Queering Islam? QTMuslims in Toronto, Canada

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Abstract

Previous research on Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) and religious identity has generally focused on psychological conflict and reconciliation. Social scientific studies have examined why queer and trans religious individuals experience identity conflict and how they reconcile it. In both qualitative and quantitative analyses, religion has been identified as the major source of identity conflict, while religious individualism and membership in Queer and Trans Religious Organizations (QTROs) have been shown to foster identity reconciliation. Although these findings have been important, they have relied on the assumption that faith-based and LGBTQ identities are fundamentally irreconcilable. Accordingly, existing scholarship has neglected to account for the non-religious factors impacting queer and trans religious individuals and has failed to consider their processes of group engagement. This dissertation therefore shifts the analysis away from individual/psychological conflict and examines the experiences of Queer and Trans Muslims (QTMuslims) in mainstream Muslim and queer organizations.

The research draws on a two-year ethnography and a total of seventy interviews with leaders of Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs), mainstream Muslim organizations, mainstream queer organizations, and a counter-to-mainstream queer organization in Toronto, Canada. I also rely on participant observation, content analysis, and archival research. The dissertation includes three standalone chapters, which collectively analyze QTMuslims' social positions and institutional relationships.

In Chapter 1, I show that religion does not necessarily prevent LGBTQ acceptance, although QTMuslims still encounter barriers in religious organizations. In speaking to leaders of mainstream Muslim organizations from various sects (e.g. Sunni, Shia, Isma'ili, and Sufi), I broaden the criteria through which to define measures of both religion and LGBTQ acceptance: I

account for individuals' complex and multifaceted relationships with Islam and consider both attitudes and actions as forms of LGBTQ acceptance. Resultingly, I find *a range* of acceptance levels that are rooted in both religious and non-religious factors.

Chapter 2 challenges the assumption that QTMuslims have an unproblematic or non-existent relationship to mainstream queer organizations. My archival and interview data show that the diversity mandates of Toronto's mainstream queer organizations are inadequate for including QTMuslims. Such diversity initiatives are based on an inclusion model that consolidates all minority LGBTQ identities under a master sexual identity. The premise of queer universality in this model perpetuates the assumption that queerness and Islam are irreconcilable and fails to account for the intersectional identities of QTMuslims. Additionally, the positive appearance of diversity initiatives conceals the structural biases embedded in mainstream queer organizations.

In Chapter 3, I examine the ways that QTMuslims' respond to exclusion from mainstream Muslim and queer organizations. I find that rather than seeking mainstream integration, they form their own sectarian QTMOs. In this sense, QTMOs can be analyzed as alternative-to-mainstream "safe spaces," in which collective oppositional identities are cultivated. By challenging mainstream sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and racism, QTMOs cultivate the intersectional character of their members' identities.

Overall, the dissertation shows that QTMuslims' experiences reflect more than a psychological conflict between their religious and sexual/gender identities. Rather, my research looks at the ways that QTMuslims, as a social group, can encounter and resist institutional barriers in their daily lives. In conclusion, I reframe QTMuslim group engagement within the context of social movements.

Résumé

Les recherches antérieures sur l'identité Lesbienne, Gai, Bisexuel, Transgenres et en Questionnement/Queer (LGBTQ) ainsi que l'identité religieuse se sont généralement concentré sur le conflit psychologique et la réconciliation. Les études dans le domaine des sciences sociales ont évalué pourquoi les personnes queers et transgenres religieuses vivent un conflit d'identité et comment ils font pour le réconcilier. Dans les analyses tant qualitatives que quantitatives, la religion a été identifiée comme la source principale du conflit d'identité, tandis que l'individualisme religieux et l'appartenance aux Organisations Religieuses Queer et Trans (QTRO) ont démontré une valorisation d'une réconciliation d'identité. Bien que ces découvertes aient été importantes, elles ont compté sur la supposition que les identités religieuses et LGBTQ sont fondamentalement inconciliables. Par conséquent, les études existantes ont omis de tenir compte des facteurs non-religieux impactant les personnes queer et trans religieuses et n'ont pas considéré leurs processus d'engagement de groupe. Cette thèse éloigne donc l'analyse du conflit individuel/psychologique, et examine plutôt les expériences des Musulmans Queer et Trans (Musulmans QT) dans les organisations dominantes musulmanes et queers.

Cette recherche s'appuie sur une ethnographie de deux ans et soixante-dix entretiens avec des chefs d'Organisations Musulmanes Queer et Trans (QTMO), des organisations musulmanes dominantes, des organisations dominantes queer, ainsi qu'une organisation Queer à contre-courant des organisations dominantes, à Toronto, Canada. Je m'appuie également sur l'observation participante, l'analyse du contenu, et la recherche de documents d'archive. La thèse inclut trois chapitres autonomes, qui analysent collectivement les positions sociales et les relations institutionnelles des musulmans QT.

Dans le chapitre 1, je démontre que la religion n'empêche pas nécessairement l'acceptation LGBTQ, cependant les Musulmans QT rencontrent toujours des obstacles dans les organisations religieuses. En parlant aux chefs d'organisations musulmanes dominantes de diverses sectes (ex. Sunnite, Chiite, Ismaili, Soufi), j'élargis les critères à travers lesquels on définit les mesures d'acceptation tant LGBTQ que religieuse : je tiens compte des relations complexes et aux multiples facettes des personnes, avec l'Islam et je considère tant les attitudes que les actions comme formes d'acceptation LGBTQ. Par conséquent, je trouve *une gamme de niveaux d'acceptation* qui sont enracinés tant dans les facteurs religieux que non-religieux.

Le deuxième chapitre conteste les hypothèses que les Musulmans QT ont une relation non-problématique ou inexistante aux organisations queer dominantes. Mes données d'archives et d'entretiens montrent que le mandat de diversité des organisations queer dominantes de Toronto sont inadéquats pour l'inclusion des Musulmans QT. Ces initiatives de diversité sont basés sur un modèle d'inclusion qui consolide tous les identités minoritaires LGBTQ sous une identité sexuelle maitresse. Le postulat de l'universalité queer dans ce model perpétue la supposition qu'être queer et l'Islam sont inconciliables et omet de tenir compte des identités intersectionnelles des musulmans QT. De plus, l'apparence positive des initiatives de diversité dissimule les préjugés structurels intégrés dans les organisations queer dominantes.

Dans le troisième chapitre, j'examine les manières dont les Musulmans QT répondent à l'exclusion des organisation dominantes queer et trans musulmanes. Je trouve que, plutôt que chercher l'intégration dominante, ils trouvent leurs propres QTMO sectaires. Dans ce cas, les QTMO peuvent être analysés comme étant des *espaces sûrs*, alternatifs aux espaces dominantes, dans lesquelles des identités oppositionnelles collectives sont cultivées. En mettant en question le

sexisme dominant, l'homophobie, la transphobie, l'Islamophobie, et le racisme, les QTMO cultivent le caractère intersectionnel des identités de leurs membres.

Dans l'ensemble, la thèse montre que les expériences des Musulmans QT démontrent plus qu'un conflit psychologique entre leurs identités religieuses et sexuelles/de genre. La recherche analyse plutôt les manières dans lesquelles les Musulmans QT, en tant que groupe sociale, peuvent rencontrer et résister aux obstacles institutionnelles dans leurs vies quotidiennes. En conclusion, je recadre alors l'engagement de groupe des Musulmans QT dans le contexte des mouvements sociaux.

Preface

All chapters are the result of the independent work of Golshan Golriz, who is the sole author. Each chapter constitutes original scholarship and contributes to knowledge about Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) religious identity. Chapter 1 contributes to knowledge about the relationship between religion and LGBTQ acceptance; Chapter 2 contributes to scholarship about diversity and inclusion and about LGBTQ Muslim individuals' experiences in queer organizations; Chapter 3 contributes to knowledge about Queer and Trans Religious Organizations (QTROs) and to social movements scholarship.

Abbreviations

QTMOs: Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations
QTMuslims: Queer and Trans Muslims
QTROs: Queer and Trans Religious Organizations
LGBTQ: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Queer

Introduction

Why Study Rainbow Religious Identities?

What makes the study of LGBTQ religious identity compelling? For most, the seeming tension between simultaneously identifying as being LGBTQ and being religious creates intrigue in the topic. Unsurprisingly, social scientific research has mostly focused on the psychological conflict experienced by LGBTQ religious (or rainbow religious) people of Christian (Kubicek et al., 2009; Mahaffy, 1996; Thumma, 1991; Yip, 2005), Jewish (Cooper, 1989; Kahn, 1989; Nugent and Gramick, 1989; Schnoor, 2006), and Muslim (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Khan, 2010; Kugle, 2014; Minwalla, et al., 2005; Siraj, 2012, 2016, 2017) faiths. These studies have addressed two main research questions: (1) why do rainbow religious people experience psychological identity conflict? And (2) how, if at all, do these individuals reconcile such conflicting identities?

The most consistent answer to the first question has been that religion is the underlying cause of identity conflict, and that one's allegiance to their religious beliefs, families, and communities prevents them from expressing their sexual or gender identities (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Schnoor, 2006; Siraj, 2006; Yip, 2004, 2008). Research has accordingly found that LGBTQ religious individuals who cultivate a personal relationship with god (Jaspal and Cinnieralla, 2010; Minwalla et al, 2005; Rosser, 1992; Siraj 2006; Siraj, 2015; Wilcox, 2002; Yip, 2005, 2008a) or become members of Queer and Trans Religious Organizations[1] (QTROs) (Habib, 2010; Jaspal and Cinnieralla, 2010; Kubicek et al., 2009; Kugle, 2010, 2013; Mahaffy, 1996;

[1] QTROs are organizations created for individuals who are both religious and LGBTQ. I refer to LGBTQ religious groups as Queer and Trans Religious organizations. While others have used the acronym LGBTRO (Fuist et al., 2102), my distinguishing between queer and trans reflects decades of politically contentious debates, and the demands of trans communities to be recognized as separate from queer ones (see Connell, 2012 for a detailed overview).

Miwalla et al, 2005; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000; Siraj, 2006, 2015; Schnoor, 2006; Thumma, 1991) more easily reconcile conflicting identities.

While this existing scholarship has yielded important explanations about why queer and trans people of faith experience dissonance and how they reconcile conflicting identities, it has nonetheless relied on the assumption that LGBTQ and religious identity *are* fundamentally irreconcilable. This begs the question: are they? Relatedly, what types of research questions would diverge from studying identity conflict and to what end? Hence, my research starts with an analytical shift: rather than focusing on psychological conflict and reconciliation, I follow a small group of social scientists (Coley, 2018, 2020; Fuist, 2016; Fuist et al., 2012; Kane, 2013; Rahman, 2014; Thumma and Gray, 2005; Wilcox, 2009) and analyze LGBTQ religious individuals' social positions, institutional relationships, and processes of group engagement.

In this dissertation, I examine the ways that Queer and Trans Muslims[2] (QTMuslims) interact with mainstream Muslim and queer organizations[3] and how/why they form their own Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs). To do this, I draw on a two-year ethnography and a total of 70 interviews with leaders (such as founders, core organizers, or executive level staff) of six QTMOs (24 interviews), twelve mainstream queer groups (21 interviews), one counter-to-mainstream queer groups (1 interview), and fifteen mainstream Muslim groups (24 interviews) in

[2] In using the word queer, I mean to refer to all of those who fall under the queer 'umbrella' of sexual diversity; in using the word trans, I mean to evoke both Serano's (2007) definition to refer to who "struggle with a subconscious understanding or intuition that there is something "wrong" with the sex they were assigned at birth" (p. 36), and to Styker, Currah, and Moore's (2008) relational definition of 'trans-,' as "mov[ing] beyond the narrow politics of gender identity" (p.14). As such, I also use to the word trans to refer to non-binary experiences. I make the purposeful choice to distinguish queer from trans because each category represents different experiences of marginalization that respectively result from one's expressions of sexuality and gender.

[3] I characterize mainstream groups as well-known, large, and often bureaucratic groups with institutional legitimacy. Typically, mainstream Muslim groups cater to non-LGBTQ Muslim populations and mainstream queer groups cater to non-Muslim populations. I refer to the latter as queer groups (rather than queer and trans or LGBTQ groups) because trans communities have historically marginalized queer communities and organizations. Trans communities have opposed being nominally included in the LGBTQ acronym but practically excluded from mainstream queer groups.

Toronto, Canada. Additionally, I use data from participant observation with all organizations, content analysis from their organizational brochures and websites, and archival analysis from the records of seven separate queer organizations in Toronto. I provide a detailed overview of each of these methods in a separate methods chapter.

The dissertation includes three main standalone chapters, which collectively show that QTMuslims face exclusionary practices in both mainstream religious and queer organizations and that they resist such practices through membership in their own QTMOs. In Chapter 1, I find that although QTMuslims encounter barriers in mainstream Muslim groups, religion itself does not necessarily prevent LGBTQ acceptance. Chapter 2 finds that despite relying on diversity and inclusion mandates to include all LGBTQ minority groups, mainstream queer organizations can be complicit in the marginalization of QTMuslims. Chapter 3 shows that QTMuslims resist the sexism, transphobia, homophobia, Islamaphobia, and racism that they confront mainstream groups and that they develop strong oppositional collective identities within QTMOs.

Thus, my research demonstrates that shifting the focus away from identity conflict/reconciliation is analytically rewarding. Similar to other sociologists (Fuist, 2016; Rahman, 2010; Sumerau, 2015), I find that some queer and trans religious individuals may not experience psychological dissonance at all. As Rahman (2010) has done, I show that examining the multidimensional character of QTMuslim identities through an intersectional framework not only disrupts the dichotomy between religion and sexual/gender liberation, but also sheds light on the ways that such groups face structural marginalization.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will first outline the key findings of existing identity conflict and reconciliation literature and will subsequently detail the ways that my dissertation chapters address the limitations of that research.

Identity Conflict and Reconciliation

As mentioned above, most of the existing research conducted with rainbow religious individuals has looked at the tension between faith-based and LGBTQ identities: scholars have sought to understand why LGBTQ religious people experience conflict and how they reconcile it.

Conducting qualitative interviews with queer and trans religious individuals, social scientists have identified participants' religious beliefs/identities as being the driving source of psychological tension (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Mahaffy, 1996; Minwalla et al., 2005; Schnoor, 2006; Siraj, 2006, 2015; Yip, 2005). They have shown that LGBTQ religious people must reconcile their variant gender/sexual identities with religious traditions that are steeped in "'traditional' gender roles, the 'nuclear family,' procreation, and conservative religious values" (Schnoor, 2006, p. 43), and that see "a homosexual life-style and a conservative religious identity" as being "simply incompatible" (Thumma, 1991, p. 333).

Nonetheless, many rainbow religious individuals remain deeply committed to their faith (Minwalla et al., 2005; Siraj 2006, 2015) and must therefore find a way to cope with their "incongruent identities" (Siraj, 2006). Some studies have further shown that cultural ties and familial bonds are often inseparable from one's faith-based identity and that an individual's race and ethnicity may further complicate their cognitive dissonance (Yip 2004, 2008; Khan, 2010; Minwalla et al., 2005; 2005; Schnoor, 2006).

Accordingly, researchers have sought to explain how rainbow religious people grapple with identity conflict (Mahaffy, 1996; Kubicek et al., 2009; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000; Schnoor, 2006; Thumma, 1991; Wagner et al., 1994; Wilcox 2002; Yip, 1997; 2005). In his case study with gay Jewish men in Toronto, Schnoor (2006) has characterized four ideal types of responses to identity conflict: (1) Jewish lifestylers, who rejected their gay identity in favour of their

religious identity; (2) gay lifestylers, who prioritized their gay identity and rejected their religious one; (3) gay-Jewish commuters, who compartmentalized their identities in gay and religious contexts; and (4) gay-Jewish integrators, who successfully integrated their sexual and religious identities. These pathways to dealing with psychological dissonance have also been replicated across other studies: rainbow religious people have been found to either reject, compartmentalize, or reconcile conflicting identities.

Successful identity reconciliation has generally seemed to be dependent on two factors: religious individualism and membership in Queer and Trans Religious Organizations (QTROs). Interviews with rainbow religious individuals have found that having a personal relationship with god helps to integrate one's faith and gender/sexual identity (Jaspal and Cinnieralla, 2010; Minwalla et al, 2005; Siraj 2006, 2015; Wilcox, 2002; Yip, 2005, 2008).

As a method of deconstruction (Buchanan et al., 2001), religious individualism has been argued to replace institutional doctrines with personal lived experiences. Those emphasizing a personal relationship with god have been reported to disengage with significant others (Kubicek et al., 2009) and to narrativize a 'gay-friendly' theology (Yip, 2005) or deploy a 'queer-friendly hermeneutics' of religious texts (Habib, 2010). Some religious individualists have been shown to endorse the essentialist argument of being 'born gay,' arguing that their sexual or gender identity is god's work (Wilcox 2002).

Aside from religious individualism, QTRO membership has been proven to be instrumental in the identity reconciliation of LGBTQ religious people (Habib, 2010; Jaspal and Cinnieralla, 2010; Kugle, 2010, 2013; Mahaffy, 1996; Miwalla et al, 2005; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000; Siraj, 2006, 2015; Schnoor, 2006; Thumma, 1991). QTROs have been instrumental in espousing alternative versions of traditional faiths and in referring members to LGBTQ-affirming literature

or deploying hermeneutic readings of religious texts (Miwalla et al, 2005; Siraj, 2006, 2015; Thumma, 1991). Muslim QTROs, or QTMOs, have played an especially important role in providing alternative interpretations of traditional Islamic scripture[4]. Overall, empirical studies have repeatedly pointed to a positive relationship between QTRO membership and identity integration.

Rodriguez and Ouellette (2000) have found that higher levels of participation in QTROs lead to higher levels of identity integration. QTRO membership seems to have played an active role in reconciliation for queer and trans religious people of most faiths, including Evangelicals, who have otherwise been reported to reject their LGBTQ identity (Kubicek et al., 2009; Mahaffy, 1996). Thumma (1991) has suggested that QTRO membership helps alleviate 'identity crises' amongst gay Christians. Studies with QTMuslims have similarly found that QTMOs help their members reconcile conflicting identities and find self-acceptance (Habib, 2010; Jaspal and Cinnieralla, 2010; Kugle, 2010, 2013; Miwalla et al, 2005; Siraj, 2006, 2015).

Thus, identity conflict and reconciliation literature has provided invaluable insights into the lives of rainbow religious individuals. First-hand accounts of LGBTQ religious people's experiences have shown that one can both experience and overcome conflicting identities, and that QTROs serve as important communities through which individuals fulfill reconciliation. Yet, still missing are the broader social analyses of LGBTQ religious people's institutional

[4] There are three sources of Islamic scripts: the Qu'ran (the literal word of god), the Hadith (alleged reports of the Prophet Muhammad's teachings), and Sharia (Islamic law) (Kugle 2010, 2013). As scholars have noted (Minwalla et al, 2005; Siraj 2012; 2015; Saed 2005; Yip, 2005, 2008), LGB Muslims tend to reject the Hadith and Sharia on the basis of credibility (the Hadith was written 300-400 years *after* the death of Muhammed and much of Sharia is either based on Hadith or other secondary accounts) and to re-evaluate and interpret the Qu'ran. The story of Lut (Lot in the bible) is the story that addresses sodomy in the Qu'ran and the one to which Muslims refer to when condemning homosexuality. Many non-heterosexual Muslims critique the traditional reading of the story of Lut, noting that (1) the people of the cities were not destroyed for any specific act (2) sodomy is portrayed as an act of gang violence rather than an intimate relationship between two consenting adults, and (3) acts of inhospitality are more condemnable than acts of sodomy (Jamal 2001; Minwalla et al, 2005; Kugle 2010, 2013; Siraj, 2012; Yip 2008).

relationships. Moreover, existing studies are predicated on the assumption that all queer and trans people of faith necessarily encounter dissonance and that religion is primarily to blame for it. What types of research designs and questions would allow us to move past these assumptions?

