The participants also propose several ways to familiarize children and adolescents with sexual and other forms of diversity. The most obvious starting point is in class, where the amount to which and the ways in which diversity is addressed should be improved. This is not limited to sex education classes and the regular curriculum but can be addressed in a variety of ways. For instance, Ilayda proposes to invite LGBTQ people to talk about their experiences: "Life stories, yes, you can do that at school, when people talk about their experiences. That can have a big impact. That would have made a big difference for me." Other options also come up: Maryem suggests showing

films or documentaries about the topic, Alex refers to a workshop on gender and sexual diversity by an LGBTQ youth organization they attended, and Sam refers to information brochures which helped him to come to grips with his own transgender identity. All these participants are in their twenties and grew up surrounded by social media; but their experiences show that online information found individually is not enough. The participants and experts also recommended to diversify the teaching staff and to adapt the teacher training to increase sensitivity and openness around sexual and cultural diversity.

Concluding discussion

This government-funded project aimed to identify the specific challenges experienced by LGBTQs with a migration background in Belgium, and to explore potential ways to improve the acceptance of LGBTQs in migrant communities, in particular the Moroccan, Turkish and Congolese communities in Flanders. To address these issues, the voice of LGBTQs with a migration background was prioritized and supplemented by the opinions of experts involved in these communities. Adopting an intersectional approach, the focus was never only on sexuality, but always on the interplay between different social positions and identities, in particular ethnocultural and racial ones.

In the interviews, we talked about the identifications of the participants, their family and ethno-cultural communities, as well as thresholds and opportunities they identified in different fields of life, such as school, religion, and the LGBTQ community. Rather than discussing the findings per ethno-cultural community, we identified a number of problems and themes running across the interviews, such as the impact of gender roles on the acceptance of LGBTQs and the importance of historical and colonial contexts for understanding the current situation. The participants and

experts also suggested a number of approaches and fields to work in, such as the LGBTQ community, media and education.

Based on this first, more descriptive level of analysis, we developed a list of recommendations, which are summarised below[6]:

(1) Provide targeted support for LGBTQs with a migration background. Build on the experiences, expertise and methodologies of civil society organizations and bottom-up initiatives working on this intersection, encouraging collaboration. Focus on well-being and empowerment, particularly for the most vulnerable people (such as refugees) and support the creation of safe(r) spaces. Stimulate cultural sensitivity and remove thresholds in the LGBTQ community.

(2) Do not start from a conflict model when addressing the intersection between sexuality, ethnicity, and migration. Do not point the finger at specific communities and do not assume that religion or ethno-cultural background are the key determinants for views on sexual and gender diversity. Do not use shock tactics but approach these topics in a culturally sensitive way. Be aware of distrust towards government actions, which may evoke resistance. Do not one-sidedly impose western norms and values, but respect cultural differences. Focus on and support changes from within the communities, and aim for connection, dialogue, and empathy. Connect the acceptance of sexual diversity to gender equality. Use life stories and give a platform to role models.

(3) Take an intersectional approach, recognizing the interplay between different levels of diversity and structural inequality. Acknowledge racism, Islamophobia, and the continued legacy of colonial history. Give people from the concerned

---

[6] A full version is available in the Dutch-language research report.

communities a place at the table where decisions are made, both at the policy level and in civil society organizations.

(4) Focus on schools and education as the primary place to initiate change. Create sensitivity around sexual and gender diversity at all educational levels. Stimulate an intersectional approach highlighting the interplay between different forms of diversity, using a variety of methodologies and formats.

(5) Increase the representation of LGBTQs with a migration background in society and media, to stimulate self-acceptance by LGBTQs themselves but also visibility and acceptance in broader society, including their ethno-cultural communities.

Beside these recommendation for future policies and shifting to the second, more critical level we also formulated recommendations for future policy-oriented research, based on the limitations of the current project. Indeed, from the very start we were aware of the problematic nature of our own research commission, as indicated in the introduction. These reservations were amplified from the moment we entered the field, both experts and (potential) participants raising critical questions about the project.

