Gender, Mobility, and Displacement: From the Shadows to Questioning Binaries

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Summary

The evolution of the construction of gender in migration studies can be appraised under several distinct headings. In the beginning, women were simply "in the shadows" with no recognition of them as potential or actual migrants. Eventually, the field moved to an "add women, mix, and stir" approach, which saw women recognized in migration studies and statistics for the first time. Here, gender was no more than a demographic category to ensure women were counted alongside men in migration flows. However, deconstructing the feminization of migration required that gender be understood as integral to the experience of migration, thus demanding more refined theoretical and analytical tools. Subsequently, migration intersected with masculinity studies, which showed the reciprocal relation where masculinity can be decisive in migratory decision making, and in return, mobility can be an essential factor in how men think about masculinity. More recently, gender in migration studies has moved beyond binary gender roles. Research on the lived experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) refugees and asylum seekers demonstrates the importance of the relationship between sexual orientation, gender identity, and identity construction in navigating migration journeys beyond the male-female binary. This raises the question of how salient this development is for international studies. While the disciplines of political science and international relations were rather late to the study of international migration, migrants and refugees have become issues of high politics in the early 21st century. Thus, there is a need to revisit and revise how different disciplines intersect in the interest of more effective policymaking based on better data.

Keywords: gender, migration, mobility, displacement, refugees, queer, binaries, immigrant, women, LGBTQ+

Subjects: Politics and Sexuality and Gender

Introduction: From the Shadows to the "Add Women, Mix, and Stir" Approach

In 1885, when Ravenstein presented his celebrated paper on the laws of migration before the Royal Statistical Society, he claimed that women were becoming more likely to migrate than men since "the workshop" was becoming "a formidable rival of the kitchen and scullery" for

women. Yet, this was true only for internal migrants—people moving within the territory of the same country. Instead, it was men who more frequently ventured beyond as international migrants. In a recent study looking at census microdata in late-19th-century Europe and North America, Alexander and Steidl (2012) have argued that there was a major shortcoming in Ravenstein's finding that women characteristically dominated short-distance and within-country mobility:

> The apparent overrepresentation of women among internal migrants was due not to their higher propensity to move but to the much higher rate at which male migrants left the population, through either death or emigration. Men were just as likely to make internal moves as women were; the difference was that men did not remain in the population to be counted when the decennial census was conducted. (p. 223)

Considering the extent to which the apparent gender difference could be driven by demographic processes other than migration itself, the intervention of Alexander and Steidl has implications for more recent scholarship on the long-term "feminization of migration." So perhaps this is nothing more than a case of simple albeit misinterpreted demographics.

It took almost one hundred years for women to assume a place within the international migration literature and overcome male bias. As a response to the absence of women in classical migration studies—and stimulated more generally by feminist movements and feminist studies—fierce debates have arisen over the relationship between feminism and migration (see, for example, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2000), with the number of case studies on female migration growing during the 1970s. In a renowned study inspired by Michael Piore's 1979 book *Birds of Passage*, Morokvaśic (1984) argued that with the incorporation of migrant women—a ready-made, flexible, and minimally demanding labor supply—into the workforce in Western industrialized countries, the "birds of passage" were now "also women." Thus, female migration moved out of the shadows, matching that of men, and the phrase "feminization of migration" took root in the literature (Donato et al., 2006).

The integration of gender analysis in migration studies thus began in the 1970s and early 1980s. In this period, gender was viewed as a static category and was included in research mostly as a categorical variable. In the mid- and late-1980s, with the contribution of feminist migration scholars, the analysis of gender moved beyond the dichotomous understanding of men versus women, and researchers started to consider gender as a "system of relations" that interact with migration (Nawyn, 2010, also discussed in Caglar, forthcoming). In the 1980s and 1990s, the feminist view of gender as a social construction also brought two new lines of inquiry into the scholarship on gender and migration. The first concerned the structures of patriarchy and how they serve as barriers in sending and receiving countries that constrain women's ability to migrate. The second focused on the interpersonal relations and power dynamics between men and women and how these relations are transformed through migration (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). The more recent wave of scholarship on gender and migration, which first emerged in the early 2000s, has focused not just on women but also on men and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and analyses the

relationship between migration and the gendered aspects of identities, institutions, and practices. From the 2000s to 2020, the field has also become more interdisciplinary, combining different theoretical, analytical, and methodological insights from fields such as sociology, political science, history, economy, geography, and psychology.