Toward Analyses of Group Engagement

While the above-mentioned scholarship has been instrumental for detailing struggles with identity conflict and pathways to integration, it has nonetheless been limited in important ways. By focusing on psychological tensions, this literature has overlooked LGBTQ religious individuals' processes of group engagement. It has, for instance, seldom analyzed these individuals' encounters with faith-based or queer institutions and has failed to examine whether such institutions accept or exclude LGBTQ religious people.

Moreover, research has only underscored the importance of QTROs to the extent that they facilitate identity reconciliation, thereby neglecting the potential other functions that such groups may serve. For instance, little research has looked at the role QTROs as social groups (which lend themselves to social events where members interact with one another) or advocacy groups (who assist members with political and legal issues or organize demonstrations, marches, and protests).

Importantly, much of these limitations stem from the presupposition that LGBTQ religious people necessarily confront identity dissonance and that such dissonance is rooted in religious traditions and beliefs. Yet some sociologists have begun to show that this may not always be the case and that some queer and trans religious individuals may not experience conflict between their sexual and faith-based identities (Fuist, 2016; Rahman, 2010; Sumerau, 2015).

Additional research is needed to examine whether and to what extent religion prevents LGBTQ acceptance, especially at the organizational level. The finding that religion can be tied to other factors such as culture, family, and race/ethnicity (Yip 2004, 2008; Khan, 2010; Minwalla et al., 2005; 2005; Schnoor, 2006) signals the need to broaden measures of religion in systematic analyses. Moreover, the assumption that LGBTQ religious individuals experience conflict on the basis of religion overlooks their relationship to queer institutions or assumes that such relationships are uncomplicated.

Hence, my dissertation chapters collectively address these gaps. In my ethnographic research with leaders of Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs), mainstream Muslim organizations, and mainstream queer organizations I ask the following questions:

- Does religion prevent LGBTQ acceptance?
- Do QTMuslims experience exclusion or acceptance from mainstream Muslim and queer organizations?
- Why and under which conditions do mainstream Muslim and queer organizations accept or exclude QTMuslims?
- Do QTMOs seek acceptance from mainstream queer and Muslim organizations?
- What might QTMOs do for QTMuslims, if not help them reconcile conflicting identities?

The dissertation is divided into three standalone chapters. The first chapter focuses on how mainstream Muslim groups interact with QTMuslims, the second turns to QTMuslim inclusion in the queer mainstream, and the third examines QTMOs in their own right. I provide an overview of each of these three chapters below.

Chapter 1: Does Religion Prevent LGBTQ Acceptance?

I start by examining the relationship between religion and LGBTQ acceptance. In addition to identity conflict and reconciliation research with LGBTQ religious individuals, many quantitative social scientific studies have found that religion (Hooghe et al., 2010; Olson et al., 2006; Rowatt et al., 2006; Schulte and Battle, 2004), and particularly Islam (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Hooghe et al., 2010; Yuchtman-Yaar & Alkalay, 2007) promotes homonegative and heterosexist attitudes. Chapter 1 contradicts these findings: I show that religion, as a singular category, does not explain homophobia or transphobia. The discrepancy between my findings and those in previous studies is likely due to my methodological choices and study design; most importantly, I rely on broader measures to define both 'religion' and 'acceptance.'

In addition to my interviews with QTMO leaders, I draw on interviews and fieldwork with key actors from mainstream Muslims groups to gauge their attitudes and actions toward QTMuslims. In doing so, I use a wide range of criteria to define what LGBTQ acceptance entails. I create ideal types of "acceptance" and "non-acceptance" to capture (a) how mainstream Muslim leaders respond to LGBTQ religious identity (their attitudes), and (b) whether they include QTMuslims in their organizations regardless of their personal beliefs. These methodological alternatives lead me to differentiate, for instance, between some mainstream leaders' personal beliefs about homosexuality/transsexuality/transgender and their organization's actions toward QTMuslims.

Moreover, the chapter shows that using singular measures such as religiosity can limit our understanding of how religion impacts LGTBQ acceptance. As mentioned, some researchers (Ambraham, 2009; El-Tayeb, 2012; Hekma, 2002; Minwalla et al., 2005; Khan, 2010; Yip 2004, 2008) have shown that religious beliefs are often tied up with individuals' familial or cultural

ideals. Yet, we lose a sense of such complexities when we aggregate religion into one unit of analysis. My definition of religion therefore accounts for the multiple interpretations and various relationships that individuals have with Islam.

Resultingly, I find that leaders of mainstream Muslim organizations demonstrate a range of acceptance levels toward QTMuslims. Their responses could be categorized into four 'levels' of acceptance: high acceptance, moderate acceptance, moderate-low acceptance, and low acceptance. Each of these leaders use religion in different ways to accept QTMuslims to various degrees. I also find that non-religious or what I call 'para-religious' factors play a part in QTMuslim inclusion. For instance, some leaders' lower levels of acceptance could be attributed to the fear of losing their existing constituency or the administrative complications associated with changing certain practices.

Chapter 1 shows that focusing on the direct relationship between a singular measure of religion and homonegative attitudes may fail to provide an accurate picture of how individuals' relationships with their faith impact LGBTQ acceptance. Such circumscribed analyses may also obscure the ways that institutional barriers prevent the inclusion of queer and trans religious individuals. Importantly, the chapter finds that some mainstream Muslim groups *do* exclude QTMuslim. Yet, it is only by analyzing more complex measures of both religion and acceptance that I arrive at this finding. Moreover, the strict emphasis on religion as the source of tension between LGBTQ and faith-based identities is presumably based on the assumption that mainstream queer organizations either have uncomplicated or unsubstantial relationships with rainbow religious people. Chapter 2 challenges this assumption.

Chapter 2: Doing Diversity in the Queer Mainstream

In the second chapter, I shift my attention to the inclusion of QTMuslims in mainstream queer organizations (or what I refer to as the queer mainstream). My findings indicate that QTMuslims encounter barriers to inclusion in Toronto's mainstream queer organizations. I draw on content analysis, interviews, and archival data to examine whether the queer mainstream's diversity policies and practices effectively include QTMuslims.

While most of the queer mainstream leaders I interviewed confidently relied on their organizations' diversity mandates to include *all* LGBTQ groups, QTMuslim interviewees reported experiencing exclusion and even hostility therein. I show that this paradox is, at least to some extent, attributed to the universality framework through which queer mainstream organizations conceptualize diversity and inclusion: such organizations' diversity initiatives are often based on an inclusion model that includes minority groups on the basis of their sexual identities. This model assumes that all queer individuals have similar experiences while ignoring the ways that racial, ethnic, and religious (and other) identities impact the experiences of marginalized groups.

In the case of QTMuslims, such assumptions of universality once again presuppose that queerness and Islam are irreconcilable and fail to employ intersectional frameworks through which to confront rainbow religious identities. Yet, this dissertation shows that QTMuslim identities are invincibly intersectional, where religious, gendered, sexual, racial, class-based, and nationality-based experiences are inextricably linked (see also Rahman 2010). Hence, queer mainstream diversity initiatives employ sameness or universalist models, which fail to address the interlocking systems through which QTMuslims face marginalization.

Chapter 2 shows that QTMuslims' experiences of exclusion from the queer mainstream are generalizable to those of other marginalized or minority groups and especially to those of Queer and Trans Black Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) communities. Such experiences are rooted in structural inequalities that are obscured by the positive appearance of diversity mandates. Similar to QTMuslims, some of the racialized interviewees from mainstream queer groups told me that their organizations' diversity initiatives concealed the institutional barriers (such as inequitable space-use policies, hiring practices, or funding models) faced by minority groups.

I triangulate these findings with content analysis of queer organizations' websites and brochures and show that diversity initiatives seem to promote inclusion at the discursive level while obscuring the ways that capitalism and racism continue to impact marginalized groups in the queer mainstream. Additionally, the archival data show that mainstream queer organizations have promoted the effectiveness of diversity policies for at least thirty years while LGBTQ marginalized communities have paradoxically opposed them. This demonstrates the need to look at diversity mandates through a critical lens: while such mandates may fulfil the manifest function of including minority groups, they may also carry out the latent function of concealing the exclusionary practices that further marginalize them.

The chapter contributes to existing interdisciplinary research on diversity policy and practice (Ahmed, 2012; Alexander, 2005; Banjerri, 2000; Bell and Hartmann, 2007; Dua, 2009; Hunter, 2009; Ralston, 1998; Puwar 2004), which has similarly found a discrepancy between a discursive commitment to including marginalized communities and a failure to do so 'on-the-ground.' These studies have shown that diversity discourse—both at the state and organizational level—pays 'lip service' to pluralism while obscuring structural exclusion.

The chapter also follows some feminist researchers (Bilge, 2013; Collins and Bilge, 2016; Luft and Ward, 2009; Ward 2008) in examining the relationship between diversity and intersectionality. Like them, I argue that diversity mandates' positive appearance of inclusion can act "as a surrogate for intersectionality" (Collins and Bilge 2016, p. 249) and therefore hinder intersectional practice. I conclude that mainstream queer groups may do well to centralize intersectional practice as a core goal of their organizations before assessing the effectiveness of diversity mandates as the right means of achieving this central objective.

Furthermore, my findings once again show the usefulness of analytically shifting the focus of inquiry from identity reconciliation to group acceptance. Rather than examining whether QTMuslims successfully reconcile conflicting identities, the first two chapters of the dissertation look at the acceptance of rainbow religious individuals by mainstream organizations. Results show that both mainstream queer and Muslim groups can be complicit in creating institutional barriers for QTMuslims. Importantly, these barriers are not necessarily attributable to religious belief or religiosity.

Mainstream Muslim organizations' resistance to include QTMuslims may be rooted in administrative decisions or vested interests, while mainstream queer organizations may perpetuate institutional obstacles steeped in longstanding structures which serve to exclude marginalized LGBTQ groups as a whole. Thus, I argue that QTMuslims' acceptance from mainstream organizations cannot be assumed *a priori*. I then shift my attention to how Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) respond to mainstream groups and examine whether or not QTMuslims *seek* acceptance from them.

Chapter 3: I am Enough

Some sociologists have already begun to shift the direction of psychological reconciliation literature by looking at the patterns of LGBTQ religious group engagement (Buzzell, 2001; Coley, 2018, 2020; Fuist, 2016; Fuist et al., 2012; Kane, 2013; Thumma and Gray, 2005). One collection of case studies has shown that queer and trans people of faith either create sectarian groups or organize within existing mainstream religious organizations (Thumma and Gray, 2005). That is, some LGBTQ religious individuals remain in or integrate into large denominations (Cadge, 2005; Shokeid, 2005) while others form their own QTROs (Coley, 2018; Fuist et al, 2012; Lukenbill, 2005). Although this two-fold model is valuable for understanding the interaction between rainbow religious people and mainstream religious organizations, it once again fails to account for how such individuals encounter mainstream queer spaces.

In Chapter 3, I contribute to this emerging body of work and ask how creating sectarian groups versus joining mainstream religious or queer organizations impacts collective identity formation. My interviews and ethnographic fieldwork with QTMOs reveal that QTMuslims resist mainstreaming. I show that QTMOs can be thought of as what some social movements scholars have called "safe spaces" (Evans and Boyte, 1986; Polletta, 1999), which cultivate oppositional and intersectional collective identities. Such groups inspire identity politics that oppose the sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and racism (or what I call mainstream'isms) that QTMuslims encounter in both queer and Muslim organizations. Importantly, the QTMO leaders with whom I conducted interviews articulated their resistance toward such 'mainstream'isms' through an intersectional lens: they neither saw religion as barrier to acceptance, nor did they believe that any specific type of organization (queer or religious) was accountable for any one form of discrimination. Rather, such leaders viewed

marginalization as an interconnected system which ubiquitously impacted the safety of their communities.

Hence, in challenging mainstream organizations, QTMOs destabilize binary identity categories and, in turn, cultivate the intersectional character of their members' identities. As seen in Chapters 1 and 2, queer and Muslim mainstream groups can create barriers for QTMuslims in ways that fail to account for their intersectional identities. By contrast, QTMOs promote collective identities that challenge LGBTQ/religious dualisms and, instead, account for the multidimensional aspects of QTMuslims' lived experiences.

Analytically, Chapter 3 shows that using intersectional frameworks to examine QTROs in the context of group engagement leads to fundamentally different explanations about their function. Rather than simply help reconcile identities, QTMOs contribute to cultural knowledge production about QTMuslims' social interactions. As 'safe spaces,' QTMOs challenge the assumption that rainbow religious people necessarily encounter faith in the same way. Specifically, QTMuslims live out their religious and gendered/sexual identities in ways that are inseparable from, at least, their racial and ethnic ones. Accordingly, they seek out and produce spaces which oppose racism, ethnocentrism, and various other 'isms. QTMuslims' decision to stay in sectarian groups reflects both their resistance toward mainstream marginalization practices and their efforts to create emancipatory spaces. Hence, QTMOs provide environments from which to engage with social justice and to foster social change.

The dissertation, as a whole, shows that analyzing QTMuslims' experiences can do more than tell us about the presumably dichotomous and contentious relationship between religion and sexual/gender diversity. Rather, my research shows that QTMuslims constitute a vulnerable group and they encounter racist, sexist, capitalist, homophobic, transphobic, and Islamophobic

systems in their daily lives. The social and institutional challenges faced by QTMuslims in both Muslim and queer mainstream organizations are indicative of larger systemic barriers that cannot be reduced to religious belief or religiosity. In conclusion, I suggest that future research examine QTMuslims' resistance toward such marginalization practices through social justice frameworks and within social movements scholarship. The next chapter details the methods and methodologies used for the dissertation.

Methods

This dissertation draws on a two-year ethnography, in-depth interviews, participant observation, content analysis, and archival research. I conducted a total of seventy interviews with leaders (meaning founders or organizers in decision-making roles) of six Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs)[5], fifteen mainstream[6] Muslim organizations, eleven mainstream queer organizations, and one counter-to-mainstream queer organization in Toronto, Canada. I also engaged in participant observation either by attending or volunteering for a total of sixty formal events (twenty from QTMOs, twenty from mainstream queer organizations, and twenty from mainstream Muslim organizations) and many informal ones. Additionally, I examined each organization's thirty most recent organizational brochures, flyers, or programs, and analyzed their websites and social media profiles. Finally, I surveyed the archival materials of seven separate mainstream queer organizations, which were publicly available at the ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives (formerly the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives). In this chapter, I detail each of these research components and outline my methodological choices.

Why Toronto, why Canada?

Previous research on LGBTQ religious identity has mainly taken place in the United Kingdom (Jaspal and Cinnieralla, 2010; Siraj 2006, 2009, 2016; Yip, 2004, 2005, 2008) Australia (Abraham, 2009), the Netherlands (El-Tayeb, 2012; Hekma, 2002) and the United States (Bauer,

[5] Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) can be thought of as groups that foster support, solidarity, and advocacy for Queer and Trans Muslim (QTMuslim) individuals.
[6] Mainstream organizations can be considered dominant groups with institutional power. They are mostly well-established and generally hold large constituencies. Typically, mainstream Muslim groups cater to non-LGBTQ Muslim populations and mainstream queer groups cater to non-Muslim populations.

1976; Buchanan et al., 2001; Cooper, 1989; Habib, 2010; Kane, 2013; Kugle, 2010, 2014; Kubicek et al., 2009; Morris, 1987; Mahaffy, 1996; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000; Shokeid, 2005; Thumma, 1991; Wagner et al., 1994; Wilcox, 2001, 2002). Thus, only few studies (Khan, 2010; Rahman, 2010; Schnoor, 2006) have examined rainbow religious activity in the Canadian context.

Both Canada and Toronto are analytically fertile study locations for examining the experiences of Queer and Trans Muslims (QTMuslims). Islam is the second largest religion in the country, constituting 3.2% of the total population. Toronto has the largest population of Muslims in all of Canada, and close to 8% of the Greater Toronto Area's (GTA) population are Muslim (National Household Survey, 2011).

Canada's Muslim population is more racially and ethnically diverse than the populations of other countries like the UK, where most Muslims are Bangladeshi and Pakistani (UK Census, 2011). Canadian Muslims include people from the Middle East, the Caribbean, North Africa, and Europe with communities originating from countries such as Lebanon, Somalia, Bosnia, Yemen, Iraq, and Iran. Moreover, most Canadian Muslims are raised Muslim and very few have converted to Islam, as is relatively more common in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2015) or the United Kingdom (Nye, 2011). These demographic distinctions are important for my dissertation because I consider the interconnections between QTMuslims' religious, ethnic, racial, cultural, and familial experiences (Ambraham, 2009; El-Tayeb, 2012; Hekma, 2002; Minwalla et al., 2005; Khan, 2010; Yip 2004, 2008).

In terms of social attitudes, bi-directional openness in Canada seems high at the national level, where Muslims are accepting of Canadian values and non-Muslim Canadians are receptive to Islam (Enviornics Institute, 2016; FOCUS CANADA, 2006). Although no comparative research

is currently available, contrasting survey results from studies in Canada, Britain, and the United States indicates that Canadian Muslims may exhibit higher degrees patriotism than their American or British counter parts (ICM, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2011; Environics Institute, 2016). On the receiving side, Canadians seem more receptive to Muslims than Americans or Britons (ComRes, 2016; Enviornics Institute, 2016; FOCUS CANADA, 2006; Pew Research Center, 2017).

At the governmental level, Canada's 2016 commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2016), in comparison to the 10,000 in the United States and the 5,706 in Britain (UNHCR, 2016), shows relative 'regime openness' toward people from Muslim-majority countries.

Among the general population, attitudes toward homosexuality seem to be slightly more liberal in Canada and the United States compared to Britain (ENVIRONICS, 2016; ICM, 2016; OECD, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2011). Moreover, Canada has outpaced other liberal-democratic countries in advancing LGBTQ rights, especially in having legalized same sex marriage in 2005 (Pew Research Center, 2019). The first Statistics Canada survey to have collected data on sexual orientation showed that 1.7% of Canadians aged 18-59 considered themselves either gay or lesbian and another 1.3% identified as bisexual in 2014 (Community Health Survey, 2014). Although more recent public data are unavailable, these numbers are likely higher in present-day, given population growth and LGBTQ migration. Moreover, while the existing data account for sexual identity, surveys capturing sexual behaviour would likely lead to higher numbers (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Importantly, estimates have suggested that nearly half (45.6%) of same-sex couples in Canada live in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2011). Toronto has many vibrant

LGBTQ communities and is home to several queer-oriented businesses and organizations. Yet, such organizations have historically been challenged by lesbians, trans and nonbinary communities, and racialized groups, who have opposed the ubiquity of white, cisgender, gay men and the protection of their interests in the 'queer mainstream' (Chambers et al., 2017).

Queer and Trans Black Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) communities—including QTblack communities (Douglas; Munga; Silvera; Lord in chambers et al. 2017), QTAsians and South Asians (Chan; Ha and Daulet; Fernandez; Li; Raj in chambers et al., 2017), 2Spirit groups (Tanaguay in Chambers et al., 2017), Latinas (Romero-Leiva and Jimenez in Chambers et al., 2017), and Muslims (Khaki in Chambers et al., 2017)—have been organizing in Toronto since at least the 1960s (Nolan in Chambers et al., 2017).

Given the existence of "very little space" for "queers of colour" in mainstream organizations (Wood in Chambers et al., 2017 p.44), QTBIPOC groups have historically organized outside of and against the queer mainstream (Clarke; Hariawthorn et al. in Chambers et al., 2017). This is, for instance, demographically evident in the contradiction between the city's continued immigration growth and the simultaneous decline of visible minority residents in Toronto's gay village (Orstein and McCaskell in Chambers et al., 2017).

These characteristics make Toronto an ideal location for studying QTMuslims' experiences. While there is evidence of social and institutional support for LGBTQ lifestyles and rights in Canada, Toronto's queer history seems to be rife with tensions between dominant and minority groups within queer communities. Furthermore, because QTMuslims may need to negotiate their sexual, gender, religious, ethnic, and racial social identities, it is important to account for their experiences in both Muslim and queer organizations.

Finally, there is simply a large QTMuslim presence in both Canada and Toronto, where many

QTMOs organize LGBTQ religious activity. Yet no empirical study has specifically focused on the experiences of QTMuslims in the city. Thus, my dissertation provides the first ethnographic account of Torontonian QTMuslims' institutional experiences within mainstream queer and Muslim organizations, and such organizations' response to QTMuslim inclusion from their own perspectives.