To start with, many participants and experts considered the very set-up of the research, focusing on three ethno-cultural communities, to be stigmatizing. These three communities of color are targeted as particularly homophobic and transphobic, while the acceptance of LGBTQs is also limited in other communities (with or without a migration background) living in Flanders. Moreover, the lack of acceptance is culturalized, i.e. connected to culture and ethnicity, disregarding the role played by class, level of education, age etc. Pointing the finger in this way was seen to be racist and counterproductive if the objective is to foster acceptance. Therefore, we decided not

to discuss the findings per ethno-cultural community but rather to highlight shared underlying structures and problems, taking an approach which is sensitive to cultural differences but does not reduce all problems to cultural difference (Withaeckx & Coene, 2011).

Moreover, by focusing on the problems and difficulties experienced by LGBTQs with a migration background rather than their positive experiences, the research is necessarily one-sided. Indeed, the interviews disclosed strong connections with and love for family and community members. It is equally important to keep in mind that LGBTQs without a migration background living in Belgium may experience similar problems, which are not studied here. This is even more important against a backdrop of homonationalism, as our focus on problems experienced by LGBTQs with a migration background may be read to confirm the opposition between a LGBTQ-friendly Flanders or Belgium versus homophobic ethno-cultural minorities (see Anonymized for review for a more elaborate analysis of homonationalism in Flanders). While we do think it is important to highlight the vulnerable position of LGBTQs at this intersection, we deliberately oppose an "us versus them" contrast, for instance by drawing attention to diversity within the three communities we study, to similarities between these communities and with Flemish society at large, ultimately questioning the borders between all these supposed communities.

Returning to the point made in the methodological section on our positionality as researchers, a further point of critique concerns our position as insiders-outsiders. Despite our own awareness and self-reflection, our reliance on experts of color, the room we opened in the interviews for critical reflection, and our aim to prioritize the participants' own voices, there was a clear power imbalance between us as researchers and the participants. Our own position as privileged white researchers came up

32

throughout the project, creating a distance and discomfort. Expert Aïda Yancy, among others, was very explicit in her critique:

> It's basically you're too privileged to carry it, because the problem with academia as we see it now is that we are being interviewed a lot by people who are going to make their career on this and their goal for them is not to open us the door of academia, obviously. Their goal is for us to be the object that has an experience, and they can study that object, right? And they can have a career on this expertise.

Based on these critiques, we recommend a different approach for future (government-funded) research on these topics. Structural changes and decolonization also mean that people of color are not merely participants in research but also take up positions of power. Experts, organizations, and people belonging to the target group and with experiences at this intersection should be involved from the very start. They should receive financial compensation for their participation, something we implemented in this project although it was not initially planned. Research should be based on the needs expressed by the target groups themselves instead of top-down. It is important to express awareness of (white) positionality, colonial structures and racism, something the researcher in this project explicitly did when contacting participants and experts. A power balance should be aimed for, something that was lacking in the pre-determined set-up of our research but that we tried to remedy as much as possible.

Our central recommendation for future government policies and research is to start from the principle "nothing about us without us" and, if possible, to hire researchers of color, people with personal knowledge of and access to the targeted communities, to develop research and policies from within. While we were aware of our own positionality when we entered the competition for this government contract, we decided to compete as the topic was so close to our academic and activist interests. We hoped to have an impact on future research and policies and to give a voice to the

communities that were targeted in the research commission. Unfortunately, after delivering the report to Flemish government (who ordered the research and therefore could decide how to act upon it) in December 2020, it was not publicized nor translated (to our knowledge) into new actions on this topic. While we have no official communication on this decision, it can be interpreted in two contradictory ways. A negative interpretation is that the report was deemed to be too critical and politically sensitive, as it explicitly pleaded against homonationalist recuperation. A more positive interpretation is that our plea against "shock tactics" and setting up actions to "save" LGBTQs with a migration background from their "homophobic" cultures was heard, and that other, more participatory policies will be set up in the future. While we fear that the negative interpretation is closer to reality, we do hope that the positive interpretation will prove to be true.