Another significant development in the field has been the foregrounding of *intersectionality*. Intersectionality is a theoretical approach rooted in Black feminism developed by Kimberly Crenshaw (1990) to explain how individuals at the intersection of different identities have been subjected to multiple sources of oppression. The integration of the intersectionality approach into gender and migration research has analytical and normative implications. For example, Bürkner (2012, p. 192) suggested that the intersectionality approach promotes "the empirical reconstruction of gender-related under privileging and exclusion in the field of migration" helps "liberate migration studies from conceptual limitations caused by pre-fixed categories" and avoids "cultural essentialism with respect to the gendering of migration in terms of identity formation and community building." Thus, intersectionality lays bare the mechanisms that drive multiple, interconnected forms of oppression and privilege and how gender as a construct is constituted by "class, race, ethnicity and informed by normative notions of sexuality" (Bastia, 2014, p. 238).

As Kofman (2020) pointed out, the internationalization of the knowledge produced on gender and migration in different parts of the world remains quite uneven, even as the epistemic community connected to it has been expanded and consolidated across different geographies. While theories developed in the United States and subsequently introduced to Europe still dominate the scholarship, East and Southeast Asia have emerged as prominent centers of knowledge production and theory development. However, the North–South divide in the epistemic community focusing on gender and migration prevents the internationalization of knowledge produced in the Global South. As Connell (2014, p. 520) highlighted, there is a "tacit assumption that the [G]lobal South produces data and politics but does not produce theory." Thus, the acknowledgement and inclusion of the Global South as a critical site of empirical inquiry is a significant development in gender and migration research. Nevertheless, researchers also need to go beyond treating the Global South as a mere source of data and work with the concepts, theories, and methods produced there.

Initially, the male bias in the literature was corrected rather crudely by just adding women, and gender was mainly considered as a dichotomous variable of sex. Pesser and Mahler (2003) located the works of Buijs (1993), Morokvaśic (1984), Phizacklea (1983), and Simon and Brettell (1986), among others, within this tradition of "just adding women." Indeed, Pesser and Mahler (2003) argued that the remedial pendulum had swung so far in the other direction that the male migrant was somehow at risk of being cast into the shadows, just as females once were. The approach simply assumed that women behave in the same way as men, never questioning the assumptions behind the existing research and the theories and methods used (Mahler & Pessar, 2006). Thus, they criticized the whole project of "seeing" gender as a dichotomous categorical variable, arguing that the approach neglected the more important theoretical innovation of treating gender as a central concept for studying migration (Pesser & Mahler, 2003).

Nevertheless, the “add women, mix, and stir” approach saw women recognized in migration studies and statistics for the first time. According to 2019 data provided by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA, 2019), women comprised slightly less than half of all international migrants in the world, 47.9%. Moreover, the share of migrant women varied across regions, with the highest in North America (51.8%) and Europe (51.4%), and the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa (47.5%) and Northern Africa, and Western Asia (35.5%). Similarly, the UNHCR reported that of the 70.8 million people who have been forcibly displaced globally, almost half are women and girls (UNHCR, 2020).

The increasing visibility of women in migration triggered a recognition that men and women experience migration differently (Carling, 2005, Piper, 2005) and that it affects them differently (Côté et al., 2015). This heralded the emergence of a true gender perspective in migration research. First, attention focused on feminization, which was followed by critical enquiry into the socially constructed definitions of femininity and masculinity. More recently, migration studies have begun to move beyond binaries, entering a phase of queering migration studies.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. The first part explores the idea of the feminization of migration beyond using sex as a dichotomous variable to count women migrants alongside men. The second details the way migration has intersected with masculinity studies. The third outlines the literature that connects queer studies with migration. Finally, in the conclusion, a discussion is provided for why these junctures matter for international studies and avenues for further research are suggested.

Unpacking “Feminization”

Current scholarship on migration treats gender less as a categorical variable of sex and more as a critical constitutive element of the migrant experience (Mahler & Pessar, 2006). Still, while the migration literature has foregrounded the study of the feminization of migration, it continues to be among the least understood trends in human mobility. There seems to be a consensus that the feminization of migration goes beyond simply questioning sex roles or using sex as a dichotomous variable to count women migrants alongside men. Instead, the field recognizes that migration is a gendered experience that demands more refined theoretical and analytical tools (Donato et al., 2006). In recent decades, studies have shed much-needed light on the nexus between the feminization of migration and socioeconomic changes in origin countries, transformations in destination-country labor markets, and changing social attitudes. Scholars have also foregrounded questions of how the feminization of migration has emerged and become institutionalized (Hofmann & Buckley, 2013).