Setting the Scene: Ethnographic Research

Toronto is a vibrant city, full of hustle and chaos. Given its large geographical size, numerous people commute in and out of its city center. As a result, the diligent ethnographer can expect to enjoy plenty of long suburban journeys, regardless of rainfalls or ice storms. The local transportation system—officially called the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) but often marketed as 'the Rocket' by the crown corporation—is notoriously despised by Torontonians for its lack of efficiency and accessibility. Considering the city's equally infamous road infrastructure, commuting for research in Toronto means many metro delays, many near catastrophic pedestrian run-ins, and many arguments with taxi drivers.

The most intensive phase of my ethnographic research took place between 2017 and 2019, during which I was involved in fieldwork almost every day, either recruiting, conducting interviews, attending events, or volunteering in some capacity. My decisions for sampling were based on three characteristics: popularity, availability, and variability. In recruiting QTMO members, I attempted to capture as many organizations as possible. I targeted and successfully recruited leaders from all of the city's well-known QTMOs.

I chose my sample of mainstream organizations based on popularity and variability. I conducted a web search of all of Toronto's most widely known Muslim and queer organizations

and contacted their leaders. I also purposefully selected organizations that differed from one another in terms of their primary function (e.g. whether they were sacred groups, community centers, advocacy groups, or social groups). I detail the diversity of organizations 'types' below. For mainstream Muslim organizations, I further divided my sample in terms of religious sects: attempted to recruit a diverse sample of Sunni, Shia, Isma'ili, Sufi, and non-sectarian organizations. Although I was unable to recruit an equal number of interviewees from each organization, my sample still consisted of a fairly even distribution of interviewees across various groups (see interview section).

I primarily contacted organizations via e-mail and social media. I also approached potential participants at events that their organization was hosting. Because Muslim communities are spread out throughout the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), field locations accordingly spanned across the city and its adjacent municipalities. Conversely, many mainstream queer organizations are concentrated in Toronto's Church-and-Wellesley 'gaybourhood' (Ghaziani, 2015). The central hub of the city's gay village is the intersection of Church Street and Wellesley Street: the neighbourhood is therefore commonly referred to as 'Church Street' or simply 'Church and Wellesley.'

Regardless of their spatial organization, both mainstream queer and Muslim organizations were well-known to either LGBTQ or Muslim communities. Mainstream Muslim organizations were well-attended and well-respected by Torontonian Muslims. Similarly, Church Street—commonly associated with drunken nights, dirty dancing, and lots of glitter—was home to Toronto's most established queer organizations. Thus, identifying and locating mainstream Muslim or queer organizations was a relatively simple process.

In contrast to mainstream organizations, QTMOs did not have fixed physical 'homes.' Rather, they organized their events throughout the GTA. Some QTMO events took place within queer organizations and few in Muslim organizations. Yet, as the dissertation (and especially Chapter 3) shows, QTMOs generally defined themselves in opposition to mainstream groups and therefore organized many of their events outside of mainstream locations. Some of such locations were more accessible than others. Sometimes, events took place in QTMO leaders' homes and were exclusively open to members.

In part, the perceived difficulty of gaining access to the field is relative to one's expectation-management. Because I allowed the project to unfold organically and anticipated a flexible timeline, I did not perceive a great difficulty in accessing the field. I surely faced many challenges but regarded them as part of the intended process of my research.

For instance, I renewed the ethics certificate (REB File #111-0717) for the project two times in order to keep recruiting for interviews. While I started recruitment prior to entering the field, some interviews took place near the end of the data collection period (or nearly two years into the ethnography). Although this would typically be regarded as a barrier to access, I followed Simpson (2014) in situating interviewees' resistance to being researched within the methodological and theoretical implications of the project. Particularly in regard to recruiting QTMuslim interviewees, these "refusals," as Simpson (2014) has called them, were a consistent reminder that I was conducting research with marginalized communities, many of whom eventually told me that they were tired of being "studied."

Recruiting interviewees from mainstream organizations presented its own set of unique challenges. In order to reduce bias, I did not disclose the purpose of the study to mainstream organizers during the recruitment process. This sometimes made it harder for leaders to

understand the objective of the research. For ethical purposes, once I met with interviewees, I informed them (both verbally and through consent forms) that we would discuss topics related to LGBTQ identity and Islam. Contrary to my expectations, this did not prevent leaders from moving forward with the interview.

Scheduling and finding appropriate spaces for interviews proved to be more difficult than initially anticipated. Toronto is loud and dense; its common meeting spaces seldom lend themselves to quiet interview locales. From the very onset of the research, I learned to ask for many favours: sometimes I asked interviewees to meet me at nearby libraries; other times I asked them to conduct the interviews in their offices; many generously offered their homes. Nonetheless, a number of interviews inevitably took place inside noisy cafes or bookstores.

Torontonians are busy people. Some work multiple jobs and, in the case of this research, many commit subsidiary volunteer hours to QTMOs and to mainstream organizations. Thus, the range of timing for interviews was wide. Some interviews took place at 8 a.m. on Sunday morning and others took place at 9 p.m. on a Friday night.

It should be noted that while I faced challenges in recruiting participants, I also received much support along the way. Although some QTMO leaders were resistant to being interviewed, others were very responsive from the start. They invited me to events, introduced me to other leaders and community partners, and went above and beyond in helping me navigate the field. These participants could be thought of as gatekeepers, but by now they have become my friends. Many mainstream leaders similarly showed me courtesy and kindness. I was especially surprised by the willingness of mainstream Muslim leaders to not only continue to participate in the research after the interviews were completed, but also to refer me to other leaders and to help me recruit more participants.

My own social statuses also helped me in the recruiting process. Being a Middle Eastern immigrant of Muslim origin awarded me easier access to mainstream Muslim organizations. Moreover, having grown up in Toronto as a racialized person and being 'hip' to the city's queer scene pre-emptively awarded me relative insider status in both QTMOs and mainstream queer organizations. My position as a social justice academic further helped in conveying my intention to want to conduct emancipatory research, especially to leaders who had academic and activist backgrounds.

Types of Organizations

My sample consists of four different types of organizations: six QTMOs, fifteen mainstream Muslim organizations, eleven mainstream queer organizations, and one counter-to-mainstream queer organization. **Table 1** outlines the characteristics of each organization type.

Table 1: Organization Types

		QTMOs (total N= 6)	Muslim Mainstream (total N= 15)	Queer Mainstream (total N= 11)	Counter-Mainstream (total N = 1)
Purpose	Sacred	2	7		
	Social	1		2	
	Arts/Events			2	
	Health			2	
	Community Center		3	3	
	Support/Advocacy	3	3	2	1
	Student Association		2		
Consticuency	50s	4	2	2	
	100s	2	5	5	1
	1000s		8	4	
Structure	Non-Profit/Charitable Organization		9	9	
	Bureaucratic Hierarchical Structures		13	10	

QTMOs can be thought of as organizations that cater to QTMuslims in various ways. Two out of six QTMOs were sacred groups (i.e. mosques), three were support/advocacy groups (i.e. they helped QTMuslims with any type of legal, social, or psychological support), and one was a social group (i.e. their primary aim was creating events for QTMuslims to come together and socialize).

It should be noted that two out of the six organizations were interfaith organizations with considerable QTMuslim constituencies; the other four were distinctly LGBTQ Muslim organizations. For the purposes of this dissertation, I counted the interfaith organizations as QTMOs because I restricted interview questions and topics to QTMuslim constituents. Only three of the total interviews were conducted with leaders of interfaith groups. QTMOs had relatively small constituencies, ranging from fifty to hundreds of constituents.

Mainstream Muslim organizations consisted of seven sacred groups, three community centers, three support/advocacy groups, and two student associations. In contrast to QTMOs, eight of these organizations had thousands of constituents, five had hundreds, and two had fifty or more. Moreover, nine organizations were non-profits and thirteen had bureaucratic structures with defined hierarchies.

Most mainstream queer organizations were similarly large, nine of which were non-profits and ten of which had hierarchal structures in place. Four out of eleven queer organizations had thousands of constituents, five had hundreds of constituents, and two had fifty or so constituents. Two organizations were social groups, two were dedicated to the arts, two were health organizations, three were community centers, and the final two were support/advocacy groups.

Finally, the counter-to-mainstream organization was a support/advocacy organization with hundreds of constituents. This group explicitly defined itself as opposing the status quo in mainstream queer organizations and promoting practices that centralized the needs of racialized queer and trans communities.

Interviews

I conducted a total of seventy in-depth semi-structured interviews, twenty-four of which were with leaders of QTMOs, twenty-four with leaders of mainstream Muslim organizations, twenty-one with leaders of mainstream queer organizations, and the one remaining interview was with a leader of the counter-to-mainstream queer organization.

As mentioned above, the interviews were fairly evenly distributed across each organization. I interviewed one to two leaders from each mainstream queer organization and two to three leaders from each mainstream Muslim organization. For the QTMOs, I interviewed five to six leaders from the four groups that were strictly Muslim and three leaders between the two interfaith groups. I outline interviewee characteristics in **Table 2.**

Table 2: Interviewee Characteristics

		QTMOs (total N= 24)	Muslim Mainstream (total N= 24)	Queer Mainstream (total N= 21)	Counter-Mainstream (total N = 1)
Gender	Man	11	8	9	
	Woman	10	16	10	
	non-binary	3		2	1
Cis/Trans	Cis	20	24	17	
	Trans	1		2	
Sexual Orientation	Straight	2	24	6	
	Queer	11		4	1
	Gay/Lesbian	8		8	
	Pansexual	2		1	
	Bisexual	1		2	
Ethnicity/Race	White	3	1	14	
	Black - Caribbean	2	1	1	
	Black - African	9	8	1	
	South Asian	7	8	2	1
	South East Asian	1		2	
	Middle Eastern	2	6	1	
Age	20s	6	9		
	30s	9	5	6	
	40s	5	3	9	1
	50s	2	4	3	
	60s	2	3	1	
	70s			2	

In order to respect confidentiality, the names of all organizations have been concealed and interviewees have been given pseudonyms.

Each interview lasted about one hour but interview questions differed for each organization type. My interviews with QTMO leaders were designed to understand the purpose of the organizations and their relationship to mainstream groups. I asked interviewees to describe the organizations' histories, structures, and constituencies and prompted them about their encounters with mainstream groups. I also asked each interviewee whether they were planning to integrate their organization or if they preferred to grow their own sectarian groups and why.

I sought to understand how mainstream organizations respond to QTMuslims from their own perspectives. That is, in addition to asking QTMO leaders how mainstream groups respond to them, I also asked mainstream groups how they respond to QTMOs and their members. In my interviews with leaders of mainstream Muslim organizations, I designed questions that were aimed at gauging both attitudes and actions toward QTMuslims. That is, while I posed leaders questions that would incite responses toward QTMuslim identity, I also asked whether they were willing to include QTMuslims into their groups, regardless of their personal attitudes.

Similarly, I asked leaders of mainstream queer organizations questions related to their relationship with QTMuslims, such as how they felt about hosting Muslim-specific events, and whether the organization should offer more programming for Muslims. I also showed both queer and Muslim mainstream organizations three vignettes (see **Table 3**). These vignettes were designed to gauge mainstream leaders' objective responses to QTMuslims and QTMOs without personally implicating them in the answers. I talk more about the vignettes in relation to mainstream Muslim organizations in Chapter 1 and in relation to mainstream queer organizations in Chapter 2.

Table 3: Vignettes

	Mainstream Queer Organizations	Mainstream Muslim Organizations
Vignette 1	Two Muslim women enter an LGBTQ restaurant and bar, wearing a hijab. They are holding hands and share a kiss. They ask the waiter if the restaurant offers halal meat. They waiter answers no. They order vegetarian dishes instead. - What are your thoughts about this situation? - Do you think that the restaurant should have offered Halal meat? Why or why not?	Two lesbian Muslim women enter a community center. They want to participate at the next community meeting and to have Muslim lesbians represented. The organizer of the community center agrees to let them give a 30 minute presentation and to post awareness flyers at the community center. -What are your thoughts about this? -Should the women be given the time to talk about the issues that their community faces? Why or Why not?
Vignette 2	A trans Muslim man enters a LGBTQ health care institution. He has been diagnosed with HIVAIDS. He asks to be seen specifically by a male doctor for religious reasons. The health care organization denies him entry. They are short staffed (they only have 1 male doctor available) and cannot provide special treatment to anyone regardless of their religion. -What do you think of this situation? -Should the health care center have made accommodations for the man? Why or why not?	Two prominent gay activists walk into a mosque. They are holding hands as they walk in. They sit down and join the prayer. They are asked by a staff member to please leave. -What do you think about the situation? -Should the men have been asked to leave? Why or why not? -What if the men were not only holding hands but also shared a kiss? Would this change your opinion of the situation? Why or why not? - What if it were not two gay men but a trans woman who was sitting in the women's section (wearing a hijab). What would you think about the trans woman being asked to go to the men's section and why?
Vignette 3	You enter an LGBTQ Muslim organization. They are having an event where queer Muslims are sharing their experiences about acceptance from their families. Some stories are funny, they are all laughing; sometimes it gets emotional, and the speakers cry. One Muslim gay man is speaking. He says: "I am so grateful to have found this space. Now I can finally be Muslim and be gay!" -What do you think of this event? -Do you think it is a positive experience that the man at the end is having or a negative one? -Can someone be Muslim and be gay?	You enter an LGBTQ Muslim organization. They are having an event where queer Muslims are sharing their experiences about acceptance from their families. Some stories are funny, they are all laughing; sometimes it gets emotional, and the speakers cry. One Muslim gay man is speaking. He says: "I am so grateful to have found this space. Now I can finally be Muslim and be gay!" -What do you think of this event? -Do you think it is a positive experience that the man at the end is having or a negative one? -Can someone be Muslim and be gay?

Content Analysis, Participant Observation, and Memo-Writing

I analyzed and coded the interviews using the ATLAS.ti coding software. Employing both deductive and inductive coding (Miles et. al, 2014), I conducted a line-by-line analysis of each interview. I deductively compiled a list of codes from my analysis of previous literature before reviewing the transcripts. I then applied these codes to the relevant lines or sections of the interviews. For instance, I created measures of LGBTQ 'acceptance' and 'non-acceptance' based on various characteristics that either had been used in or been missing from previous studies. I

detail the process through which I created these ideal types of 'acceptance' and 'non-acceptance' in Chapter 1.

I also applied inductive coding, or ascribed codes as they emerged in my data analysis. This is exemplified in the coding of the theme "diversity," which informed much of the groundwork for Chapter 2. Although the topic of "diversity" was not built into my interview questions, it was mentioned several times by interviewees and organically emerged as I examined the transcripts. After having conducted a line-by-line analysis of each interview transcript, I clustered initial codes into larger themes and dropped those that were irrelevant or insignificant.

I triangulated my interview data with content analysis of both QTMOs' and mainstream organizations' online materials and websites. I accessed event flyers, event programs, and promotional materials on organizations' social media profiles (including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). I started with the most recent content (which, at the time, was from June of 2019) and moved backwards until I reached thirty documents. Generally, this was the number at which I reached saturation and the content became repetitive. Most of the content dated back one to two years. I also analyzed the entirety of organizations' official websites if they were available. All but three organizations had official websites. I looked for consistencies and inconsistencies between the content and interview data and searched for any additional themes that emerged from the analysis.

In order to collect complimentary data and to immerse myself into the communities with whom I was conducting research, I undertook participant observation in QTMO and mainstream events (Atkinson and Hammersely, 1994; Hammersely and Atkinson, 2007; Reinharz, 1992). I attended a total of sixty formal events, including talks, prayers, social gatherings, support groups, plays, and film screenings. Twenty of these events were hosted by QTMOs, twenty by

mainstream queer organizations, and twenty by mainstream Muslim organizations. I also attended countless informal events.

I maintained a participant-observer position by participating in events when appropriate. For instance, if attendees spoke about their personal experiences, I similarly shared my experiences; if I attended mosques, I prayed alongside other participants. Particularly in QTMOs, I also often volunteered for events. This allowed me to get to know members better, to engage in informal conversations with them, and to contribute to the organizations. Within twenty-four hours of attending each formal event, I composed fieldnotes and documented my participant observation.

I also wrote analytic memos, which were different than my fieldnotes in that they critically contemplated the research project overall (Salanda, 2009). In my analytic memos, I reflected on the broader implications of the formal and informal events that I attended, but also on the themes of the interviews, the relationships of various actors to one another, and everything in between. As Hesse-Biber (2007) has noted, "memo writing is the link between analysis (what did I find?) and interpretation (what does it mean?)" (p. 340).

Archival Research at The ArQuives

Finally, I conducted archival research at the ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives. The ArQuives is a non-profit organization located in Toronto, Canada. It is the largest independent LGBTQ archive globally (ArQuives 2020) and can be thought of as a community archive (Gilliland and Flinn 2013). The ArQuives is home to a sizable number of personal and organizational records, which are referred to as fonds. These encompass personal donations from individuals with LGBTQ-related materials and archival records from several queer organizations across Canada. The organization also has separate "collections that are made up of materials that

will not be amalgamated into a fonds." (ArQuives, 2020). These collections and fonds are vast and include textual records, artifacts, artworks, photographs, posters, and audio-visual records.

The primary purpose of the archival research was to understand the history of mainstream queer organizations in Toronto. Thus, my archival selection was based on the availability of records and on the historical breath and prominence of the organizations. The organizations were not related to the groups I selected for interviews. I worked with the obliging archivists at the ArQuives, who helped me narrow down the most well-known and long-established organizations in Toronto and who worked with me to locate the most relevant and available materials[7]. I surveyed mostly the textual records—such as meeting minutes, letters, and programs—of the following seven queer organizations: Pride Toronto, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, the Aids Committee of Toronto, the Metropolitan Women's Common, Inside/Out, and Supporting Our Youth. **Table 4** describes the details my archival analysis.

Table 4: Archival records

Organization	# of Boxes	# of files	Types of Documents	Year Range
Pride Toronto	4	50 +	Festival programs, mission statements, photographs, tshirts, buttons	1981-2012
Buddies in Bad Times Theatre	14	300 +	Flyers, programs, meeting minutes, correspondences	1981-1993
The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives	4	200 +	Annual General Meeting reports, meeting minutes, event planning files, speeches, conference files	1978-2010
AIDS Committee of Toronto	5	200 +	Flyers, meeting minutes, photographs, surveys, annual reports	1983-1997
The Metopolitian Women's Common	8	300 +	campaign brochures, meeting minutes correspondences, comment cards, sign in books, phone surveys	1986-1994
Inside Out	8	20 booklets	Festival programs(drafts of programs + final) products	1995-2015
Supporting our Youth	3	200 +	Meeting minutes, Executive Committee files, correspondences, newsletters	1987-2001

[7] Some materials were not publicly available because donors restricted access to them. Moreover, some of the files were currently being organized by archivists and were not available for analysis.

I intermittently frequented the ArQuives between February 2019 and February 2020, averaging an estimate of two hours per week. I dedicated approximately one-hundred total hours to archival research. Collecting or analyzing queer and trans community archives is challenging in several ways. First, given the history of LGBTQ discrimination, the systematized collection and organization of materials is relatively new. Luckily, the ArQuives—whose collection has grown from the individuals involved with UoftT Homophile Association, Glad Day Bookshop, and the Body Politic (Jackson; Mouldenhaur in Chambers et al. 2017)—has been formally collecting material since 1973 and their oldest historical records date back to 1850 (ArQuives 2020). Nonetheless, much of the collection has been historically compromised, most notably in 1977, when the police raided and seized materials from the Body Politic.

Moreover, materials are generally donated to the ArQuives, which means that they are often inconsistent: some organizations will donate meeting minutes and others will donate boxes of clothing. As opposed to, for instance, governmental archives, who have specific oversights, regulations, and archive management schedules, community archives are informal. Furthermore, as objects of analysis, archival materials can be biased. The institution chooses which materials to keep and the organization/person choses what to donate. LGBTQ archives can also be biased by identity politics: because of the tensions between the queer mainstream and racialized communities, some potentially damaging materials could have been omitted from the collections.