References

Abdi, S., & Van Gilder, B. (2016). Cultural (in)visibility and identity dissonance: Queer Iranian-American women and their negotiation of existence. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 9(1),* 69- 86.

Aftab, S., Mouissat, S., Bracke, S., Longman, C., & Scheepers, S. (2013). *Recht op Liefde. Handleiding: Seksuele diversiteit bespreekbaar maken binnen etnisch-culturele minderheden*. Brussel: Ella vzw en Merhaba vzw.

Bakker, H., & Felten, H. (2019). *Verandering van Binnenuit. Zelfbeschikking bevorderen binnen migranten- en vluchtelingengemeenschappen*. Movisie: Alliantie Verandering van Binnenuit.

Barker, M.-J., & Scheele, J. (2019). *Gender: A Graphic Guide*. London: Icon Books.

Bell, L. (2014). Ethics and Feminist Research. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer* (pp. 73-106). London: Sage.

Bornat, J. (2004). Oral History. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium, & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice* (pp. 34-47). London: Sage.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social research methods. 2nd Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cense, M. (2013). Over diplomaten en activisten. Strategieën rondom seksuele identiteit van biculturele lesbische vrouwen, homoseksuele mannen en biseksuelen. Rutgers WPF. Retrieved from https://www.movisie.nl/publicatie/over-diplomaten-activisten

Cense, M., & Ganzevoort, R. (2016). Navigating identities: Subtle and public agency of bicultural gay youth. *Journal of Homosexuality, 64(5),* 654-670. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1196992

Chikwendu, M. (2013). Circular consciousness in the lived experience of intersectionality: Queer/LGBT Nigerian diasporic women in the USA. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 14(4),* 34-46.

Choo, H. Y., & Ferree, M. M. (2010). Practicing intersectionality in sociological research: A critical analysis of inclusions, interactions, and institutions in the study of inequalities. *Sociological Theory, 28(2),* 129-149.

Coll-Planas, G., García-Romeral, G. & Plademunt, B.M. (2020). Doing, being and verbalizing: Narratives of queer migrants from Muslim backgrounds in Spain. *Sexualities.* https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460720944589

Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum,* 1989, 139-167.

Duyvendak, J. W., Bos, D., & Hekma, G. (2010). De kast op een kier: Ontwikkelingen in de acceptatie van homoseksualiteit onder etnische en religieuze minderheden in Nederland. In S. R. Keuzenkamp (Ed.), *Steeds gewoner, nooit gewoon: Acceptatie van homoseksualiteit in Nederland* (pp. 320-323). Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.

El Feki, S., Heilman, B., & Barker, G. (2017). *Understanding masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) - Middle East and North Africa.* Cairo and Washington: UN Women and Promundo-US.

El-Tayeb, F. (2012). 'Gays who cannot properly be gay': Queer muslims in the neoliberal European city. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 19(1), 79-95.

Espín, O. (1999). *Women Crossing Boundaries: A Psychology of Immigration and Transformation*. New York: Routledge.

European Commission. (2015). Special Eurobarometer 437. Discrimination in the EU in 2015. Report. Retrieved from http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2077_83_4_437_ENG

European Commission. (2019). Eurobarometer on Discrimination 2019: The social acceptance of LGBTI people in the EU. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurvey detail/instruments/special/surveyky/2251

Felten, H. & Bakker, H. (2015). Eergelateerd geweld en seksuele diversiteit. Utrecht: Movisie. Retrieved from https://www.movisie.nl/publicatie/eergerelateerd-geweld-seksuele-genderdiversiteit

Felten, H., & Taouanza, I. (2018). Wat werkt bij het verminderen van discriminatie? Factsheet. Utrecht: Movisie. Retrieved from: https://www.movisie.nl/publicatie/wat-werkt-verminderen-discriminatie

Fisher, D. (2003). Immigrant Closets: Tactical-Micro-Practices-in-the-Hyphen. *Journal of Homosexuality, 45(2/3/4),* 171-192.