Early research on the feminization of migration concentrated on wives and children relocating to join husbands and fathers who had moved abroad as labor migrants (Boyle et al., 2009; Castles & Miller, 2009; Menjívar & Agadjanian, 2007). This disregarded the vital role of women as labor migrants in their own right (Hofmann & Buckley, 2013; Kofman, 1999; Pedraza, 1991). More recent research has observed the inverse pattern—namely, male family

members relocating to join female labor migrants abroad (George, 2005). Current research also explored how the embodiment of increasing women's mobility is triggering profound changes in the construction of families and gender roles in the international division of labor (Beneria et al., 2012).

Thus, household decision making and family dynamics are being transformed: women are no longer followers but have become primary decision makers. Research has also begun to challenge established theories by incorporating a gendered lens. This challenge has recognized feminist critiques of the new economics of labor migration (NELM) theory, which sees individual migration as a household-level decision based on an economic calculus and accords no weight to gendered social norms and unequal intra-household power distribution, which can create a challenging environment for women deciding to migrate independently for work. In response, Paul (2015) proposed an explicitly gendered "negotiated migration model" to account for the ways in which women navigate gendered family constraints to undertake independent labor migration.

More contemporary research has focused on the transformative power of migrant women beyond the household. Bachan (2018) showed how the migration experience and subsequent return of migrant women to their home countries steers positive and sustainable social and economic changes at the household, community, and national levels. In other words, migrant women can become powerful agents of transformation, influencing social and economic development in their countries of origin. Using data from rural China, Lu and Tao (2015) proposed that the feminization of migration has the potential to infuse origin communities with economic and ideational changes that may challenge and reconfigure gender values. Still, "current research does not yet enable us to understand how the set of policy measures directed towards family immigration and integration have affected migrants in their ability to live transnationally in terms of everyday practices and longer-term strategies" (Kofman et al., 2015).

Overall, the feminization of migration has eschewed generalization and a one-size-fits-all analytical approach; differences emerge across varying national contexts and forms of migration (Timmerman et al., 2015). Indeed, most studies on the feminization of migration focus on labor migration. Forced displacements and irregular migration are still very much overlooked in the literature. A similar problem is also present in masculinity studies, as will be discussed.

Migration Meets Masculinity Studies

A focus on the gendered—in this case masculine—dimensions of migration allows us to consider motivations and strategies other than, for example, neoclassical perspectives on migration focused on economic explanations, including household risk diversification and individual cost-benefit calculations. From this, the question of the role of masculinity arises. As Hearn (2015, p. 163) argued, "women, men, and further genders are likely to experience migration, emigration, and immigration in different ways, as well as being differentially

involved in policymaking and policy regulation, control, and implementation.” Extending this line of argument, it is readily apparent that migrant experiences are outcomes of interrelated factors such as nationality, sexuality, class, and sociocultural and religious backgrounds.

Moreover, “masculinities are challenged, problematic, variable, changing, shifting, fluid, fractured, contextualized, contested, complicated, plural, different, diverse, heterogeneous, self-constructing and always emerging” (Donaldson & Howson, 2009, p. 215). Thus, male migrants cannot be reduced to a homogenized group. Instead, male migrants’ relations to masculinity and their migration experiences vary tremendously based on the factors mentioned above, which can affect their status and positionality in both countries of origin and host societies.

Hegemonic masculinity is a crucial concept for exploring the relationship between masculinities and mobility on a global scale. Traditionally, hegemonic masculinity “embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves concerning it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). In addition, views of hegemonic masculinity are not static and have been reflected in highly varied ways throughout history. As a result, we can expect struggles over hegemony and new forms of masculinities to emerge and replace old ones over time. Consequently, there is no one form of masculinity, and instead, we observe a variety of masculinities. As Connell (1998, p. 17) pointed out, “two important conclusions of the ethnographic moment in masculinity research [shows] that different forms of masculinity exist together, and that hegemony is constantly subject to change.” Based on this formulation of hegemonic masculinity, we can expect hegemonic masculinity to persist in different settings, albeit altered by various forms of mobility.

When men and women cross international borders together, they face “alternative gender ideologies, institutions, and practices” (Pessar, 2005, p. 6). As a result, there is variation in the expected outcomes of these new encounters and confrontations. According to Pessar (2005), three broad scenarios of gendered migration experience can be identified, which are that: (a) migration can challenge previously held gender “ideologies, beliefs, relations, and practices” and lead to a process of renegotiation; (b) migration might lead to a “wider acceptance and consolidation of counter-hegemonic gender regimes, which were available prior to departure”; and (c) “migration can lead to the reproduction, if not intensification, of original gender beliefs and norms” (p. 6). These three scenarios are ideal types. They are expected to vary according to individuals’ education, socioeconomic status, and previously held gender beliefs and practices, and to the institutions and practices in destination countries. As Pessar’s typology demonstrates, men’s premigration conceptions of manhood and gender relations might be changed, strengthened, or remain the same following migration. Thus, due to the fluid and diverse nature of masculinities and gender ideologies, even the same individuals can undergo many transformations during their lifetimes.