To conclude, my dissertation relies on several methods. In this chapter, I have detailed my use of in-depth interviews, participant observation, content analysis, and archival research. In the following three stand-alone chapters, I use these various methods to examine QTMuslims' institutional relationships. I analyze the relationship between QTMOs and mainstream Muslim and queer organizations to examine the experiences of QTMuslims within the social world.

Chapter 1[8]

Does religion prevent LGBTQ acceptance? A case study with queer trans Muslim in Toronto, Canada

Abstract: This chapter looks at whether mainstream Muslim organizations accept Queer and Trans Muslims (QTMuslim). The study draws on forty-eight in-depth interviews with leaders of mainstream Muslim organizations and Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) in Toronto, Canada in order to explore (1) what the acceptance of QTMuslims constitutes, (2) whether acceptance is acquired/conferred, and (3) whether religion prevents acceptance. I compare mainstream leaders' responses to characteristics that constitute ideal types of 'acceptance' and 'non-acceptance.' Responses are weighed against interviews with QTMO leaders and participant-observation data. Results show a range of four acceptance levels, demonstrating that religious belief alone does not explain or account for LGBTQ acceptance.

Keywords: gay, lesbian, transgender, transsexual, Islam, religion, acceptance.

[8] This chapter, for which Golshan Golriz is the sole author, has been published in the Journal of Homosexuality. Golriz, G. (2020). "Does religion prevent LGBTQ acceptance? A case study with queer and trans Muslims in Toronto, Canada." Journal of Homosexuality. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2020.1809888

INTRODUCTION

The conflict between Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (LGBTQ)[9] and religious identity has generally been addressed as a psychological irreconcilability, which results from the tension between religious belief and LGBTQ acceptance. Social scientific research has consistently identified religious belief as inciting homonegative or heterosexist attitudes (Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009; Schulte and Battle, 2004; Siraj, 2009). Relatedly, LGBTQ and religious identity have been considered irreconcilable. Looking at Christianity and its denominations (Kubicek et al., 2009; Mahaffy, 1996; Thumma, 1991; Yip, 2005), Judaism (Nugent and Gramick, 1989; Schnoor, 2006), spirituality (Buchanan et al., 2001), and Islam (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Kugle 2014; Khan, 2010; Minwalla et al., 2005; Siraj, 2012, 2016, 2017), scholars have examined the reconciliation of conflicting identities at the individual level.

This chapter draws on ethnographic research with leaders of Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) and mainstream Muslim organizations in Toronto, Canada as a case study for examining the impact of religion on LGBTQ acceptance. The chapter makes two important contributions to the study of LGBTQ religious identity. First, it moves away from previous "identity reconciliation" literature. Given that some people have successfully integrated these 'conflicting' identities through membership in Queer and Trans Religious Organizations (QTROs) or through religious individualism (Mahaffy, 1996; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Kubicek et al., 2009; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000; Siraj, 2006, Siraj 2016; Schnoor, 2006;

[9] This chapter alternates between the terms LG, LGB, LGBT, LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ. In cases where the T or Q are absent, the research has excluded this population from the research. At times, 'queer and trans' is used interchangeably with LGBTQ+: queer is used more broadly as an umbrella category of sexually diverse identities and trans is used to refer to those who feel that their bodies or their medically/socially ascribed sex does not align with their gender identity. I separate queer from trans as recognition of the distinctiveness of trans lived experiences from queer ones.

Wilcox 2002), and because others do not experience dissonance at all (Fuist, 2016), more research is needed to explore the social barriers that prevent acceptance beyond the individual level (see Rahman, 2014 for a recent example of this type of research) . In other words, this chapter shifts the focus analysis from psychological/individual irreconcilability to the social barriers that Queer and Trans Muslims (QTMuslims) face.

Second, the chapter examines whether religion serves as a barrier to the acceptance of LGBTQ religious individuals. Rather than focus on the relationship between religious belief and homonegative attitudes, I broaden the measures of both acceptance and religion: I incorporate both attitudes and actions of religious groups, and I examine non-religious and what I call "para-religious" or "meta-religious" barriers in addition to religious ones. By using a wide range of criteria to capture religion and LGBTQ acceptance, the chapter demonstrates that people use faith in different ways to justify a *range* of LGBTQ acceptance levels. As such, I argue that religion, as a singular category, cannot explain LGBTQ acceptance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Is religion a barrier to acceptance?

Much of the existing social scientific research points to religion as a barrier to the acceptance of LGBTQ religious people. Quantitative analyses from survey data (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill 2005; Hooghe et al., 2010; Olson et al., 2006; Rowatt et al., 2006; Schulte and Battle, 2004) have consistently identified religion (measured both by religious affiliation and religiosity) as a predictor of negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Drawing on the World Value Survey (WVS), the European Value Survey, and the Comparative Youth Survey (CYS), studies have

shown that Muslims[10] approved less of homosexuality than other religions (Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009; Hooghe et al., 2010; Yuchtman-Yaar and Alkalay, 2007). Questions generally asked in these surveys range from whether homosexuality is justified, whether homosexuals should be able to live their own lives 'as they wish' (Fitzgerald, Winstone, and Prestage 2014), or whether same-sex marriage should be abolished (Lubbers, Jaspers, and Ultee 2009).

Non-religious factors that could potentially complicate the relationship between homonegative attitudes and religion remain relatively underexplored. Some researchers (Fitzgerald, Winstone, and Prestage, 2014; Lubbers, Jaspers, and Ultee, 2009) have shown that Western values may have additional socialization impacts on attitudes toward homosexuality. These scholars have argued that those with Western values are less likely to oppose same-sex marriage (Lubbers, Jaspers, and Ultee, 2009), and that acculturation to Western norms increases tolerance toward homosexuality (Fitzgerald, Winstone, and Prestage 2014; Soehl, 2014). Additional factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, education, and family and marital status have also been found to shape homonegative beliefs (Besen and Zicklin, 2007; Lubbers, Jaspers, and Ultee, 2009; Schulte and Battle, 2004).

For instance, Besen and Zicklin (2007) found that young religious men showed more negative attitudes to gay marriage, gay adoption, and gay military constituencies, compared to their female counterparts (see also Hooghe et al., 2010). Lubbers, Jaspers, and Ultee (2009) found that lower educational levels and non-Western origins increased the likelihood of Dutch religious individuals' opposition to gay marriage. These finding show that perhaps religion is tied to other factors that impact LGBTQ acceptance. For instance, we may ask how masculinity complicates the relationship between religion and acceptance.

[10] Here, religion was measured both by affiliation, religiosity and by country/cultural tradition

Although quantitative analyses have looked at religious heterosexual individuals' responses to homosexuality, little research has analyzed their attitudes toward transsexuality/transgender. Nor has any previous study examined attitudes toward LGBTQ Religious identity or groups. Moreover, very little qualitative work has gauged reactions to LGBTQ Religious identity from the perspective of religious communities themselves. The notable exception is the work of Siraj (2009), who interviewed 68 Muslim heterosexuals (33 men and 35 women) in Glasgow, Scotland.

Siraj (2009) found that Islam was a major predictor of negative attitudes toward homosexuality: 88% of her male participants and 86% of the female ones denounced homosexuality as *Haram* (forbidden by Islamic law or scripture). Participants were asked to describe their position toward homosexuality both on its own and in relation to heterosexuality. Siraj found that most participants cited the *Qur'an* or *Hadith* as the primary source of homonegative and heterosexist attitudes.

Qualitative research with QTMuslims (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Minwalla et al., 2005; Schnoor, 2006; Siraj, 2006, 2012; Yip, 2008) has also detailed accounts of exclusion as resulting from the interpretation of religious scripts, namely from the *Qur'anic* passages of Lut[11]. Yet some (El-Tayeb, 2012; Hekma, 2002; Minwalla et al., 2005; Khan, 2010; Yip 2004, 2008) have linked homonegative attitudes to family values or the tension between 'Eastern' and 'Western' cultures. For instance, Kugle (2014) showed that family and community commitments powerfully contribute to identity conflict for transgender, gay, and lesbian Muslims. Yip (2004)

[11] Some Muslim scholars interpret the *Qur'anic* passages involving the prophet Lut/Lot as a condemnation of homosexuality. They claim that the disregard for Lut's warnings against sodomy resulted in the annihilation of the majority of population through a "shower (of brimstone)" (see Siraj, 2009 for a detailed explanation). This interpretation is, however, contested by other Muslim scholars and Imams (see, for instance, Kugle, 2010 2014, Siraj 2016, 2017).

similarly explored the negotiation of non-heterosexual Muslim identity within familial and kinship ties. He found that many Muslim families were resistant toward homosexuality because they viewed it as a Western disease. Here, the idea of 'gay culture' was articulated as being absent in home countries. Minwalla et al. (2005) similarly pointed to such cultural tensions: they found that ethno-cultural differences between East and West were a source of contention for Gay Muslims. Participants noted that the concept of 'gayness' or 'gay identity' was a Western one: the need to fit 'gayness' into an identity category was not made important in home countries, where homosociality was more widely practiced. Others (El-Tayeb, 2012; Khan, 2010) have reinforced the same idea: gay identity in the Western sense is antithetical to non-Western culture[12].

Although they fall in line with the idea that Western acculturation is negatively correlated with homonegative attitudes, these findings also incite the question of whether homonegative attitudes are defined according to Western norms in the first place. Furthermore, the resistance to homosexuality *as a Western phenomenon* would presumably explain why Muslim groups would simultaneously reject both homosexuality and acculturation. Importantly, these findings show that perhaps religious beliefs or religiosity do not explain homonegative attitudes on their own.

Existing research calls into question the extent to which religion is tied up with cultural scripts and familial values. On the one hand, homonegative attitudes may not be religious at all: they may be associated with resistance to Western acculturation and familial identity. Alternatively, these attitudes could be considered "meta-" or "para-" religious: one's Muslim identity could be inextricably linked to their insistence on family values and their rejection of

[12] It is important to note that while some regard LGBTQ identities as being explicitly Western, LGBTQ Muslim lived experiences do not necessarily fit into binary categorizations of being either Western or non-Western. Many scholars have shown that such experiences are idiosyncratic and intersectional (Bereket and Adam 2006; Habib 2010; Rahman, 2010).

Western culture. Relatedly, measures used to capture religion may not be accurate as a unit of analysis. Is Islam measured by one's textual interpretation of religious scripts, their cultural affiliation with the religion, their individual relationship with *Allah*, or everything in between? Ahmed (2015) has shown that all of these factors make up Islamic ideology and practice. Finally, it remains to be seen whether homonegative attitudes translate into actions (i.e. whether negative attitudes toward homosexuality necessarily lead to the inclusion or exclusion of QTMuslims).

Based on existing research (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill 2005; Hooghe et al., 2010; Olson et al., 2006; Rowatt et al., 2006; Schulte and Battle, 2004) we would expect that most mainstream groups would fail to accept QTMuslims on the basis of religion. Yet such explanations may not paint the whole picture: acceptance could be impacted by factors such as the tension between East/West culture (El-Tayeb, 2012; Minwalla et al., 2005), family values (Khan, 2010; Kugle, 2014; Yip 2004), or one's understanding of Islam (Ahmed, 2015). Overall, we need more analyses of if and whether Muslims accept LGBTQ populations and why. The present study provides qualitative accounts of what acceptance [as it pertains to both attitudes and actions] means and how it is impacted by meta-religious and non-religious factors.

METHODS

Interviews

I draw from interviews with leaders[13] of six QTMOs and fifteen mainstream Muslim organizations. QTMOs consisted of two sacred groups, three support/advocacy groups, and one social group. For the mainstream groups, I attempted to capture a range of sacred and non-sacred

[13] Leader refers to those who hold crucial roles in the organizations or whose impact has been instrumental. In this chapter, the term "leader" and "organizer" are used interchangeably.

Islamic organizations by interviewing leaders of seven sacred groups, three community centers, three support/advocacy groups, and two student associations.

I conducted a total of forty-eight semi-structured interviews (twenty-four with QTMOs and twenty-four with mainstream organizations). Mainstream group leaders' roles could be organized as follows: six of the interviewees were Imams or Sheikhs, ten were organizers of community centers or mosques, four were advocacy leaders/lawyers (one of whom was also an Imam), and four were student group organizers. Additionally, variations in Islam were reflected in the diversity of interviewee sects, consisting of ten Sunni, five Shia, three Sufi, three 'non-sectarian', and three Isma'ili organizers.

I strategically compartmentalize Islam within these smaller sects in an effort to capture a wider range of categorical analysis and to compare different Islamic groups' attitudes. For instance, where Sufism or Isma'ilism are known to be the relatively open branches of Islam, it remains to be seen whether their attitudes toward homosexuality or transgender are qualitatively different than Sunni or Shia Muslims.

Through my interviews with QTMOs leaders, I sought to understand how QTMuslims interact with mainstream Muslim groups and whether they experience exclusion or inclusion within them. The interviews with leaders of mainstream Muslim organizations were aimed at understanding whether the groups accept QTMuslims and why.

I asked mainstream leaders questions about their relationship with QTMOs and about their inclusion of QTMuslim constituents. These questions differed from previous studies (Lubbers, Jaspers, and Ultee 2009; Fitzgerald, Winstone, and Prestage 2014; Siraj, 2009) that asked participants what their views on gay marriage/homosexuality were in general or whether they saw homosexuality as a sin. Although I did account for these 'attitudes' (see vignettes below), I

also sought to understand whether QTMOs were willing to include LGBTQ members into their spaces or whether they endorsed their inclusion.

Mainstream leaders were shown three vignettes. The first two vignettes depicted scenarios where QTMuslims where respectively included in a non-sacred space and excluded from a sacred space. In the first vignette, two Muslim Lesbian women were granted the opportunity to speak about LGBTQ related topics at their local community center. I asked interviewees to share their thoughts about this situation and whether the women should have been given the time to speak about LGBTQ issues.

In the second vignette, two prominent gay activists were asked to leave for having held hands in a mosque. Again, I asked interviewees what they thought about this scenario and to explain whether the exclusion from the mosque was justified. I also asked participants whether their response would have differed if the two men were not only holding hands but also shared a kiss[14]. Finally I asked whether and why interviewees would have reacted similarly if a trans woman were asked to leave the woman's section of a mosque.

The third vignette provided a glimpse into a QTMO meeting, where a queer Muslim man was expressing happiness about finding acceptance in the group. At the end of the vignette, the man declared that he was happy to have found a space where he could "finally be Muslim and be gay." I first asked interviewees to respond with their general thoughts about this event and subsequently to respond to the queer Muslim man's joyous evocation that he can "finally be Muslim and be gay." I then posed the more direct question of whether someone *can* be Muslim

[14] Some practices that are associated with homosexuality in Western culture (such as two men kissing on the cheek or holding hands) are considered homosocial rather than homosexual practices amongst Muslim/Arab men. As such, I first depicted the scenario as two men holding hands and secondly introduced the kissing component. I did not specify the type of kiss that the men shared in order to gauge a wider range of responses. Moreover, I combined the acts of holding hands and kissing with the idea that the two men were well known gay activists, adding a specific homosexual character to their interaction.

and be gay. Again, this vignette can be differentiated from questions in previous studies because it asked participants both to reflect on their response to QTMuslim group engagement and on their "attitudes" toward homosexuality.

Participant Observation

In addition to the interviews, I attended a total of forty events, including talks, prayers, social gatherings, support groups, plays, and film screenings. QTMOs hosted twenty of such events, and mainstream Muslim groups organized the remaining twenty. However, due to the exclusivity in Ismai'li group membership[15], I was unable to participate in any Isma'ili events.

Measures

Acceptance

I categorized the responses from mainstream leaders into two ideal types: 'acceptance' or 'non-acceptance' of LGBTQ Muslims. These ideal types captured both attitudes toward LGBTQ identity and actions toward QTMuslims:

(1) *Acceptance by Muslim groups occurs when the interviewee:* affirms the lived experiences of QTMuslims; does not consider homosexuality a sin; voices support for LGBTQ rights; welcomes conversations and dialogue about LGBTQ+ identity; is open to attending/hosting LGBTQ events; affirms QTMOs as valid spaces; agrees that QTMuslims should feel/be safe; denounces the exclusion of QTMuslims from Muslim spaces; believes QTMuslims should be treated like equals; affirms trans experiences.

[15] Isma'ili groups seldom allow any non-Isma'ili members in their space. This often includes family members or spouses who are not-Isma'ili. As a result, direct participant observation was not possible with such groups.

(2) *Non-acceptance by Muslim groups occurs when the interviewee*: believes homosexuality is a sin; believes that conversations about homosexuality would influence others negatively; believes that acting on 'homosexual impulse' is bad but the desire itself isn't; believes in conversion therapy/methods; believes that the state has the right to punish homosexual acts where it isn't legal; does not believe that LGBTQ+ people should be allowed in Muslim spaces; is unwilling to include LGBTQ events/topics in their space; is not affirming of trans identity; denounces QTMOs; believes homosexuality is immoral.

Interviewees could be characterized as demonstrating varying degrees of acceptance: the highest level of acceptance would be categorized if responses matched all of the criteria from the acceptance ideal type and none from the non-acceptance ideal type. By contrast, the lowest level of acceptance would occur if interviewees provided responses that matched all of the criteria from the non-acceptance ideal type none from acceptance ideal type.

Religion

This chapter purposely uses a broad measure of religion. Given the complexity of religious views (Ahmed, 2015) and their interconnectedness with familial values (Khan, 2010; Yip 2004) and cultural tensions (El-Tayeb, 2012; Minwalla et al., 2005), it is useful to take into account the various ways in which one's religion can impact their degree of acceptance. Thus, I look at "religion" as it pertains to interpretations of decrees and texts, and as it is linked to culture.

RESULTS

Interviewee responses could be categorized into four groups, reflecting a range of acceptance levels: mainstream Muslim leaders were either on opposite ends of the acceptance spectrum or somewhere in the middle. **Table 1** depicts examples of how responses were categorized into each level of acceptance. Overall, 42% (ten out of twenty-four) of participants in the Muslim group demonstrated high levels of acceptance toward QTMuslims: their responses matched all of the acceptance criteria and none of the rejection ones. By contrast, 12% (three out of twenty-four) of Muslim leaders showed low levels of acceptance: most of their responses matched criteria from the rejection ideal types and little from the acceptance one. In between the opposite poles, 29% (seven out of twenty-four) of the mainstream sample could be characterized as moderately accepting LGBTQ Muslims and the remaining 17% (four out of twenty-four) demonstrated moderate-low levels of acceptance.

Table 1: Examples of Acceptance Levels According to Interviewee Responses

	High Acceptance	Moderate Acceptance	Moderate-Low Acceptance	Low Acceptance
ACCEPTANCE				
Affirms the lived experiences of QTMuslims	X	X	X	
Does not consider homosexuality a sin	X	X		
Voices support for LGBTQ rights	X	X	X	
Welcomes dialogue about LGBTQ identity in their organization	X			
Is open to attending/hosting LGBTQ events	X			
Affirms QTMOs as valid spaces	X	X		
Agrees that QTMuslims should feel/be safe	X	X	X	X
Denounces the exclusion of QT Muslims	X	X	X	X
Believes QTMuslims should be equals	X	X	X	
Affirms trans experience	X	X	X	
NON-ACCEPTANCE				
Believes homosexuality is a sin			X	X
Believes that LGBTQ dialogue would influence others negatively				X
Denounces homosexual acts as opposed to desires			X	X
Believes in conversion therapy				X
Believes in State punishment of homosexuality				X
Does not welcome LGBTQ+ people in Muslim spaces				
Is unwilling to host LGBTQ events		X	X	X
Denounces QTMOs				
Believes homosexuality is immoral				X
Is not affirming of Trans identity				X

The breakdown of acceptance levels across Muslim sects is shown in **Table 2**: for Sunni interviewees, two were categorized in the high acceptance category, one in the moderate, four in the moderate-low, and three in the low category. Out of the five Shia organizers, four were highly accepting and one was moderately accepting. For Isma'ili leaders, one was highly accepting and the remaining two were moderately accepting. The three Sufi organizers were categorized as being highly accepting. Lastly, All three three non-sectarian organizers were moderately accepting. Due to limited and uneven sampling, findings cannot be generalized across sects. Although the sample is not representative of all Muslim groups, it is nevertheless demonstrative of a range of acceptance levels.