Hall, D. E., & Jagose, A. (2013). Introduction. In D. E. Hall & A. Jagose (Eds.), *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader* (pp. xiv-xx). London: Routledge.

Harraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies, 14(3),* 575-599.

Hill Collins, P., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality.* Cambridge: Polity Press

Huijnk, W. (2014). De acceptatie van homoseksualiteit door etnische en religieuze groepen in Nederland. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau

Jivrai, S., & de Jong, A. (2011). The Dutch homo-emancipation policy and its silencing effects on queer Muslims. *Feminist Legal Studies,* 19, 143-158.

Luibhéid, E. (2005). Introduction: Queering migration and citizenship. In E. Luibhéid & L. Cantù Jr. (Eds.), *Queer migrations: Sexuality, U.S. citizenship, and border crossings* (pp. ix-xlvi). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Manalansan IV, M. (2006). Queer Intersections: Sexuality and Gender in Migration Studies. *International Migration Review*, *40*, 224-249.

Mepschen, P., Duyvendak, J. W., & Tonkens, E. H. (2010). Sexual politics, orientalism and multicultural citizenship in the Netherlands. *Sociology, 44(5)*, 962-979.

Nahas, O. (2005). *Homo en moslim - hoe gaat dat samen?* Utrecht: FORUM, Instituut voor Multiculturele Ontwikkeling.

Nsayi, N. (2020). *Dochter van de dekolonisatie.* Antwerpen: EPO.

Peumans, W. (2017). Same-sex sexualities and Belgian Moroccan communities. In C. Timmerman, N. Fadil, I. Goddeeris, N. Clycq, & K. Ettourki (Eds.), *Moroccan Migration in Belgium. More than 50 years of settlement* (pp. 285-303). Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Peumans, W. (2018). *Queer Muslims in Europe. Sexuality, religion and migration in Belgium*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris.

Puar, J. (2007). *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Plummer, K., Kong, T., & Mahoney, D. (2002). Queering the Interview. In J. Gubrium & J. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research* (pp. 239 - 259). London: Sage.

Rahman, M. (2010). Queer as intersectionality: Theorizing gay muslim identities. *Sociology, 44(5),* 944-961.

Roggemans, L., Spruyt, B., Van Droogenbroeck, F., & Keppens, G. (2015). Religion and negative attitudes toward homosexuals: An analysis of urban young people and their attitudes towards homosexuality. *YOUNG, 23(3)*, 254-276.

Shield, A. (2017). New in town: Gay immigrants and geosocial dating apps. In Dhoest, A., Szulc, L., & Eeckhout, B. (Eds.) LGBTQs, Media, and Culture in Europe. (pp. 244-261). London: Routledge.

Siraj, A. (2012). "I Don't Want to Taint the Name of Islam": The Influence of Religion on the Lives of Muslim Lesbians. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 16(4)*, 449-467. DOI:10.1080/10894160.2012.681268

Stuyck, K., Doyen, G., Feys, Y., Noppe, J., Jacques, A., & Buysschaert, P. (2018). *Survey Samenleven in Diversiteit 2017*. Brussel: Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur.

Taylor, Y., Hines, S., & Casey, M. E. (2011). *Theorizing intersectionality and sexuality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Timmerman, C., Fadil, N., Goddeeris, I., Clycq, N., & Ettourki, K. (Eds.) (2017), *Moroccan Migration in Belgium. More than 50 years of settlement.* Leuven: Leuven University Press.

van Stapele, N. (2014). Intersubjectivity, Self-Reflexivity and Agency: Narrating About 'Self' and 'Other' in Feminist Research. *Women's Studies International Forum, 43*, 13-21.

Voloder, L. & Kirpitchenko, L. (Eds.) (2014). I*nsider research on migration and mobility: International perspectives on researcher positioning.* Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate

Withaeckx, S., & Coene, G. (2011). Voorbij de tegenstelling tussen vrouwenrechten en cultuur. Pleidooi voor een cultuursensitieve benadering van cultuurgerelateerd geweld. *Tijdschrift voor genderstudies, 14(1)*, 7-20.