The two-way relationship between masculinities and mobility indicates that masculinity can be decisive in migratory decision making. In turn, mobility can be an essential factor in how men think about masculinity. For example, some studies on migration and masculinities find that

women's increasing participation in international migration can result in men feeling disempowered if they lose a significant portion of control in household decision making and become more involved in domestic labor (Gamburd, 2002). Similarly, men migrating through marriage may experience frustration if they feel their masculine authority as a "provider" is undermined by having to "follow" abroad women who are already empowered as labor migrants and primary decision makers (Charsley, 2005; Gallo, 2006). Nevertheless, other studies suggest that women's empowerment does not always result in men's disempowerment, and migration's impact on changing gender relations is complex and contextual. These studies cover a wide range of topics, including male domestic workers and how they negotiate their masculinities (Bartolomei, 2010; Parreñas, 2015; Sarti, 2010; Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010; Scrinzi, 2010), the emotional aspects and consequences of migration for migrant men (Datta et al., 2008; Montes, 2013), how migration affects men as fathers (Dreby, 2006; Schmalzbauer, 2015), case study analyses of the transformation and maintenance of gender practices of men in the diasporas as a result of their partners' migratory decisions (Farahani, 2012; Osella & Osella, 2000; Parreñas, 2005; Pasura, 2014; Pribilsky, 2012), and the experiences of refugee and asylum seeker men (Griffiths, 2015; Jaji, 2009; Scheibelhofer, 2017; Suerbaum, 2020; Turner, 2021).

More current research on migration and masculinities has focused on two main issues: migrant men's changing notion of masculinities based on changing gender relations, and refugee and asylum seeker men's negotiation of their gendered identities as reactions to discourses built on foreign masculinities. Broughton's (2008) study of Mexican men and their migratory decisions found three main categories among men in rural Mexico: the "traditionalist," the "adventurer," and the "breadwinner." While the traditionalists wanted to maintain hegemonic masculinity built around traditional gender roles and family ties, the male adventurer considered international migration to the north as a way of building a new life away from the limitations of rural Mexico. Most labor migrants fell under the category of adventurer. In this case, migration was the only viable option left for the breadwinner since he "is forced out of circumstance to migrate northward to provide for his family and, once there, endures material and symbolic indignities with the hope that his provision will, in the subsequent generation, foster mobility" (Broughton, 2008, p. 585). Thus, for many migrant men, migration can symbolize a rite of passage.

Migration might also affect men's selfhood and cause them to (re)negotiate their masculine identities. Donaldson et al.'s (2009) edited volume was the first study to focus exclusively on migrant men and explore the relationship between migration and masculinities through a critical lens. The several case studies in the volume shed much-needed light on how migrant men bring a firm understanding of manhood and gender relations with them and renegotiate their gender identities concerning the dominant culture in host societies. Moreover, these case studies showed that migrant masculinities are outcomes of ongoing dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that intersect across a range of dimensions, such as race, gender, and class.

Del Aguila (2013) coined the term “masculine capital” to explore how men’s notions of masculinities transform over time and space. Masculine capital is “a form of cultural capital that provides men with the necessary masculine skills and cultural competence to achieve legitimacy and social recognition as respected men.” Del Aguila (2013) argued that men’s migration journeys reflect an ongoing process of “acquiring, accumulating, and successfully performing masculine capital” (p. 222). Thus, hegemonic masculinity expects men to acquire and maintain masculine capital to fulfil their social roles in society as men. However, migration might reduce men’s ability to fulfil these specific roles and social expectations as it can bring precariousness, loss of power and status, and other social and economic disruptions into migrant men’s lives. As a result, migrant men (re)negotiate their identities and masculinities to address other important moral values such as “responsibility, hard work, decency, and fatherhood” (p. 225). This negotiation process also entails the reaffirmation of men’s sense of agency and authority.

Concerning these processes of reaffirmation, Hoang and Yeong (2011) focused on the experiences of transnational Vietnamese families who have undergone migrant journeys. The authors found that many migrant men feel the constant need to reaffirm their role as the principal decision maker in migration journeys, which extends to insisting that their approval must be sought before female family members migrate. Migrant men left alone in origin countries also adjust to their new conditions by creating coping mechanisms that buttress their sense of independence. Strategies include taking on more work or borrowing money from friends and colleagues rather than asking for remittances from wives working abroad. Hoang and Yeong’s (2011) study was essential as their findings contradict the assumptions that men would turn to hyper-masculinity and find themselves in a crisis of masculinity when they experience losses in social and economic power following expansions in women’s mobility and economic power.