Table 2: Levels of acceptance across sects (Total N = 24)

Sect	High	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Low
Sunni	2	1	4	3
Shia	4	1		
Isma'ili	1	2		
Sufi	3			
Non-Sectarian		3		

Generalizability and Robustness Check:

It is important to take two general caveats on generalizability under consideration. First, although I mitigated sampling bias by concealing the purpose of the study during recruitment, it is possible that potentially non-accepting organizations did not respond to my recruitment call. Moreover, given Toronto's legal and political pro-LGBTQ ideas and practices, it is possible that some leaders softened their stances about LGBTQ acceptance or gave skewed responses.

Second, given that organizations vary in size, I designed a robustness check through weighted percentages. I gave organizations that had thousands of constituents a weight of 1,

those with hundreds of followers a weight of 0.10, and those with fifty or so members a weight of 0.05. This resulted in the following weighted percentages: 38% fell in high acceptance category, 20% were in the low acceptance category, 16% in the moderate acceptance and 26% in the moderate low acceptance. This drives up the moderate low and low acceptance categories and brings down the moderate and high acceptance ones. Despite this robustness check, a range of acceptance levels can be observed across mainstream leaders' responses, with high acceptance still constituting the largest category.

High Acceptance:

As mentioned, 42% of leaders from mainstream Muslim groups demonstrated high levels of acceptance toward QTMuslims. These responses were qualified by a welcoming and supportive attitude toward homosexuality/transgender, as well as by the willingness to engage in conversations about LGBTQ identity and to include QTMuslims in mainstream spaces. The leaders who demonstrated high acceptance did not simply condone LGBTQ Muslim identity, but actively supported it. In some cases, their own groups supported LGBTQ constituents. I sat with Emin, the Sheikh of a sacred group, over a hot cup of tea and traditional sweets—a treat generously offered to me during most interviews. This well-respected religious leader reflected on the LGBTQ constituents of his organization:

> There are about ten of them and they feel free to talk to me about [LGBTQ issues]. They have relationships, they're happy and just like any relationship they may have issues. You know, they're doing a good job and so who am I to judge?

When highly accepting leaders did not have LGBTQ members in their organizations, they often articulated the desire to build bridges in order to recruit them. These individuals expressed the desire to welcome LGBTQ participants or were open about supporting QTMuslims. Sima, a

26 year-old leader of an advocacy organization invited me to her bright and airy home. While fiddling with her ornate living room curtains so as to block the sun from hurting my eyes, Sima provided me with an exemplary set of 'acceptance' criteria that her organization endorses. Alongside hosting events, providing community, and engaging in advocacy work, Sima noted:

> We do not ostracize people who are LGBTQ+. And it's not really like 'hey can you just hide it and come join our organization?' We're very public about it. We've written position papers on it. We are connected with [QTMOs]. It's not a behind the scenes solidarity. We're open about it and we should be.

Highly-accepting organizations supported the existence of QTMOs. They either participated in QTMO events directly or voiced interest in doing so. Furthermore, they denounced the exclusion of queer Muslims and validated their lived experience. When presented with the question 'can someone be Muslim and be gay?' at the end of the third vignette, most of these interviewees responded with enthusiasm to affirm that such compatibility was obvious. Below are a few sample responses:

- "Yes! I mean I don't just think it, I know it. I have friends who are." (Akila, religious leader)
- "Of course!" (Emin, religious leader)
- "Ya! There are Muslim gay people all the time! That's definitely a yes." (Sima, advocacy leader)
- "I think you can be anything you want. These are names that we carry." (Malik, religious leader)

My interviews with QTMOs confirmed that acceptance levels can widely range. Carter, a QTMO leader and gay Muslim man in his forties, stated that he felt safe in some Muslim spaces in the city, including the one described below:

> I go to [Muslim organization X] with my family. All of the aunties that go there come up and hug us during the *Khutbas* [Sermons]. The person who generally gives the *Khutbas* comes and hugs us. We bring our trans friends and there's never been an issue with anybody there.

Yet, another QTMO leader in his fifties, Lyron, told me that while he did experience acceptance by some Muslim organizations, he did not feel welcomed in all of them:

> [Muslim group X] and [Muslim group Y] are both Muslim organizations that have been very supportive and that have come a long way in terms of supporting LGBT-Muslims and being friends of [our organization]… But then there are groups like [Muslim group Z] who are absolutely avoiding us.

Although some highly accepting mainstream leaders had not resolved their own inner-conflicts with LGBTQ Muslim identity, they nevertheless advocated for organizational inclusiveness. I met with Fadila, a twenty-one-year-old Sunni Muslim, at the office of the student group for which she was a core organizer. She explained to me that she wanted her organization to have conversations about LGBTQ issues, despite her personal doubts regarding the compatibility of Islam and queer/trans identity:

> I just don't think I can speak on it. I don't have enough knowledge to talk about whether that is compatible but what I can say fully is that I can understand why people have these preferences and also be Muslim.

Similarly, Jamila, who was part of the same organization, reflected on her own ambivalence toward QTMuslim identity:

> I get scared to read *Qur'an* a lot of the times because I don't think I have the knowledge to interpret it... I've grown up in that very traditional environment… But I believe it is compatible because I also know that colonialism has really done a lot in terms of why Muslims practice the way they do. I don't think they were like this before.

Jamila was trying to make sense of her conflicted feelings, musing that perhaps colonialism may have impacted the homonegative interpretation of Islam over time. Although these responses reflected hesitancy (and even fear) with respect to Islamic scripture and sexual orientation, the interviewees neither denounced homosexuality as a sin, nor did they believe it to be immoral. Furthermore, these leaders still expressed support for queer Muslim experiences and welcomed open dialogue about it in mainstream Muslim groups. Thus, personal attitudes toward homosexuality did not affect the desire to include QTMuslims in organizations.

Highly accepting participants also articulated support for trans constituents. All participants in this category voiced disagreement with the exclusion of the trans woman from vignette 2. Some mainstream Muslim leaders further denounced the negative treatment of transgender individuals in Muslim communities. This was evident in Jamila's following statement:

> I really have a problem with the gendered nature of Islam, as it is practiced by most people. I really dislike it. It doesn't acknowledge the existence of transgender persons. That is probably my main struggle with the traditional interpretation of Islam.

Jamila, like all of the other interviewees in the 'high acceptance' category, was careful to address the woman in the vignette by appropriate gender pronouns and demonstrated sensitivity to language use when speaking about transgender issues. She also questioned certain aspects of Islam while simultaneously endorsing others. Most evidently, I noticed the elaborate design pattern on Jamila's *hijab*, and reflected on the layers of meaning embedded in her interpretation of Islam and gender, given her own visible commitment to the religion. These responses show us that the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward gender identity and sexual orientation are likely more complex than our current accounts of them. In both Jamila and Fadila's responses, I observed that religion itself was being questioned in relation to homosexuality and transgender, even though both interviewees observed Islamic practices.

Moreover, most Muslim leaders in this category cited Islam as their primary motivation for acceptance. Emin (the Sheikh encountered earlier) recounted the advice that he gave to a queer Muslim constituent who was seeking acceptance in Islam:

> I said, 'look don't let anybody tell you that you cannot go to *Allah*. He created you, he knows who you are, and it's between you and him.'

Malik, a highly skilled young religious leader with years of training in Sufism, echoed this belief. I interviewed Malik in his place of worship, where he endorsed the idea that LGBTQ people are "sacred *because* they are the creations of Allah" (emphasis mine). He believed that acceptance was a matter of humility and mutual respect, which were embedded in Islam:

> I always go with the Sufi idea that you shouldn't bother anybody or disrespect anybody. Do whatever you want to do and be who you want to be. And that includes everybody. It includes LGBT people and it includes me. I don't give myself the permission to judge them and say that it's a sin.

Similarly, in response to the second vignette of the two gay activists who were asked to leave a mosque, Reza, a Sunni Imam and Islamic scholar in his fifties noted

> Who am I to stop somebody who expresses themselves like that? I would not ask them to leave. I have to look at the bigger purpose of why they are here and I have to empower them.

Other mainstream Muslim leaders highlighted the importance of being Muslim regardless of sexual orientation. Maryam, a Shia organizer at another Muslim student association expressed enthusiasm about mainstream spaces. She and others emphasized the importance of Muslim representation across LGBTQ groups. Maryam stated:

> I think it's great that people who identify as LGBTQ would still feel comfortable and confident identifying as Muslim…the fact that this is still such a strong part of their identity is really important and positive and can help so many people.

Here, interviewees articulated the idea that Islam, in its diversity, included QTMuslims. This shows that perhaps attitudes toward LGBTQ identity may vary from attitudes toward QTMuslims. Akila, a forty-something religious leader who invited me to her trendy apartment on an October afternoon, explained that her organization emphasizes Islamic sameness as a basis for acceptance:

> It's an inclusive space to everyone regardless of their gender and sexual orientation. There's no judgment or restriction to who can or cannot be a Muslim.

Overall, most of the interviewees who demonstrated high levels of acceptance toward QTMuslims did so in the name of Islam. Thus, rather than inciting homonegative attitudes, religious belief played a large part in these individuals' desires to accept QTMuslims.

Low Acceptance:

As mentioned above, those who displayed low levels of acceptance made up a minority of the overall sample. Only three out of twenty-four (12%) interviewees' responses matched most of the criteria from the non-acceptance ideal type and little from the acceptance one. In considering this low percentage, the limitations mentioned above should be accounted for. Given the possibility of sampling bias and skewed responses, one could consider, for instance, extreme public endorsements of homophobic and transphobic ideologies and practices (e.g. conversion therapy or opposition to the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in the sex education curriculum) by prominent Muslim leaders in Toronto and elsewhere. Regarding the issue of generalizability, the weighted percentages provided above can help to provide a more representative account of acceptance levels.

In contrast to highly-accepting leaders, these interviewees criticized the existence of QTMOs and accused them of misinformation. Milan, a well-respected Imam in the Muslim community,

critiqued QTMOs for "promoting [homosexual] behavior in a religious space." Milan met with me in the office space of his mosque and answered my questions openly and honestly: he believed that QTMOs spaces were contradicting Islamic practice.

Milan, who is in his mid-forties, shared these negative sentiments with Ali, who is twenty-five and the head organizer at a community center, and with Aanisah, who is a mosque organizer in her fifties. I spoke with Ali over coffee and pastries, where I asked him to explain his disagreement with the existence and growth of QTMOs. I described some of the ways in which QTMOS deploy a hermeneutic reading of passages such as Lut, and asked Ali to respond to this. Ali believed that QTMOs were misinterpreting parts of a larger religious text, noting that one "cannot just interpret one passage of the *Qur'an.*" He also believed that QTMOs "promoted" homosexual behaviour.

Low accepting interviewees made a distinction between nature and nurture or 'desire' and 'action' in homosexuality. They believed that Lesbian or Gay identity was justifiable so long as it wasn't acted upon. The two examples below demonstrate this way of thinking:

- "You don't hate the person, you hate what is wrong in that person. If someone [declares they are gay] you're not going to say I hate you. It's not the end of the world. But it depends if the person wants to promote this or overcome it (Ali).
- "You can be Muslim and gay if you don't act on it. But claiming that you can act on it is ridiculous. Promoting homosexual behaviours and claiming to be Muslim just doesn't go" (Milan).

The espousal of such ideas was also accompanied by the belief in conversion therapy. Interestingly, all three participants denounced the exclusion of queer Muslims from sacred spaces, as it was depicted in the second mosque vignette. Recall that the two gay activists were asked to leave for holding hands. Interviewees were then asked if their sentiments toward the

scenario would be different if the two men were kissing, and subsequently, if a trans woman were asked to leave the sister's section. Anisaah said that kissing in a mosque was disrespectful and that it was an action neither homosexual nor heterosexual couples should engage in:

> Instead of you coming to the mosque and focusing on your relationship with god, you are displaying your personal relationship. I wouldn't come in kissing my husband. I walk with respect.

Regardless of the kissing, Aanisah still disagreed with the exclusion of the two men:

> I think we would just leave them to their prayers…they are coming to the mosque because that's an open-door policy. You can come and pray.

Thus, even those who denounced homosexuality as being contradictory to Islam maintained that mosques were inclusive spaces for all. Yet, as evident in Ali's statement below, the interviewees in this category did believe that the trans woman in the second part of the vignette should have left the sister's section:

> So he was a man and tried to convert to a woman? I think that person should be treated as a man, and he should be asked to go to the men's section. Because Allah says your gender is whatever you're made up of. So even if he tries to change it, he remains a man.

Note the stark contrast between the responses from the high acceptance category and this one. Here, the woman in the vignette is not addressed by she/her pronouns, nor is there recognition of her identity as a woman. In general, comparing the responses between high and low acceptance levels paints two fundamentally different pictures.

Consistent with previous findings (Abraham, 2009; Burdette, Ellison, and Hill 2005; Cooper, 1989; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Minwalla et al., 2005; Olson et al., 2006; Rowatt et al., 2006; Schulte and Battle, 2004; Siraj, 2009), low-accepting leaders' responses highlight religious belief as a cited reason for homonegative or transnegative attitudes. All of the participants in this

category saw homosexuality/transgender as being incompatible with Islamic scripture. However, even low accepting leaders disagreed with the notion that queer Muslims should be asked to leave a mosque, regardless of their sexual orientation. Their responses were based on the idea that the *Masjid* was a sacred space before all else. Thus, Islam still served as a justification for some inclusion of queer Muslims even though it impacted the interviewees' negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

Moderate Acceptance:

Seven out of twenty-four interviewees moderately accepted QTMuslims. Their responses matched most of the acceptance criteria and one or two of the non-acceptance ones. The interviews showed that these leaders personally supported QTMuslims but were hesitant toward full organizational inclusion.

In general, QTMO leaders described an absence of full acceptance from mainstream organizations. Yet, they explained this as an unresolved attitude through which mainstream groups failed to accept QTMuslims without vehement disregard or repudiation. Sarni, a South-Asian leader of an Isma'ili QTMO, defined this lack of acceptance as a "professionally disguised excuse." He noted that there was a great deal of diplomacy involved in the lack of commitment to fully accept QTMuslims:

> Many [Muslim groups] come up with justifications like 'what would the elders from the community feel, what would our communities from around the world think?' It's just an excuse that is professionally disguised.

Lyron, the fifty-something-year-old QTMO leader who compared accepting and non-accepting groups above, noted that many Muslim groups profess inclusiveness but are not "proactive" about it. When reaching out to these groups, QTMO leaders reported a lack of

engagement or an unwillingness to include QTMuslims. Such inclusions referred to contexts ranging from event planning, important decision-making processes, or board membership. Yet, QTMO leaders were unable to pinpoint a clear justification for exclusion from Muslim groups.

Ariel, a forty-two-year-old QTMO leader who had been working with her organization for five years, described this indescribable exclusion as "dancing around the topic." Importantly, these organizers noted a relative openness toward QTMuslim existence, but one that did not translate into what they sensed was genuine inclusiveness. Tavi and I reflected on this evasive attitude together. Tavi, a QTMO leader in his mid-thirties, described the mainstream Muslim response to LGBTQ identity as a disavowal: "It's like an open secret…it's not hostile or unpleasant, it's just an erasure."

Mainstream leaders who moderately accepted QTMuslims did not believe homosexuality was a sin and stated that they regularly welcomed QTMuslims in their spaces. However, they were not prepared to discuss LGBTQ issues or to host queer/trans specific events at their organization. Zel, a bold and articulate mosque leader in her fifties invited me to visit her organization on numerous occasions and welcomed me each time with cordial hospitality. While Zel supported queer and trans rights personally, she was not prepared to speak about LGBTQ issues on behalf of her organization. This was the inverse logic of what hesitant leaders in the high acceptance category articulated: high accepting mainstream leaders welcomed organizational dialogue about LGBTQ issues regardless of their personal doubts; by contrast, these moderately accepting leaders were unwilling to address LGBTQ issues in their organizations even though they personally accepted them.

Rather than being rooted in religious belief *per se,* some Muslim leaders attributed the distancing of personal from organizational inclusion to a fear of losing their existing

constituency. As evident in Lily's statement below, these organizations were afraid that the public acceptance of LGBTQ Muslims would lead to a loss of their constituency base.

> In our particular centralized structure, [LGBTQ events] wouldn't be possible because we're also conscious about maintaining legitimacy in a Muslim community that is homophobic. So we make these negotiations on a regular basis.

This statement suggests two points: first, as noted above, it shows that individual attitudes toward homosexuality may not translate to acceptance. Lily's insistence on making "negotiations" as an act of "maintaining legitimacy" shows that perceptions of social attitudes toward homosexuality influence decisions to include QTMuslims. Relatedly, in at least some cases, social stigma and constituency demands play a large in preventing acceptance. Regardless of whether these factors are considered non-religious or meta-religious, their impact complicates the relationship between religion and LGBTQ acceptance.

QTMO leaders were critical of mainstream groups whom they felt did not entirely accept them. For instance, while some mosques had 'open-door policies,' they declined to perform gay marriage ceremonies or segregated men and women. I asked QTMO leader, Carter, to explain this critique. Carter told me that he felt simultaneously accepted and not-accepted in some organizations:

> I do feel like I'm *mostly* welcome, but I'm never going to be able to access those spaces, say, if I wanted to have a marriage ceremony there. Nope, that's not gonna happen there! On the other hand, I also go there with my people and take up space.

Carter also questioned why some mosques allowed men and women to sit in the same room but still segregated them: "I find it weird. I find it limited and limiting."

I shared responses like Carter's with mainstream leader Dalia, whose organization had a reputation for being more inclusive and intersectional in terms of social justice or interfaith

dialogue. Given that Dalia's mosque practiced segregated seating, I shared criticisms like Carter's with her and gauged her reaction. Dalia explained that although seating was separated by gender, it was not monitored by organizers: "we hope that people feel comfortable sitting where they feel comfortable sitting. We don't police that." Yet, for QTMO leaders like Carter, the fact that seating was segregated at all could create potential barriers for trans men and women or for non-binary individuals.

Some moderately-accepting mainstream leaders were resistant to the criticism they received from QTMOs. Atif, an Isma'ili leader in his thirties, explained that the lack of gay marriage ceremonies in sacred spaces could be attributed to administrative hassles rather than to a lack of acceptance. He was therefore critical of queer Muslims' perceived grievances about gay marriage in mainstream mosques:

> I think it's a false gripe. The idea of being banned from marriage at a *Juma Khaneh* [house of worship]—it's not a ban *per se*. It's just that the way that the ritual is set up right now does not work. The undertaking to change something that has been here for 800 years is a headache.

Leaders like Atef believed that their organizations' inability to include QTMuslims' demands was mostly due to factors like the "headache" involved in changing organizational structures.

Another one of such barriers was the lack of an authoritative voice on LGBTQ Muslim identity. Some Muslim leaders said that QTMOs presented their demand for acceptance in ways that were indigestible for dominant Muslim communities. Idris, a Shia legal advocacy leader, whose organization was heavily critiqued by QTMOs, agreed to meet me in the midst of his very busy workday. His organization did not support QTMOs because they questioned such groups' legitimacy. However, for Idris, this was due to a lack of authoritative voice rather than a fundamental incompatibility between homosexuality/transsexuality and Islam. Although this is related to religiosity, it cannot be constituted as religiosity proper. Rather, interviewees believed

that the *interpretation* of Islam by a well-known Muslim figure or scholar would facilitate acceptance for LGBTQ constituents.

Thus, while some mosques like Atef's, Zel's, or Dalia's unofficially welcomed QTMuslims, their hesitancy toward addressing LGBTQ specific issues, performing gay marriage, or segregating gender was demonstrative of a moderate acceptance rather than a full-fledged acceptance. Leaders from these groups could be neither compared to those who openly accepted QTMuslims and changed their organizational structures to include their demands, nor to interviewees who denounced QTMO growth as divisive for Muslim communities.

Furthermore, while some highly accepting leaders separated their personal doubts about homosexuality from organizational inclusion, moderately accepting leaders justified their organizations' distance from LGBTQ issues by pointing to their personally inclusive attitudes. This comparison is important because it shows that positive attitudes about homosexuality don't necessarily result in inclusion. Rather, what interviewees identified as external factors such as a lack of authoritative voice, a fear of constituency loss, or an administrative "headache" seemed to play a large role in their organization's unwillingness to include QTMuslim events. Again, these factors can either be considered as being separate from religion or inextricably linked to religion, depending on one's outlook. Either way, these non-religious or para-religious factors complicate the direct relationship between religion and LGBTQ acceptance.

Moderate-Low Acceptance:

Finally, four out of the twenty-four interviewees could be categorized as demonstrating moderate-low acceptance toward QTMuslims. In many of my interviews with mainstream leaders from this category, I remarked the simultaneity of acceptance and non-acceptance

responses. These interviewees believed that QTMuslims deserved to be treated like equals, and that they should feel safe in Muslim spaces. They also strongly denounced the exclusion of LGBTQ Muslims from the mosque in vignette two. Yet, at the same time they also believed that homosexuality was a sin.

Seyyal, a twenty-nine-year-old core leader of a community center, offered to book us a room at her university's library, where we could quietly conduct our interview. Successful, organized, and motivated to create social change in Muslim communities, Seyyal believed that excluding anyone from a mosque was fundamentally contradictory to Islam:

> I will not accept someone saying 'no, they're not allowed to be here.' From just a theological perspective it makes no sense, and it's unproductive and humph! It just boils me.

Wharda, a younger organizer in a different community center with a similarly high position, also believed that exclusion would defeat the point of the mosque:

> I don't think they should have been asked to leave. The central point of the *Masjid* [mosque] is that as long as you're a Muslim this place is for you.

At the same time, these participants believed that homosexuality was a sin. While they conveyed the importance of creating safe spaces for conversations about homosexuality, they still maintained that acting on same-sex desire would lead to *Jahanam* (hell) and criticized QTMOs for promoting homosexuality. In response to the third vignette, where the queer Muslim man was happy to have found acceptance in a QTMO, Seyyal expressed feelings of pity:

> I'm happy that they are happy. But I'm also sad. I'd be happy that these people found some peace in this world, but inwardly, I'd be sad. Based on what Islam dictates, these people are not going somewhere good.

Here, we see a contradictory statement. On the one hand, Seyyal is affirming the experience of acceptance that the queer Muslim man is having. On the other, this affirmation is coupled with

lament that he will be going to hell. This response is therefore different from those given by highly accepting leaders, who endorsed QTMOs, and from those given by low accepting leaders who advocated for conversion therapy.

Furthermore, Seyyal's religious beliefs informs both the idea that homosexuality is a sin and the idea that QTMuslims should be included in mainstream Muslim spaces, regardless of their sexual orientation. Recall her frustration with the second vignette: noting that the scenario "just boil[ed]" her, her anger was based on the idea that asking the gay activists to leave didn't "make sense" from a "theological perspective." While Seyyal's "attitudes" were not "accepting" of homosexuality, she nevertheless demonstrated some degree of acceptance toward QTMuslims. This reaffirms the need for analyses that are more complex than those which measure the positive correlation between religiosity and homonegative attitudes.

DISCUSSION

This chapter relies on fieldwork and interviews with both QTMOs and mainstream Muslim groups to analyze whether the latter accept QTMuslims and why. While previous research on LGBTQ Religious identity (Khan, 2010; Kugle 2010; Kubicek et al., 2009; Mahaffy, 1996; Minwalla et al, 2005; Siraj, 2016; Thumma, 1991) has focused on the psychological tension between two seemingly incompatible identities, this chapter moves toward an analysis of the social barriers that prevent QTMuslims from being accepted into Muslim groups. Moreover, while both quantitative (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill 2005; Olson et al., 2006; Rowatt et al., 2006; Schulte and Battle, 2004) and qualitative (Cooper, 1989; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Minwalla

et al., 2005; Schnoor, 2006; Siraj, 2009; Yip, 2008) studies have pointed to religious beliefs as the major barrier to acceptance, the present study has provided a more nuanced picture.

Similar to other research (El-Tayeb, 2012; Hekma, 2002; Minwalla et al., 2005; Khan, 2010; Rahman, 2010, 2014; Yip 2004, 2008), this chapter has argued against the seemingly unavoidable tie between religious belief and homonegative attitudes. I have used broader criteria to measure both religion (Islam) and acceptance. Results reflected a range of acceptance levels from non-mainstream Muslim leaders: high acceptance, moderate acceptance, moderate-low acceptance, and low acceptance.

Contrary to the expectation that Muslim groups would hold homonegative attitudes (Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009; Siraj, 2009; Yuchtman-Yaar and Alkalay, 2007), 42% of the interviewees demonstrated high levels of acceptance toward LGBTQ Muslims and only 12% demonstrated low acceptance. The other two groups fell somewhere in between, where 29% and 17% of the remaining sample showed moderate and moderate-low levels of acceptance respectively. This was perhaps partly due to the way that acceptance was measured. Given that interviewees were asked questions beyond those gauging their personal sentiments toward homosexuality or transgender, their responses captured a wider range of acceptance criteria.

For instance, some leaders who highly accepted QTMuslims affirmed the existence of QTMOs, and hosted LGBTQ specific events despite their own reservations about the compatibility of LGBTQ and Muslim identity. Their personal attitudes did not prevent them from including and publicly supporting QTMOs into their spaces. On the other hand, those in the moderate acceptance category often asserted personal support toward QTMuslims but were unwilling to provide public inclusion. This comparison allowed me to complicate the

relationship between religious belief and homonegative attitudes, where attitudes toward homosexuality neither fostered nor prevented inclusion *per se*.

Overall, using a wider range of criteria for capturing 'religion' shows the futility of using it as a singular measure for analyzing LGBTQ acceptance. Both high-accepting leaders and low-accepting leaders cited Islam as their primary motivator for acceptance and non-acceptance, respectively. Low-accepting leaders also denounced the exclusion of LGBTQ Muslims from mosques on the basis of Islam. Responses from moderate-low accepting leaders similarly pointed to religious belief as influencing both acceptance and non-acceptance. These organizers criticized the exclusion of LGBTQ people from Muslim spaces as fundamentally "un-Islamic" but also believed that homosexuality was a sin. Hence, different understandings of Islam could result in variations of acceptance levels.

We could argue, for instance, that when religion is defined as the strict adherence of the *Qur'an* or *Hadith* (Siraj, 2009) or when it is linked to East/West culture (El-Tayeb, 2012; Minwalla et al., 2005) and family values (Khan, 2010; Yip 2004), lower levels of acceptance can be observed. On the other hand, when one uses religious individualism or hermeneutic readings of Islamic texts (Minwalla et al., 2005; Kugle, 2010; Wilcox, 2002; Yip, 2005) as definitions of religion, higher acceptance levels can arise. Presumably, refining such measures will also result in variability. More research is needed in this area.

Future studies can also look at how non-religious or meta-religious factors prevent religious groups from accepting LGBTQ individuals. In the present study, moderately-accepting Muslim organizers often cited underlying barriers that prevented their groups from including LGBTQ Muslims. These included the absence of an authoritative Islamic voice on LGBTQ issues, the fear of losing one's constituency, or the administrative "headache" involved in changing existing

structures. While some QTMO leaders regarded this reasoning as a "professionally disguised excuse," such factors could alternatively be analyzed as non-religious obstacles to acceptance. Alternatively, they could be seen as barriers that are captured in wider definitions of religion.

Interviews with QTMO leaders partly supported the main research finding: they experienced a range of acceptance across groups. Yet, most of these leaders felt that the majority of mainstream groups neither accepted nor rejected them. Rather, they experienced what they described as an avoidance, a disavowal, or a lack of engagement. It therefore appeared that, at least from their standpoint, some moderate or moderate-low accepting leaders tolerated QTMuslims rather than accepted them.

This chapter is not without its limitations. The interviews with mainstream groups are not fully representative of Toronto's Muslim population and the data cannot account for how Muslims generally react to LGBTQ related issues. Issues of generalizability and exaggeration have been accounted for above. Moreover, given Toronto's multicultural and density and relatively progressive politics, interviews with Muslim groups in other Canadian cities and locales may have yielded varying results. Additionally, more interviews are needed across different sects of Islam in order to explore the qualitative differences in their acceptance levels. Nevertheless, results do show that we cannot make general claims about how Muslims, as a singular category, view LGBTQ related issues. The data also show that acceptance can vary across individuals, organizations, and sects. Such differences are demonstrative of a need to rethink the relationship between religion and LGBTQ acceptance.

In sum, this chapter found that Islam, as a singular category, does not explain homophobia or transphobia. Rather, it is in the kaleidoscopic shape of Islam that researchers may find more

synthesized explanations about what LGBTQ acceptance entails. In the next chapter, I shift the focus to mainstream queer organizations and look at whether they accept QTMuslims.

Chapter 2

Doing Diversity in the Queer Mainstream

Abstract: This chapter examines the function of diversity policies and practices in mainstream queer organizations. The research draws on interviews with leaders of Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs), mainstream queer organizations, and one counter-to-mainstream queer organization in Toronto, Canada. Interview data are triangulated with archival and content analysis. Results show that diversity mandates are insufficient to address the needs of Queer and Trans Muslims (QTMuslims) within mainstream queer organizations. This is because diversity initiatives are based on an inclusion model that consolidates all minority differences under a master sexual identity. The assumption of queer universality in this model ignores the specific demands of minority groups, fails to account for QTMuslims' intersectional identities, and creates the assumption that queerness and Islam are irreconcilable. The positive appearance of diversity initiatives also conceals the unequal power relations and structural barriers encountered by marginalized groups, including QTMuslims, in mainstream organizations.

Keywords: diversity, queer and trans Muslims, mainstream queer organizations, race, ethnicity,

intersectionality

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based on forty-six in depth interviews with leaders of six Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs), eleven mainstream queer organizations[16], and one alternative-to-mainstream queer organization in Toronto, Canada. Additionally, I survey archival data from seven separate queer organizations in the city. The main objective of the chapter is to examine the function of diversity policies and practices[17] in mainstream queer organizations (or the queer mainstream). The archival and interview data show that, for at least thirty years, queer organizations have endorsed diversity initiatives as effectively including minority or marginalized communities[18] into their groups. Yet, the Queer and Trans Muslims (QTMuslims) with whom I conducted interviews reported being consistently excluded from mainstream organizations. The chapter shows that this paradox is partially due to the model of inclusion on which diversity practices rely.

I argue that diversity initiatives often use what I call a 'master identity model' of inclusion, which consolidates all marginalized groups under a 'master' queer social identity category. The model assumes that all LGBTQ groups are bound by a universal queer identity, irrespective of their differences. Yet, this effectively neglects the specific needs of communities whose experiences of marginalization are fundamentally different than those of normative queer groups.

[16] I characterize mainstream organizations as well-known, and often large and often bureaucratic groups with institutional legitimacy.
[17] I refer to diversity policies and practices as initiatives to include minority groups in queer mainstream organizations. These include mission statements, public statements and commitments, hiring practices, diversity trainings, staff meetings, and community outreach.
[18] I interchangeably refer to minority or marginalized communities or groups as any non-normative communities that experience social exclusion on the basis of their difference from dominant groups. In the context of this chapter, dominant groups consist of white, secular, able-body, and wealthy queer individuals, and minority/marginalized groups accordingly constitute non-dominant queer communities. Marginalized/minority groups' experiences of social and institutional exclusion are often based on race, ethnicity, ability, religion etc… Trans communities can also be considered marginalized/minority groups because they have often been excluded from the queer mainstream.

In the case of QTMuslims, such inclusion models promote an 'irreconcilability logic,' which pits Islam against queerness and fails to account for the complex and intersectional experiences of racism, Islamophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism faced by QTMuslims.

Moreover, I find that diversity initiatives conceal unequal power relations and structural barriers persistent in mainstream organizations. Similar to QTMuslim interviewees, four out of seven racialized mainstream leaders criticized their own groups' diversity initiatives. They believed that the positive language of diversity mandates effectively obscured the institutional obstacles being confronted by marginalized groups. I triangulate these findings with archival data and online content analysis to argue that changing the organizational structures that currently support (and are supported by) diversity initiatives may go a further distance in promoting intersectional practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Paradox of Diversity

The rise of diversity ideology and practice has been traced to increasing heterogeneity in North America, Europe, the UK, and Australia (Bannerji, 2000; Duggan, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Ralston, 1998; Titley and Lentin, 2008). Diversity has been analyzed as "a discursive way of dealing with the problem of difference," which pursues the "conceptual legacy" (Titley and Lentin, 2008, p. 15) of assimilation and multiculturalism (i.e. positioning 'different' cultures in relation to a white dominant culture whilst maintain the superiority of the latter) without explicit use of such politically charged terms (Ahmed, 2000; Bannerji, 2000; Mohanty, 2003; Puwar, 2004; Titley and Lentin, 2008).

Diversity discourse has been argued to 'equalize' all forms of difference (Titley and Lentin, 2008) and to categorize People of Colour (POC) within the palatable, neutral, and depoliticized language of pluralism, while obscuring unequal power relations among them and white privileged groups (Bannerji, 2000). This simultaneous nominal commitment to inclusion and actual practices of exclusion has been referred to as the paradox of diversity (Ahmed, 2012; Bannerji, 2000; Hunter, 2009). Diversity discourse's ability to evoke ideas of multiplicity, unity, and togetherness—or what some have described as the [united colours of] "Benetton model" (Bannerji, 2000; Duggan, 2003; Lury, 2000; Titley and Lentin 2008)—has been argued to produce 'feel good politics' (Ahmed, 2012), which 'celebrate' inclusion at the surface level while obscuring social and structural exclusion (Bell and Hartmann, 2007; Michaels, 2006).

Structurally, while diversity discourse promotes racial, ethnic, and cultural pluralism, it has been shown to ignore underlying class differences (Michaels, 2006) and to conceal unequal access to rights and resources such as citizenship or labour (Mohanty, 2003; Ralston, 1998). At the level of social interaction, individuals have been found to perpetuate the diversity paradox. This is, for instance, empirically evident in Bell and Hartmann's (2007) study, who have drawn from nationally representative phone surveys and in-depth interviews to gauge how Americans view and respond to diversity. In doing so, they found a contradiction between "descriptive and prescriptive visions of diversity" (Bell and Hartmann, 2007, p. 902), where participants consistently paid 'lip service' to pluralism but used the language of diversity to evade discussions of racial inequality.

Moreover, "diversity happy talk" (Bell and Hartmann, 2007) has been shown to limit individuals' ability to position themselves within unequal social relations. In Hunter's (2009) study, welfare professionals exhibited what she has called the 'recognition denial paradox:' they

were willing to talk about institutional racism and sexism but were unwilling to situate themselves within social relations that contributed to such discriminatory practices.

The Institutionalization of Diversity

Diversity discourse and practice has become increasingly institutionalized through formal organizational procedures. In higher education, institutionalizing diversity initiatives has been found to increase the circulation of inclusive language about race, while paradoxically decreasing inclusive practices and obscuring racism (Ahmed, 2012; Alexander, 2005; Collins and Bilge, 2016; Dua, 2009; Puwar, 2004). Dua (2009) has shown that the proliferation of anti-racist policies in Canadian universities has served as "window dressing" to absolve academies of their legal obligation to attend to inequality (p. 164).

Moreover, while women and POC have become visible representations of difference in organizations, they have been expected to assimilate to norms that may limit their status as visible minorities (Puwar, 2004). This has become especially evident when mandates and policies have been challenged by minorities (Ahmed, 2012; Alexander, 2005). Overall, rather than reforming institutional practices to critically rethink difference, what Alexander (2005) has called 'the laundry list approach' to diversity, has *managed* difference, rendering POC to organizational "ticks in the boxes" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 153).

Such critiques of diversity management have been applied to both for-profit and non-profit organizations. In what has been described as the "non-profit industrial complex" (Rodriguez, 2007; Smith, 2007), grass roots and non-profit organizations become economically reliant on large corporations and the State, which, in turn, impacts their decision-making processes, distribution of funds, organizational growth, and consumer loyalty (Chasin, 2000; Luft and

Ward, 2009; Smith, 2007; Ward, 2008). This economic dependency has also been found to incite competition among similar organizations, who fight for the same economic resources, and among practitioners, who compete for managerial positions (Ward, 2008).

Intersectionality and Diversity

While diversity discourse and practice have been examined in public and private sector organizations more broadly, little research has looked at how they are executed in social justice organizations. Moreover, few studies have examined the relationship between diversity and intersectionality. In this chapter, I draw on Collin and Bilge' (2016) definition of intersectionality as an "analytic tool" that "gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves" (p.2), and Luft and Ward's (2009) definition of intersectional practice as "the application of scholarly or social movement methodologies aimed at intersectional and sustainable social justice outcomes" (p. 11).

These scholars have suggested that intersectionality must involve praxis, or some combination of theory and practice. Their definitions have also retained the 'interlocking' model (rather than the additive model) of difference (Collins, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 1979; Crenshaw, 1990), which promotes the understanding social identities as being impacted by multiple and intersecting systems of power. Collins and Bilge (2016) have emphasized the importance of relationality, which considers the interconnections between categories of difference and relationships that produce power and inequality (see also Alimahomed, 2010; Luft and Ward, 2009). They have also argued that social justice is one of the central features of intersectionality.

As such, Collins and Bilge (2016) have suggested that diversity discourse "often serves as a surrogate for intersectionality" (Collins and Bilge 2016, p. 249) while moving away from

intersectional praxis. Bilge (2013) has argued that this depoliticized and 'ornamental intersectionality' promotes "good public relations and rebranding" and, in so doing, conceals "the underlying structures that produce and sustain injustice" (p. 408). Luft and Ward (2009) have similarly claimed that intersectionality as a "political practice and intervention" (p. 10) is incompatible with diversity initiatives.

Social justice organizations, and especially queer organizations, provide fertile ground for examining the relationship between intersectionality and diversity. On the one hand, queer groups represent previously excluded populations that have acquired at least some inclusion in larger society and that have formed their own vibrant organizations. On the other hand, queer groups must still attend to the question of difference and the various systems of power and inequality that impact various intersecting identities in their spaces. The question then becomes: how intersectional are queer spaces?

Armstrong (2002) has argued that the growth and survival of the queer movement has been dependent on its ability to use diversity as 'a strength.' Yet, first-hand accounts of exclusion from trans (Serano, 2013; Stone, 2013) and LGBTQ racialized communities (Alimahomed, 2010; Boykin, 2000; Cyrus, 2017; Ghabrial, 2016; Han, 2007) give cause to question the queer movement's effective use of diversity and its 'success' in including multiple forms difference (Armstrong, 2002).

Moreover, non-profit and social justice organizations' economic dependence on states and large corporations (Chasin, 2000; Luft and Ward, 2009; Smith, 2007) may have an impact on their diversity models. In fact, Ward (2008) has persuasively argued that the diversity initiatives of queer organizations "look remarkably non-distinctive" (p. 5) from corporate diversity models. Her ethnographic research has shown that queer organizations can be economically, culturally,

and ideologically dependent on corporations, and they can both 'mainstream' intersectionality and 'instrumentalize' diversity initiatives and procedures.

Thus, considering the critiques of diversity discourse and practices outlined above, there is, on the one hand, good reason to doubt its positive impacts. On the other hand, some scholars have remained optimistic of diversity initiatives' beneficial impacts (Cooper, 2004; Brown-Glaude, 2009; Armstrong, 2002, Scott, 2005). For instance, Scott (2005) has argued that diversity mandates and intersectionality can be compatible if initiatives are met with equitable hiring practices and changes in organizational structures. Swan (2009) has suggested that there are multiple iterations of diversity practices and, as such, that "that there is still room for hope in diversity interventions" (p. 318).

In Brown-Glaude's (2009) edited volume, contributors have demonstrated that diversity practitioners are resourceful in their approaches to promoting inclusion and fostering institutional change. Cooper (2004) has argued that radical diversity politics can have the transformative impact of dismantling unequal structures. Even some of its most steadfast critics have noted that diversity initiatives still promote progressive social and structural change (Luft and Ward, 2009; Ward, 2008).