In the same vein, Montes (2013) examined the plurality of masculinities among Guatemalan migrant men and argued that “migration offers an opportunity [for] men, both migrant and non-migrant, to reflect on their emotional relations with distinct family members,” allowing these men to assign “actions to those emotions in a way that contradicts some of the negative traits associated [with] hegemonic masculinity, such as being unemotional, nonnurturing, aggressive, and dispassionate” (p. 486). Thus, migration can offer men a path to divert from the ideals of culturally expected hegemonic masculinities and adapt to more transnational forms of reinscribed masculinities.

Host societies and their perception of foreign masculinities are also vital to understanding the relationship between migration and masculinities. Another important strand in the literature on migration and masculinities focuses on how the intersection of race, sexuality, religious background, and nationality leads to othering and vilification of some masculinities and groups of migrant men. For example, Ewing (2008) explored how discursive practices built on portraying migrant Muslim men as a threat to German society have led to the discrimination, stereotyping, and stigmatization of Muslim immigrants in Germany. These discourses about “dangerous” Muslim migrant men also feed into other discourses around the purported failure of some migrant groups, such as Turkish immigrants, to integrate into Germany.

Concerning the relationship between masculinities and forced migration, Griffith (2015) underlined distinctions between the ascribed categories of “genuine refugee,” “bogus refugee,” and “failed asylum seeker” to show that a male asylum seeker’s credibility is continuously questioned. While all asylum applicants are subject to these suspicions, “male claimants can be overtly demonized and criminalized in the process” (p. 469). Analyzing Austrian postwar migration policies and refugee movements after 2015, Scheibelhofer (2017) found that racialized conceptions of “foreign masculinity” are an integral part of migration and border control. While foreign masculinity was first used to legitimize men’s migration as a contribution to the productive forces in host countries, later, the discourse on migrant masculinity was securitized based on the threats migrant men supposedly pose to the host countries. Moreover, this new discourse has been strengthened, especially with the arrival of Muslim refugees in Western Europe, and politicians have instrumentalized foreign masculinity to propose restrictive measures against all refugees.

Similarly, analyzing U.S. deportations between 1997 and 2012, Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013) concluded they are a form of a “gendered racial removal program” that targets Latino working-class men. Through these gendered racial removal practices, migrant men are rendered “criminal” and “fugitive” aliens that pose gendered and racial threats to the nation. Similarly, analyzing cases of unaccompanied minors in Sweden, Herz (2019) uncovered a racialized public discourse and stigma that labels these boys and young men as a threat. Thus, aware of their portrayal as public threats in the media and the public discourse, these unaccompanied boys and young men (like many other migrant men) find themselves in a situation where they must continuously question and negotiate their gender identities and masculinities.

In these studies, accounting for men’s migratory experiences through the lens of the negotiation and transformation of masculinities has broadened the scope of migration studies. Moreover, given the gendered nature of migration, citizenship, and asylum regimes, exploring migrant masculinities underlines the importance of intersectional analysis while studying the wider range of migrant identities.

Moving Beyond Binaries

Since the 2010s, the field of migration studies has increasingly focused on refugees and asylum seekers, especially regarding the LGBTQ community. The move beyond male and female binaries has begun to fill an important gap in migration studies, and a number of case studies focusing on the lived experiences of LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers have helped us to better understand the importance of the relationship between sexual orientation, gender identity, and identity construction in navigating migration journeys. For gay, transgender, non-binary, and queer individuals, identity construction and claiming are highly challenging processes, given structures of inclusion and exclusion in both home and host countries. The inclusion of sexuality in migration studies helps researchers expand the boundaries of previous research, and challenges the heteronormative conceptualizations, practices, and institutions that migration studies have historically taken for granted (Luibhéid, 2004). In this

way, the heteronormative assumptions in migration research that “all the immigrants are heterosexual” and “all the queers are citizens” come under critical scrutiny (Luibhéid, 2004, p. 233).

As Manalansan (2006) argued, bringing a queer perspective into migration studies sheds light on how “sexuality is disciplined by social institutions and practices that normalize and naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices including marriage, family, and biological reproduction by marginalizing persons, institutions, or practices that deviate from these norms” (p. 225). Thus, scholars of queer studies take a different stand than feminist scholars in arguing that social institutions create and promote privileges allowing heteronormative structures and practices to maintain the status quo.

On this basis, the task of queer migration scholars is to expose these structural and institutional heteronormative biases that work in favor of some groups at the expense of others in migration, citizenship, and asylum-seeking processes. Gorman-Murray (2009) suggested that queer migration occurs “when the needs or desires of non-heterosexual identities, practices and performances are implicated in the process of displacement, influencing the decision to leave a certain place or choose a particular destination” (p. 443). It should also be noted that the migration of queer individuals might entail a complex web of interconnected motivations involving economic, sexual, work, and education-related factors. Therefore, moving beyond heteronormative biases enables researchers to consider sexuality as integral to migration processes, and as one important factor among many social and economic considerations (Luibhéid, 2014).

Another area of interest for migration researchers is the treatment of LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers. Keen interest in this area reflects the new focus on sexual orientation and gender identity within United Nations bodies, specifically the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), beginning in 2008 (Lewis & Naples, 2014). The UNHCR (2012) published its most comprehensive official guideline on claims to refugee status based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In this guideline, the UNHCR acknowledged the human rights abuses and various forms of persecution that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals face. In addition, it stated that many LGBTI individuals who flee due to the threat of persecution confront inconsistent procedures and protocols when applying for refugee status in different countries.

Applying for refugee status becomes additionally complicated and challenging due to intersecting factors like race, ethnicity, class, sex, nationality, and social and economic background, all of which affect the ability of LGBTI individuals to live openly and therefore provide public “proof” of their identity. For this reason, LGBTI refugees have often struggled to have their claims taken seriously, although UNHCR guidelines indicate that “decisions on LGBTI refugee claims are not based on superficial understandings of the experiences of LGBTI persons, or on erroneous, culturally inappropriate or stereotypical assumptions” (UNHCR, 2012). In the same vein, the UNHCR guidelines acknowledge that LGBTI applicants’ own testimony is the primary (and often the only) source of evidence available to prove persecution or threat of persecution in the applicants’ country of origin.

Thus, interviews should serve the purpose of uncovering the applicants' story, and decision makers should rely on applicants' statements in place of documentary and other forms of evidence related to persecution in the country of origin. For example, although the UNHCR warns against the use of documentary or photographic evidence of intimate acts, LGBTI applicants are routinely asked for these types of evidence, in addition to medical examinations to establish their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Through their monitoring and documenting activities, international and humanitarian organizations help LGBTQ individuals prove the threat of persecution in their origin countries. Nevertheless, the stigma and the oppression against LGBTQ individuals in many countries limit applicants' ability to establish connections with these organizations. In her article "'Gay? Prove it': The politics of queer anti-deportation activism," Lewis (2014) highlighted how LGBTI asylum seekers are forced to produce legitimating documents and narratives to prove the sexual oppression they have been subjected to. As asylum processes are shadowed by constant suspicion and threat of deportation, LGBTI migrants are forced to carry the burden of proof through documenting and demonstrating their sexuality in highly intimate and pornographic ways. The routinization of state practices to force migrants to produce evidence during asylum processes also creates hierarchies among different groups within LGBTI applicants.

Lewis's (2014) analysis showed that lesbians are at a high risk of rejection and deportation due to their challenges in demonstrating they have lived openly as lesbians in their origin countries. Based on stereotypes and heteronormative biases, decision makers assume lesbians are better placed to live more securely in their countries of origin by hiding their sexual orientation, whereas, in fact, they may face heightened threats from their families and local communities, even in their private spaces. In addition:

> judges will frequently comment on a woman's appearance as "proof" that she is not a lesbian; they also have been known to suggest that if a woman has ever had a relationship with a man or has a child, she cannot really be a lesbian. (p. 170)

Similarly, research based on LGBTI asylum claims in Europe and Canada showed that heteronormative assumptions about sexuality and gender identity mean that transgender and intersex identities are often overlooked or misunderstood by officials, while bisexual asylum applicants are deemed more deportable because they are assumed to be able to return their country of origin and adopt heterosexual identities (Lewis & Shuman, 2016; Rehaag, 2009).

Similarly, Murray (2016) explored how routine demands for documents "verifying" asylum seekers sexual orientation have produced a generalized loss of credibility of asylum claims in this category and increased the importance of LGBTI community organizations in legitimizing the authenticity of refugee claims. In Canada, publicly recognized and funded Canadian LGBTI community organizations have increasingly focused on supporting refugees through letters that applicants can use in their asylum applications. However, Murray (2016) pointed out that the production of more and more documents has contributed to:

> the formulation of a highly delimited and privileged definition of sexual orientation reflecting particular alignments of raced, classed, and gendered histories and subjectivities in Canada which may work to the disadvantage of some claimants, who, for a variety of reasons, may not identify with these definitions and/or join these organizations. (p. 475)