As such, through a case study with Queer and Trans Muslims (or QTMuslims), I ask: what do the diversity initiatives of Toronto's queer organizations do? What is the relationship between diversity and intersectionality in this context? And do QTMuslims benefit from queer organizations' diversity policies and practices?

METHODS

Interview Data

This chapter draws on a total forty-six in depth semi-structured interviews with leaders (such as founders, core organizers, or executive-level staff) of three different types of organizations in Toronto, Canada: I interviewed twenty-one leaders of eleven mainstream queer organizations, twenty-four leaders of six Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs), and one leader of a counter-to-mainstream organization.

Mainstream queer organizations ranged from LGBTQ bars, bookstores, arts/entertainment venues, health care institutions, and community centers. It is important to note that most of these organizations were large and bureaucratic, with paid staff and hierarchical power structures: nine out of eleven were non-profit organizations and at least six relied on big banks and corporate donors for funding. QTMOs were relatively smaller groups, were run strictly by volunteers, and had little to no access to funding. QTMOs could be thought of as safe spaces that fostered support, solidarity, and advocacy for QTMuslims. The counter-to-mainstream organization publicly distinguished itself from mainstream queer groups: its purpose was to create spaces for marginalized communities who have been historically left out of the queer mainstream. This group acquired some funding through grants, but explicitly refused to become a non-profit organization.

I asked mainstream leaders to broadly describe their organizational structures, goals, and practices. I also asked more specific questions related to their relationship with QTMuslims, such as how they felt about hosting Muslim specific events, and whether the organization should offer programming for QTMuslims. At the end of each interview, I showed leaders three vignettes, which were intended to gauge interviewees' objective responses toward QTMuslim identity and

their reactions toward the exclusion of QTMuslims from mainstream queer spaces. The vignettes allowed me to compare whether interviewees reacted differently to the exclusion of QTMuslims when their organization was not implicated and whether they responded differently when speaking about their own groups.

In the first vignette, two Muslim lesbians entered a popular LGBTQ bookstore: they were both wearing hijabs and shared a kiss. They asked the waiter if the restaurant offered halal meat, to which he answered no. I asked interviewees what they thought about the situation and whether the restaurant should have offered halal and why.

In the second vignette, a trans Muslim man entered a queer health clinic: he had been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and asked to be seen by a male doctor for personal religious reasons. The clinic denied him entry as they were short staffed and only had one male doctor available. I asked participants to share their thoughts about this exchange and asked whether they believed the healthcare clinic should have made special accommodations for the man.

The third vignette depicted an event at a QTMO, where a queer Muslim man was expressing joy about having found a space to be simultaneously Muslim and gay. I asked interviewees what they thought about the event and if they believed someone could be both Muslim and gay.

Complimentary Data

In order to triangulate my interview findings, I also looked at mainstream queer organizations' social media profiles and official websites. I analyzed thirty of the most recent flyers, event programs, and promotional materials from each group's Facebook/Twitter/Instagram accounts. I also analyzed the entirety of their official websites.

Moreover, I surveyed the archival records of the following seven queer organizations in Toronto: Pride Toronto, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, the ArQuives, the Aids Committee of Toronto (ACT), The Metropolitan Women's Common, Inside/Out, and Supporting Our Youth (SOY). Organizations were selected based on availability, historical breath, and prominence and were not related to the interviews.

RESULTS

In what follows, I show that mainstream queer organizations (or what I refer to as the queer mainstream) promote diversity initiatives and practices as a commitment to pluralism and inclusion. The archival and interview data show that, for at least thirty years, queer mainstream leaders have promoted diversity initiatives in a positive language, maintaining that such initiatives proactively correct the previous exclusion of marginalized groups. The majority of mainstream leaders I interviewed remained hopeful that diversity practices were 'making room' for all marginalized communities, including Queer and Trans Muslims (QTMuslims). Yet, the QTMuslims with whom I conducted interviews reported being excluded from the queer mainstream. This discrepancy, I argue, shows that diversity mandates may be less effective than anticipated by mainstream leaders.

I show that diversity initiatives aim to include all minority groups through a 'master identity model' of inclusion: rather than focus on the differences between racialized, ethnic, and cultural groups, this model aggregates *all* LGBTQ marginalized identities under a master sexual identity category. I argue that while this master identity model appears to have a wide inclusive reach, it often creates the exclusionary effect of differentiating between a universal and normatively

privileged identity (i.e. a white, secular, ableist, and wealthy queer identity) and all 'different' identities. I look more specifically at the case QTMuslim inclusion in the queer mainstream to argue that this model promotes an 'irreconcilability logic,' which distances queerness from Islam and ignores the racialized experiences of QTMuslims.

Moreover, I show that diversity initiatives mask the structural barriers faced by minority communities in the queer mainstream. In addition to QTMuslim interviewees, some (four out seven) of the racialized mainstream leaders I interviewed rejected their own organizations' diversity initiatives and believed that they concealed structural barriers and unequal power relations. I triangulate these findings with archival data and content analysis to demonstrate that diversity initiatives can obscure the interlocking systems of racism and capitalism that further marginalize minority communities.

The Word On Everyone's Lips

In their brochures and/or websites, most mainstream queer organizations either directly or indirectly mentioned diversity and promoted the inclusion of LGBTQ people, regardless of their ability, race, ethnicity, or creed. Out of the ten organizations with stated mission statements and mandates, four explicitly mentioned the word 'diversity' or 'diverse' and two evoked diversity discourse by 'celebrating difference.' In my interview analysis, I coded the word diversity a total of seventy-three times, most of which emerged from interviews with queer mainstream leaders. Importantly, I did not initiate diversity-related interview questions or comments, and interviewees' mentions of diversity were unprompted.

Mainstream leaders often promoted diversity through the language of pride, celebration, and inclusion. For instance, Darren, a thirty-year-old trans white man, was very vocal about the fact

that his organization had "the most diverse group you can ask for." Similarly, John, a forty-year-old cis, white, gay leader of an arts/events organization, felt that "if nothing else" the group always included "people from diverse communities."

This positive language was mostly promoted by white mainstream leaders but also by two out of seven racialized leaders. One of these two leaders, Lana, who is a pansexual cisgender black woman in her late forties, reassured me that there were "very few groups that [weren't] represented across the spectrum" in her organization. The other leader, Carlo, used superlatives to describe his organization's diversity initiatives. Carlo is a thirty-something-year-old South East Asian cisgender man. He told me that his organization did "a very golden and amazing job in making sure that [they] represent[ed] as many diverse groups as possible." Overall, leaders engaged in diversity talk through the language of celebration, hope, and pride.

Mainstream leaders saw diversity mandates as proactively correcting the previous exclusion of minority groups, and especially of Queer and Trans Black Indigenous and People Of Colour (QTBIPOC) communities, from the mainstream. Mark, who described himself as a "middle-aged, white, gay man," explained that his organization has "intentionally tried to create a space that is inclusive" and "to step out of the basic culture of Church Street[19]." Consequently, the group has "tried to create a space that is really pro people of color and pro diversity."

Leaders compared their current diversity initiatives and practices to a previous exclusionary white, cis, queer mainstream. John explicitly stated that although his group's mission has been to recruit "more members of the POC community," the organization "has had a history of being very gay white men." Nonetheless, he compared this exclusionary past to current diversity initiatives that seek to correct it.

[19] The central hub of the Toronto's gay village is the intersection of Church Street and Wellesley Street: the neighbourhood is therefore commonly referred to as 'Church Street' or simply 'Church and Wellesley.'

Chris, who is a white cisgender queer male in his 50s, similarly "put it really bluntly" and told me that "the overwhelming majority of [the group's] programming and membership used to be from cisgender white folks." Riley, a white cis woman who identifies as being "closer to straight than gay," was also very frank about her organization's history as being made up of "a bunch of white cis guys." She explained that the group was "very much transitioning from being very much an old boys club" and had therefore resolved to make "diversity and inclusion or anti oppression training mandatory for all of [their] staff and volunteers." Thus, although these leaders were critical of how the queer mainstream has previously excluded QTBIPOC communities, they were generally confident about diversity initiatives' ability to remedy pervious exclusion.

Interestingly though, my analysis of the archival data shows that queer mainstream organizations have framed diversity initiatives as a response to the previous exclusion of [especially racialized] minority groups for at least thirty years. Starting from the year 1990, concepts and phrases like diversity, community outreach, and anti-racism workshops began to enter the vocabulary of mainstream queer organizations. Often, this diversity talk emerged in response to critiques from QTBIPOC communities, who publicly challenged the queer mainstream for their racist or exclusionary practices.

For instance, in the following 1991 correspondence to the editors of *Rites Magazine*[20], the board members of Toronto's most well-known queer theatre responded to QTBIPOC criticism by writing that "as white queers," they "recognize the importance of demonstrating [their] solidarity with queers of colour through outreach efforts and inclusive programing and policies" such as "co-host[ing] a panel discussion on cultural diversity" (Gilbert et al., 1991).

[20] Rites Magazine was a popular Canadian LGBTQ magazine which was active in the 1980s and 1990s.

Given mainstream leaders' persistent enthusiasm about the broad reach of diversity initiatives, one would expect all marginalized communities to feel included therein. Yet, the QTMuslim organizers with whom I conducted interviews painted a fundamentally different picture of inclusion practices in mainstream organizations. These leaders described a general dissatisfaction and disidentification with the queer mainstream and were doubtful of the effectiveness of its diversity practices. Why?

In the following section, I show that diversity initiatives often rely on a model of inclusion which assimilates all LGBTQ groups into a master sexual identity. The model is based on the assumption that diverse queer and trans individuals' needs are met through all-inclusive policies and practices that welcome everyone on the basis of sameness. Yet, this faulty logic is unraveled when the mainstream is tasked with tending to the specific needs of marginalized individuals. Specific to the case of QTMuslims, such inclusion models assume that queerness and Islam are fundamentally irreconcilable. Hence, this model fails to apply intersectional frameworks to inclusion practices, ignores the religious and racialized identities of QTMuslims, and creates barriers for them in mainstream queer organizations.

Different but the Same: Universal Queerness and Diverse Others

Emphasizing togetherness and unity, many of the mainstream leaders I interviewed talked about diversity as being comprehensively inclusive of all LGBTQ groups. As mentioned above, this was also evident in organizational websites and brochures, which described including 'diverse' LGBTQ groups regardless of race, ability, creed, etc… To be sure, leaders promoted diversity with the best of intentions: they were hopeful that, despite their differences, all LGBTQ individuals could unite under the 'queer umbrella' and be treated as equals.

Nonetheless, while ascribing to this master identity model had the performative effect of unifying the spectrum of LGBTQ communities, it often effectively prevented organizations from making specific accommodations for QTMuslims. When I asked queer mainstream organizers if they had worked with QTMuslims, they often reassuringly responded that they worked with every group. For instance, Darren said that his organization "literally include[d] LGBTQ-anybody" and that he did not "care" or discriminate against any given group. Janine, a white bisexual cisgender woman in her mid-forties, reminded me that "most of [the organization's] programming [was] pretty broad" and that it encompassed "any demographic of LGBTQ and everything within that." Jordan told me that his organization did not "specifically look" to include "queer Muslim stuff," but that they would "love it" if QTMuslims themselves would approach the organization.

I then asked mainstream leaders whether they were willing to cater more specifically to QTMuslims by adding 'markers of inclusion' such as displaying a visible Muslim symbol on their window or hosting events during which they spoke directly about Islam. Most mainstream leaders were hesitant about this idea: they were concerned that it would create a slippery slope, where the organization would have to make accommodations for every minority group. For instance, John said that if "you do that for one member of the community, suddenly people will be wondering why their group is not being represented with their sticker or symbol." Chris similarly said that "there's always going to be the subsection of the subsection who doesn't feel represented." Instead of specifically representing each community, these leaders found it more practical to emphasize the unity of the queer community as a whole and to demonstrate solidarity with its diverse 'subsections' more generally.

Other leaders more strongly felt that religion would detract from the uniformity of their group. Janet told me that "it would be a very bad thing for [the organization] to become a religious organization." Janet is a straight, cisgender, white woman in her early seventies and one of the earliest core organizers of her queer support group. She invited me to conduct our interview in her home, where I probed her with difficult questions about difference and inclusion. Janet believed that "the whole key" of her organization was to "accept everybody regardless of their religion." She strongly endorsed the idea that whatever their faith, members of the organization were "all equals and they all [had] the same issues." Peter, a cisgender white straight man and another older leader, similarly believed that if his organization were to "support one religion," then "all of the sudden, other people [would] not feel welcome anymore."

Like Janet and Peter, Leslie, a sixty-something-year-old straight white cisgender woman, was firm about the fact that her queer organization was "a secular group" where members "[did] not talk about religion." Leslie said her organization provided the same support for everyone "no matter what their faith [was]." "It doesn't matter what faith you are," she emphasized, "we are all the same." As such, the organization "appeal[ed] to the sameness part" of members' identities and "[drove] by the faith part." Yet, QTMuslims' did not believe that their communities were 'the same' as secular groups: they required specific accommodations that were attentive to their experiences as religious minorities. Hence, they rejected the mainstream's approach to diversity and inclusion, which they believed categorized all queer communities as being the same at the expense of non-normative groups.

Interestingly, mainstream leaders denounced the vignette scenarios described above, in which specific accommodations were not made for QTMuslims. For instance, Jordan cheekily told me that the scenario in the second vignette, where the trans man was denied health care services,

"stressed [him] out." He thought that the lack of accommodations was "terrible, especially since it [was] an LGBTQ space." Janet was even more disappointed by the second vignette: "that's bull," she exclaimed, "they should have accommodated the man for sure!" Leaders like Janet and Jordan justified disagreeing with the vignettes on the basis that queer spaces ought to be intersectional or that they ought to accommodate queer people from different religious backgrounds. Yet, at the same time, many failed to uphold the same standard for their own organization and did so in the name of inclusion: they believed that making specific accommodations for QTMuslims would fail to be inclusive of 'everyone.'

Not only did QTMuslims feel that mainstream inclusion models neglected their needs as LGBTQ religious individuals, they also argued that such models ignored their racialized experiences and created limitations for QTBIPOC groups in general. Jama, an outspoken black cisgender queer Muslim organizer in his thirties, told me that "inclusion these days is being used against people of color as a way to refuse creating specific spaces for our communities." He exemplified that "if you tell LGBTQ organizations, 'hey we need something specific for black queer Muslim folks,'" they would respond by saying "'no we do our work for everybody, we need to be diverse and inclusive.'" Thus, while mainstream organizers believed that sameness models successfully integrated all marginalized communities into their groups, responses from QTMO leaders showed that minority groups themselves may not reap the intended benefits of such models.

Moreover, QTMuslims believed that mainstream organizations' discursive commitment to inclusion masked the privileging of white, secular, normative groups over marginalized and racialized communities. Jama said that despite mainstream groups' intentions to want to include "everybody," such organizations favoured queer people who were "always all white and always

already white." I explore this more in the next section, where I discuss the connection between universal queer identity, religion, and race.

QTMuslim Identity: Irreconcilable or Intersectional?

As mentioned in the previous section, many mainstream leaders were hesitant to integrate Islam or religion in mainstream spaces. Here, I further show that much of this aversion was rooted in what I call an 'irreconcilability logic,' which regards queer identities as being universally secular. This logic fails to account for the intersectional identities of QTMuslims whose religious identities are often inextricably linked to their sexual and racial ones. Yet, because diversity initiatives tend to group difference under a master sexual identity, they conceal the complexity of QTMuslim experiences, which are shaped by multiple axes of social division.

QTMuslims repeatedly criticized the failure to apply intersectionality within the queer mainstream. Jama said that "many people hold these ideas that Muslims are backwards and perpetuate this sense of impossibility of being both Muslim and queer." Nivaan, who is South Asian and twenty-two, drew on their own experience to tell me that although they did not have a problem reconciling their pansexual, non-binary, and Muslim identity "on the inside," the mainstream's "assumption of these things clashing [made them] really uncomfortable to talk about [their] experiences." Nivaan recounted being asked questions like "why would you be part of a faith that doesn't want you?" or being told that "it's fine if you want to be queer or non-binary as long as you leave your faith." Although leaders like Jama and Nivaan acknowledged that some QTMuslims *do* face issues reconciling their faith and queer/trans identity, they rejected the mainstream's positioning of queerness and Islam as contradicting one another.

Overall, mainstream organizations seemed to look at Muslim identity as being opposed to queer/trans identity. In my archival research and content analysis, I remarked that in the few instances where QTMuslim content was specifically included, it relied on 'irreconcilability logic' to showcase what Jama summarized as the "impossibility of being both queer and Muslim."

Many (but not all) mainstream leaders saw religion as being oppressive for queer and trans people. For instance, despite seeing his organization as the "most diverse group you can ask for," Darren thought that most of its members would be "very turned off from all models of religion." Peter, the older leader encountered above, more radically commented that religion "practically [lead] the charge against gay people," and was convinced that religious groups were "not prepared to accept gay people." Although Darren and Peter's positions were likely informed by the historical exclusion of LGBTQ groups from religious institutions, they nonetheless relied on the assumption that religion and gay/trans liberation were antithetical.

One leader, Karlee, told me that her organization was weary of partnering with Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs): the staff believed that QTMOs were "paying homage to a document that suggest[ed] that [queer people were] going to burn in hell." Karlee is a black cisgender queer woman in her fifties. Although she told me that she was starting to change her mind about religion, she described some employees' frustration toward QTMOs for bringing faith into their safe space: "it's like 'come on folks," she exclaimed, "we ran away from faith, don't bring it to us! This is our safe space and you're hurting us."

Again, given that religious institutions have historically discriminated against LGBTQ populations, and that religion has been a source of tension for many queer and trans individuals, Karlee's frustration is understandable. Nevertheless, there are two implicit assumptions in her

statement: first that religion is always at odds with queer identity, and, second, that "we" (read: queer people) constitutes a universal category.

Although many leaders relied on this 'irreconcilability logic,' they responded positively to the third vignette, where the queer Muslim man had found an accepting space. When I asked mainstream leaders if someone can be Muslim and gay, they all responded with affirmative enthusiasm. Yet, when it came to hosting QTMuslim events in their own spaces, mainstream organizers displayed a mistrust toward religion.

QTMuslims believed that the aversion to religion was particularly pronounced in response to Islam. Jama described experiencing "general animosity towards any kind of religion" in the queer mainstream but underscored that "it seems to be particularly targeted toward Islam." Some mainstream leaders also reiterated this and recounted instances of Islamophobia. Shey, a thirty-something-year-old trans Middle Eastern man, shared that he has "constantly" witnessed an aversion to Islam in the queer mainstream. Specifically, he said that it "manifest[ed] in the notion that being a practicing Muslim [was] an immediate cause of not being supportive [of LGBTQ people]." Monica, who is a white, gay, cisgender woman in her forties, also told me that she had not only seen discomfort toward religion overall, but had also witnessed much "anti-Muslim sentiment by board members and staff who could not wrap their head around how one could be out, proud, and part of a religion that they perceived to be hateful, limiting, or backward."

Sometimes, the irreconcilability between Islam and queer/trans identity was explicitly linked to Muslim 'community' and 'culture.' Lana (the black pansexual leader who felt positively about diversity mandates) believed that it was "virtually impossible" to "implant notions [of queerness] that are born in a secular society" within Muslim communities. She told me that "educating the Muslim community about what it means to be queer" was presumptuous. She explained that

notions of queerness, which have been accepted by "mainstream white LGBTQ communities" since the 1950s, still "do not exist in Muslim communities and cultures."

For Lana, the notion that queerness and Islam are irreconcilable was intricately tied up with ideas about culture and race: she saw "mainstream white LGBTQ+ communities" as welcoming queer identities and believed that queerness "did not exist in Muslim communities and cultures." Similarly, Janet told me that she "blame[d]" the difficulty of recruiting "ethnic groups" to their religious affiliation. This not only equates queerness with secularism, but also with whiteness.