Thus, these efforts toward producing more documentation also help to maintain and feed a system built on constant suspicion and the threat of deportation. This system, which "inscribe[s] a homo-nationalist mode of gatekeeping" burdens LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees with the expectation of learning how to speak and behave in ways that conform with homonormative assumptions about behavior if they wish their claims to be accepted (Murray, 2018). Llewellyn (2021)—who referred to the traumatic consequences of this system as "legal violence"—showed that the legal mechanisms that aim to prevent fraud lead to harmful consequences for LGBTQ asylum applicants in the form of "isolation and loneliness, prolonged uncertainty, mental vulnerability, and physical vulnerability" (p. 9). In the United States and many other countries in the Global North, these traumas are further heightened by the implicit or explicit racist and homophobic tendencies of asylum adjudicators who operate based on "white and Western norms of sexuality." Yet, as Vogler (2016) suggested:

> The most carefully adjudicated asylum claims are beginning to confront this everchanging reality and suggest that we could, and indeed are, moving toward societal and legal understandings of sexuality as differently constituted for people located in various social constellations and that what it means to have a queer identity varies along many social dimensions. (p. 885)

Taking the asylum seeker as a queer subject, Seitz (2017) investigated how the practices of destination countries such as Canada reproduce asylum seekers as "dispossessed, deportable, precarious queers, regardless of sexual identity or practice" (p. 438). Focusing on Germany's assessment of refugee claims made by LGBTQ+ Muslims, Tschalaer (2020) depicted how sexual regimes in the asylum context always function in relation to hierarchies of gender, class, race, and cultural geopolitics and underlines the need to address these intersections to institute a more just and inclusive European asylum system.

Still, the current system's requirements for proving credibility especially hurts refugees in the Global South, where most queer refugees reside. In many countries of asylum, such as Turkey and Kenya, LGBTQ individuals experience "verbal harassment and physical attacks from members of the local population" and are also "ostracized by other refugees" (Grungras et al., 2009, p. 53). Thus, for many LGBTQ asylum seekers, countries in the Global South are only temporary first stations where they "wait to be safe and sound" (Kara & Calik, 2016; Kivilcim, 2017). Relatedly, Kocak (2020) showed that the discourse of "fake refugees" dominates national and international refugee governance, particularly the resettlement processes from Global South to Global North. In a climate where access to refugee status and resettlement are based on demonstrating credibility and deservingness, queer refugees constantly negotiate their statuses and gender identities with UNHCR officials and non-governmental

organization (NGO) workers to prove authenticity. When the hostile environment for LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees meets pressure to produce credible claims to asylum through documentation, LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees become further marginalized and disadvantaged since they cannot “perform” their sexualities openly in ways to produce evidence. Instead, they might try to render themselves invisible to blend in with host communities to increase their level of security and access to livelihoods since being identifiable as LGBTQ creates certain risks (Pincock, 2020). Thus, LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees in the Global South are more likely not to be able to demonstrate visibility in LGBTQ communities or become part of community organizations due to high levels of hostility and violence. As a result, their chances of accessing asylum through producing documentation to prove their sexual orientation and gender identity are significantly reduced.

In conclusion, the literature on LGBTQ migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees has shown that heteronormative bias and assumptions in migration, citizenship, and asylum systems produce structural inequalities and discrimination against LGBTQ individuals in various ways. Thus, migration studies need to move beyond a binary understanding of sexualities and explore the various and complex ways in which sexualities and gender identities affect migration journeys from a broader perspective.

Conclusion: Why Does “Gender and Migration” Matter for International Studies?

In a recent article, Morokvaśic (2014) argued that “the ongoing process of cross-fertilization of developments in two separate epistemologies, each initially questioning monolithic and essentialist visions of a ‘migrant’ on one hand and a ‘woman’ on the other, produced a fecund subfield of research ‘migration and gender’.” Gendering migration studies and studying the intersection of gender and migration requires certain epistemological standards and commitments. The integration of queer theory, feminist theory, and critical masculinity studies pushed researchers to critically rethink “the idea of the ‘objective researcher’, stressing the contingent and constituted character of knowledge production, including the ‘subject’ of the research” (Di Feliciantonio & Gadelha, 2017, p. 5).

These critiques have led to the emergence of new research questions on the relationship and even the assumed dichotomy between subjects and objects, as well as the role and identity of researchers and migrant participants in research processes. For example, studying migrants from the Philippines in Germany, Shinozaki (2012, p. 1811) asked “Being a migrant myself, how might my positionality influence the kind of data obtained and consequently the knowledge produced?… What about my gender, social class, age, stages of life and ethnicity?” The inclusion of positionality statements, discussions of self-reflexivity, and efforts to eschew the power asymmetries between the subjects and producers of knowledge become epistemological standards in the scholarship. In this way, researchers aim to create a more egalitarian and reciprocal environment for migrant research participants while challenging assumptions about the objectivity of knowledge during the different stages of research, including data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

Regarding the question of why “gender and migration” matter for international studies, Mitchell (1989) rightfully observed, “political science and international relations scholarship come rather late to the study of international migration” (p. 681). Weiner (1992) concurred, arguing:

> Migration and refugee issues, no longer the sole concern of ministries of labor or of immigration, are now matters of high international politics, engaging the attention of heads of states, cabinets, and key ministries involved in defence, internal security, and external relations. (p. 91)

After a thorough review of recent work in the discipline of international relations, Mitchell (2018) maintained “a number of gaps remain, as the emerging literature tends to examine national security, international migration, forced migration, and developed countries, without exploring internal conflict, internal migration, voluntary migration, and developing countries” (p. 51). We can add gendered migration to the list.

Gender in migration studies is no longer about making sure women are counted alongside men in migration statistics. Nevertheless, disaggregated data still matters, especially in subtopics such as irregular migration. Unfortunately, the compilation, investigation, and distribution of sex-disaggregated data on migration flows, including irregular migration, is not systematically undertaken by any international or regional institution or agency, and there is a dearth of quantifiable knowledge about women who cross borders irregularly (Pickering, 2010). While acknowledging improvements made in collecting disaggregated data, Martin (2009) underlined the continuing gaps in data collection, particularly regarding internally displaced persons, trafficking victims, and urban refugees, and displaced persons and proposes:

> As recommended in ‘Policies and Procedures Manual, Policy for UNFPA Support to Emergency Preparedness, Humanitarian Response and Transition/Recovery’, there is need for regular surveys/censuses of refugees and internally displaced, regular monitoring of mortality and reproductive health needs, incorporation of demographic data into education programs, support to identify adolescent concerns, interests and ideas in protracted situations of forced migration. Also needed are studies/analyses of population, migration and poverty issues and factors affecting re-integration of returnees, with particular focus on adolescents and youth in transition and recovery situations. (p. 21)

Thus, disaggregated data collection remains an important task for international organizations to undertake for data-driven policymaking.

However, as Green (2013) rightly argued, even our gendered understandings of migration are continually getting more complex with changes in the demographic mix of migration and shifting representations of (un)desirability of different categories of migrants divided by race, national or religious origin, sex, and/or class. If there is continuous change, then it matters to

understand what is happening now because it matters to identify and study the repeatedly asymmetrical gendered relations of migration (within both binary and non-binary contexts) to integrate migrants (including forced and labor migrants) as gendered agents within the complex history of mobility.

To illustrate, while an important question to ask may be whether gender is relevant for refugees—neither the 1951 Geneva Convention nor the additional protocols refer to gender (Buckley-Zistel & Krause, 2017)—the vulnerability criteria of humanitarianism (i.e., to determine who does and who does not deserve protection) have important policy implications. By aiming to implement a gender-sensitive approach to refugee aid, the UNHCR has repeatedly acknowledged women's needs in protection and assistance measures. Aid agencies often associate gender with women and deliver aid in a way that favors women to the disadvantage of men, thus directly affecting gender relations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2017). Research has cautioned that such policies may produce power imbalances between women and men that complicate gender relations and generate conflict. Men who have been breadwinners and decision makers can react with violence to maintain the patriarchy when this status is challenged (Lukunka, 2012). There remains a need to question assumptions of vulnerability and agency, which are made a priori without adequate testing within empirical settings. As Tittensor and Mansouri (2017) underlined:

> whether research conducted predominantly by scholars residing in the Global North can and should make assumptions about notions of victimhood, vulnerability and (lack of) agency in a context where a lack of appreciation of the specific local, social and cultural conditions might prevail remains an issue. (p. 4)

As Keenan (2012) also rightly emphasized, the asylum system in the Global North serves to reinforce transnational power structures of patriarchy and racial oppression. A similar problem also remains in studies of conflict and peace processes (for further discussion, see Çelik, 2017).

There is less drive to theorize than to report in the form of stories. Thus, further research on gender in migration studies is crucial if global humanitarianism is to advance. However, this research must move beyond case studies and be mindful of intersectional approaches. As Luibhéid (2005) highlighted in her study of sexuality at the U.S. border "(a)n intersectional analysis works against tendencies … that treat distinctions of sexuality, gender, race, class, nationality and legal status as if they refer to empirical, pre-existing identities that immigrants already have" given that "immigration control depends on these categories and reproduces them" (p. 138). We are only now learning how such hierarchies are reproduced among queer communities, and we have a long way to go.

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