For the large majority of QTMuslims in this study, race was inextricably linked to their Muslim identity. Twenty-one out of twenty-four organizers explicitly stated that they belonged to a racial minority group. They described facing barriers and interactions in mainstream organizations, which ranged from being uncomfortable to hostile, and which relied on the synthesis of Islamophobic and racist assumptions. Examples included being unable to host specific events for QTMuslims or encountering ignorant and sometimes aggressive confrontations with patrons in mainstream groups. Tavi, a thirty-something-year-old South Asian cisgender queer man, used the example of white queer individuals in the mainstream relying on "what little knowledge they have about Muslim identity" to "conjure up the most extreme images, like 'oppressive to women and barbaric.'" Importantly, these experiences are often rooted in irreconcilability logic, which not only fails to account for the ways that QTMuslim identities are indivisibly linked, but also how they are tethered to racialized identities.

At the same time, diversity mandates continue to promote inclusivity and unity. These discursive commitments to inclusion can conceal the Islamophobic and discernibly racist interactions faced by QTMuslims. Moreover, as I show in the next section, the positive language of diversity and inclusion can make it difficult for QTMuslims to challenge mainstream

organizations. It can also obscure the structural obstacles and unequal power relations that not only negatively impact QTMuslims but affect marginalized groups as a whole.

White Folks, Money Folks: Barriers to Access for Marginalized Groups

In the previous sections, I showed that while mainstream queer organizations' diversity initiatives are based on principles of unity and sameness, they lack intersectional frameworks from which to include marginalized groups like QTMuslim. Instead of accounting for the interconnectedness of QTMuslims' sexual, gender, religious, and racial experiences, such diversity mandates assume that all minority identities can be consolidated under a queer umbrella category. This master identity model of inclusion therefore fails to consider the interlocking systems of oppression that impact QTMuslims.

Here, I further argue that the inclusive language of diversity initiatives not only prevents minority groups from challenging mainstream organizations, but also tends to obscure their structural exclusion. In addition to my interviews with QTMuslims, I draw on interviews with four racialized mainstream leaders who reiterated QTMuslims' skepticism about diversity mandates. Their responses, along with my archival and content analysis, put the positive appearance of diversity policies and practices into question.

QTMuslims told me that they have been met with an adverse reaction from mainstream organizations when attempting to challenge their diversity mandates. Mina, a thirty-year-old South Asian pansexual Muslim cisgender woman, told me that "the assumption that queer spaces are so inclusive makes it difficult to address when they're not being inclusive." Explaining that critiques toward mainstream groups often received "an enormous backlash," Mina equated her experiences with "talking to a brick wall." Many QTMuslims similarly drew on this analogy of

'hitting a wall' or described great difficulty in attempting to challenge the queer mainstream because of the assumed success of its diversity mandates. White mainstream leader, Monica, also confirmed the mainstream's inability to recognize its *current* exclusionary practices and referred to it as a "debilitating defensiveness."

Moreover, in addition to QTMuslims, four out of the seven racialized mainstream leaders I interviewed were skeptical about the outcomes of diversity policies and practices. Unlike most mainstream leaders, who were hopeful about diversity initiatives' ability to include minority groups, these four interviewees had a much more cynical outlook. Bridgette, a fifty-something year old South Asian non-binary individual, said that "it's pretty clear that [queer organizations] do not have a good relationship with communities of colour at all." They explained that the individuals who promoted diversity initiatives were "all white and [had] a liberal mindset," which they described as either "want[ing] to be inclusive but only in a limited format" or "want[ing] the conversation to be simple." In general, these People Of Colour (POC) leaders were critical of diversity initiatives for being simplistic, or simply discursive.

Critical interviewees rejected diversity initiatives for promoting a visible organizational commitment to inclusion while obscuring structural inequality for racialized individuals in the queer mainstream. These leaders told me, for instance, that QTBIPOC individuals were often hired to work in lower-level roles without holding positions of power. Like Bridgette, Zara, a cisgender South Asian woman in her mid-forties, believed that her organization's efforts to represent QTBIPOC populations were rooted in a "need to look diverse." Noting that she had "a habit of counting the people of colour in every room," Zara believed that her organization failed to commit to the representation of racialized communities "at the decision-making level."

Mira, the non-binary South Asian leader whose organization was purposefully anti-mainstream, told me that queer organizations perpetuate "pyramid structures," in which "a lot of cis, white folks with upward mobility are at the top." Mira explained that "queer folks of colour" are seldom "in positions of power," but are placed on the "frontline" so as to seem diverse. Thus, at the top of such 'pyramid structures,' "the administrators are all white and get paid really well," and at the bottom, "the frontline staff are all POC and get paid shit." White mainstream leaders also confirmed that few racialized employees held positions of power in the organizations, and I found further evidence of this in my content analysis of organizational websites and brochures.

The archival data similarly show that racialized leaders condemned the mainstream for hiring POC employees on the "frontlines" so as to "look diverse." In an Op-Ed from 1990, a former volunteer penned the following critique of The Metropolitan Women's Common (a lesbian organization): "women of colour are curious if the ploy of having one woman of colour working the highly-visible position of door keeper actually fools the [organization's] white clientele into thinking it has conquered its race problems" (Vespry, 1990).

Mira conceived of the queer mainstream as being made up of many non-profit organizations who rely on "white folks and money folks" for resources. They believed that such funding models limited the mainstream's ability to cater to marginalized communities. Similarly, Shey, the trans Middle Eastern man encountered above, said that his organization had "become obligated to corporate funders" who expected "certain quotas." He said that "trying to work for the funders" was fundamentally incompatible with "trying to have an anti-oppressive practice." White mainstream leaders like Chris and John also told me that although funding bodies may grant money to queer organizations in order to promote their own commitment to diversity, they may also control which groups get access to material resources and which do not. While white

mainstream leaders mostly endorsed diversity initiatives, some were still critical of the ways that organizational structures created barriers for particular groups.

Importantly, mainstream funding structures were often rooted in secularism in ways that excluded QTMuslims. Mark the "middle-aged, white, gay man" whose group was "pro people of color and pro diversity," said that the "secularism that pervades queer society prevents organizations from acquiring funding for religious projects." Drawing on his own experiences working as a funder, he said that many large corporations and grant agencies refused to fund religious events or activities. If they were accessible online, I examined the policies of the funding bodies from which many mainstream queer organizations received money and confirmed that some did not fund religious projects.

Yet, Mark told me that the funding organization for which he used to work would use the rhetoric of secularism while in actuality, "fund[ing] Christian and Jewish charities, but not anything Islamic." This brings to mind earlier statements by Jama, Shey, and Monica who highlighted that anti-religious sentiment was particularly directed at Islam. Shey also told me that while his organization's funders restricted religious programming or content, they worded it in the language of being "inclusive of everyone" or "avoiding creating divisions." Note, again, that the language of inclusion is being used to effectively exclude particular groups.

In addition to these funding practices, some mainstream organizations implemented their own secular policies. Karlee, the black cisgender leader whose organization was hesitant to partner with QTMOs, told me that her group abided by policies that prohibit the "religious use of space." Karlee neither wholeheartedly endorsed diversity initiatives like Lana and Carlo nor did she necessarily reject them like the interviewees quoted in this section. Nonetheless, she was clear that her organization generally pushed back against QTMuslim events and programming,

and that such 'pushbacks' were supported by organizational structures like funding models and space-use policies.

Again, where available, I examined the space-use policies of mainstream organizations and found that some groups did restrict religious activities from occurring in their spaces. Although these analyses are by no means systematic or statistically robust, the results help triangulate mainstream leaders' comments and point to the structural biases embedded in mainstream organizations.

Hence, while diversity initiatives continue to present positive images of inclusion, they conceal the systemic privileging of what Mira called "white folks and money folks." This is demonstrative of the ways that diversity discourse can be incompatible with intersectional practice. In contrast, Mira saw their organization as presenting alternative-to-mainstream, "decentralized," and "deinstitutionalized" models of inclusion: instead of becoming "like a business" and aiming to "get bigger and better," the group was "small and community focused." Moving away from "pyramid structures" that "hoard power," Mira's organization "share[d] information, resources, and power" with participating minority groups. This focus on structural equity, deinstitutionalized power, and community-engaged resource development provides an example of how social justice organizations can begin to rethink inclusion models in ways that incorporate intersectional frameworks and practice.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has drawn on a total of forty-six interviews with leaders of six Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs), eleven mainstream queer organizations, and one alternative-to-

mainstream queer organization. I also analyzed mainstream groups' social media profiles and websites and surveyed the archival records of seven separate queer organizations.

Consistent with other findings, the data revealed a 'diversity paradox' which paid 'lip service' (Bell and Hartmann, 2007) to inclusion while obscuring inequality (Ahmed, 2012; Banjerri, 2000; Hunter, 2009; Ralston, 1998). In my interviews, mainstream leaders often evoked diversity 'happy talk' (Bell and Hartmann, 2007) or a 'feel good politics' (Ahmed, 2012) of inclusion without seeing their own organizations as reproducing unequal social relations (Hunter, 2009). My archival research and interviews with racialized mainstream leaders further showed that Queer and Trans Black Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) communities have rejected this positive outlook on diversity and inclusion for at least thirty years.

As with previous research (Ahmed, 2012; Alexander, 2005; Bannerji, 2000; Luft and Ward, 2009; Mohanty, 2003), my findings revealed that mainstream groups relied on what I have called a 'master identity model' of inclusion , which consolidated all minority differences into a universalized, white, and secular sexual identity. This failed to implement 'relationality' in considering the 'interconnections' (Collins and Bilge, 2016) of QTBIPOC identities and left little room to include the specific needs of marginalized communities. The model created social and structural barriers for QTMuslims by promoting an 'irreconcilability logic,' which distanced queer identity from religious and racialized identity.

Because of their positive appearance, diversity initiatives made it difficult for minority groups to challenge mainstream organizations; QTMuslims often equated their experiences of doing so with "hitting a brick wall." This was remarkably similar to responses from the diversity practitioners interviewed by Ahmed (2102) who used the same language to describe their challenges with implementing diversity policies. Moreover, mainstream organizational structures

'instrumentalized' diversity, especially through 'public image management' (Ward, 2008), while obscuring the unequal power relations that benefited the most privileged groups. While minority groups served as "ticks in the boxes" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 153), they systematically encountered limitations in acquiring resources and power. In this sense, diversity was "a surrogate for intersectionality" (Collins and Bilge, 2016, p. 249) instead of promoting intersectional practice.

Thus, perhaps it may be useful for mainstream queer organizations to ask not only what diversity has accomplished but rather, what it has concealed. One useful starting point may be to critically examine what diversity initiatives *do* for intersectionality or, better yet, to focus on intersectionality itself. Mainstream groups may do well to ask: which structures promote intersectionality and what are the means to implement them?

Chapters 1 and 2 have collectively shown that QTMuslims face exclusion from mainstream Muslim and queer groups. In the next chapter, I look at how QTMuslims respond to such exclusion and whether they seek mainstream integration.

Chapter 3[21]

'I Am Enough': why LGBTQ Muslim groups resist mainstreaming

Abstract: This chapter draws on twenty-four interviews and two years of ethnographic fieldwork with leaders of Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) in Toronto, Canada. Rather than look at psychological identity dissonance or integration, the chapter follows a recent shift in focusing on LGBTQ religious group formation and membership. I look at the ways that creating sectarian groups, as opposed to acquiring reform from mainstream institutions, impacts collective identity formation. Analyzing the responses of QTMO leaders to both queer and religious institutions reveals that such organizations foster multidimensional collective identities that are distinct from the mainstream. I show that QTMOs can be analyzed as alternative-to-mainstream "safe spaces," which pose a challenge to the sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and racism that they perceive as occurring in the religious and queer mainstream. In doing so, they cultivate strong oppositional and intersectional collective identities. The chapter contributes both to the study of LGBTQ religious group formation and to the analytical development of 'safe spaces,' as sites within which marginalized collective identities emerge.

Keywords: queer, trans, Muslim, collective identity, safe spaces, ethnography

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INTRODUCTION

Scholarship examining the relationship between gender, sexuality, and religion has traditionally focused on individual identity conflict. That is, former studies have tended to examine the psychological dissonance and reconciliation of LGBTQ and religious identity (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Minwalla et al., 2005; Siraj, 2012, 2016; Yip, 2005). LGBTQ religious organizations have accordingly been studied in respect to their role as identity-reconcilers (Mahaffy, 1996; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000; Schnoor, 2006; Thumma, 1991). More recently, research (Coley, 2020; Fuist, 2016; Fuist et al., 2012; Thumma and Gray, 2005) has started to examine the social and interactive relationships between LGBTQ Religious people and organizations.

In Thumma and Gray's (2005) edited volume, two "institutional forms of gay religious life" (p. xii) have been outlined: queer religious people either reform existing religious institutions or they form sectarian groups. Each of these outcomes yields different results for collective identity formation: in choosing to stay in existing religious organizations, LGBTQ religious congregants gain legitimacy and resources at the expense of their collective identities. Conversely, in creating sectarian organizations, members generate powerful collective identities but limit their political, economic, and social support. While these typologies of group participation are analytically useful, their categorization is still premised on the conflict between gay identities and religion. This chapter follows the 'institutional' direction of previous work, but broadens the scope of analysis to include experiences of both queer and trans[22] individuals, and to analyze the

[22] Although Thumma and Gray's (2005) book includes scarce examples trans experiences, the analytical distinction between queer and trans is not made. Instead, LGBT and gay are used interchangeably, while most examples refer to gay and lesbian religious experiences.

relationship between Queer and Trans Religious Organizations (QTROs)[23] and both mainstream religious and queer institutions.

I draw on two years of ethnographic research and twenty-four interviews with leaders[24] of Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) in Toronto, Canada. I ask what QTMOs might *do* for LGBTQ Muslims if not help reconcile conflicting identities. In looking at the function of QTMOs and their relationship to the queer and religious mainstream, I argue that these organizations can be thought of as 'safe spaces' or 'free spaces' (Evans and Boyte, 1986; Polletta, 1999) where collective identities are cultivated. Such collective identities are oppositional in their resistance to mainstream sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamaphobia, and racism, and, as such, are strengthened by their own intersectional character. Not only are QTMOs resisting past and current mainstream oppression, but they are also, as one interviewee put it, "carving out possible queer and trans Muslim futures."

LITERATURE REVIEW

LGBTQ Religious Group Participation

The study of group participation by LGBTQ religious people has recently marked a shift in an otherwise psychologically or individually focused body of literature (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Mahaffy, 1996; Minwalla et al., 2005; Schnoor, 2006; Rodriguez and Ouellette 2000; Thumma, 1991; Yip, 2005). Scholarship has moved from examining the reconciliation of individuals'

[23] In this chapter, I refer to LGBTQ religious groups as Queer and Trans Religious Organizations. I make the purposeful choice to distinguish queer from trans because each category represents different experiences of marginalization that respectively result from one's expressions of sexuality and gender. Hence, while, for instance Fuist et al. (2012) use the term LGBTROs to refer to LGBTQ religious groups, this chapter uses QTMO as a nod to these complex histories.

[24] By leaders, I refer either to those who have founded the organizations or hold key organizing/leadership roles in them.

religious and LGBTQ identities to analyzing LGBTQ religious group engagement (Coley, 2018, 2020; Fuist, 2016; Fuist et al., 2012; Kane, 2013; Thumma and Gray, 2005; Wilcox, 2009). Some have contested that LGBTQ religious people always encounter psychological dissonance and have looked at the social contexts and interactions that impact their identity formation (Fuist, 2016; Sumerau, 2015). Others have focused on the effect of an LGBTQ religious 'marketplace' (Kane, 2013; Wilcox, 2001, 2009), and the impact of group membership on one's understanding of religion and sexuality (Coley, 2020).

Thumma and Gray's (2005) edited collection provides "institutional examples of gay spiritual practice" (p. xii), where queer religious people either organize within 'denominational heritage groups' or form 'sectarian/subaltern groups[25].' That is, some congregants remain in mainstream denominations or form para-mainstream groups that are LGBTQ affirming (Cadge, 2005; Primiano, 2005; Shokeid 2005). Other constituents form their own Queer and Trans Religious Organizations (QTROs) in spite of or in opposition to the religious mainstream (Bates, 2005; Drumm, 2005; Lukenbill, 2005; Wilcox, 2005). Analyzing these outcomes is useful for conceptualizing LGBTQ religious identities in relation to social contexts and interactions (Fuist, 2016). Whether LGBTQ religious people form sectarian organizations or stay in existing institutions is consequential for identity formation.

Those individuals who reform existing religious institutions distance themselves from being an 'all-gay' religious group and gain legitimacy from their families and communities (Cadge, 2005; Primiano, 2005). Such 'mainstreamers' hold deep allegiances to religious denominations. Some are critical of QTROs for "putting gay before god" (Thumma, 2005, p. 72), and regard

[25] A third 'institutional' form is also outlined in the book: Thumma and Gray (2005) classify those who don't fall into the other two categories as 'finding spiritual expression' in popular culture. Given that this form does not explicitly address group participation for LGBTQ religious people, I restrict my analysis to the first two institutional forms.

their theological practices as “wishy washy” (Primianio, 2005, p. 14). Thus, while this form of group participation yields promising results for mainstream reform, it is less effective for LGBTQ religious collective identity formation.

Conversely, although QTROs also emerge “in response to subordination by or exclusion from dominant organizational realities” (Thumma and Gray, 2005, p.164), their imperative is to cultivate “subaltern communities of faith” (p. xiii). Rather than seek mainstream acceptance, QTROs serve as “spiritual safe space[s]… that nurture and solidify a *new* gay religious identity” (p.164, emphasis mine). This new identity is collectively adopted to challenge normative culture as it pertains to what LGBTQ or religious identity ought to be (Sumerau, 2015). Thus, even some congregants who acquire support from mainstream religious groups continue to cultivate their LGBTQ religious identities in separate organizations (Shokeid, 2005).

In what follows, I question whether QTROs can be thought of as “safe spaces” where collective identities are created (Evans and Boyte, 1986 ; Poletta, 1999). Yet, I also question whether such collective identities are mere expressions of religious sexuality and whether they also cut across multiple marginalized experiences.

Few exceptions notwithstanding (Bates, 2005; Wilcox 2005, 2009), existing scholarship tends to ignore intersectional identity formation inside of QTROs. Notably, trans, non-binary, and racialized experiences are seldom accounted for in such analyses. Yet intersectionality plays a meaningful role in group formation. For instance, much of women of colour organizing has historically prioritized coalition building over creating an amalgamated or singular group; coalitions are thought to preserve the multiple and intersecting identities in each group rather than coopting or erasing any given identity under a larger umbrella (Naples, 1998; Ward, 2008). Moreover, racialized women and LGBTQ groups of colour have often used intersectional

frameworks to resist interlocking systems of oppression (Alimohamed, 2010; Collins and Bilge, 2016).

In the context of QTROs, intersectionality challenges the notion that all LGBTQ religious people encounter faith in the same way. This is certainly the case for queer and trans Muslims who interact with their faith through the dimensions of race, ethnicity, and citizenship, especially as such intersections facilitate systemic inequality and oppression[26]. These multidimensional identities presumably impact the decision to assimilate or form sectarian groups. Such decisions are likely dependent on queer and trans Muslims' relationship with both the Muslim and LGBTQ mainstream. Still, most research in the area assumes that LGBTQ religious people have an unproblematic relationship (or none at all) to the queer mainstream (see Sumerau 2015 for a notable exception).

Hence, I question if QTROs can foster collective identities that are intersectional rather than dichotomous and whether they are constitutive of marginalized identities across multiple axes of oppression. I argue that in order to capture the multilayered dimensions of collective identity formation, we must examine the relationship of LGBTQ religious people to both the religious and the queer mainstream.

In this chapter, I refer to the religious and queer mainstream[27] as dominant institutions that differ from QTROs in two important ways: first, mainstream religious and queer institutions are generally large and bureaucratic; they have existing hierarchal structures, rules, and specialized tasks; they are well established, with wide expansive networks, and economic support systems. Second, mainstream organizations uphold accepted and often institutionalized ideologies and

[26] See Puar (2007) for a detailed analysis of how homonationalism and the universalization of gay rights enables the surveillance of and violence against Muslim bodies.
[27] Again, I use 'queer' mainstream as opposed to 'LGBTQ' mainstream in an effort to acknowledge the ways that trans populations have been excluded from it.

practices that are endorsed by large groups of people. Hence challenging the mainstream can limit one's political, social, and economic resources or lead to social exclusion.

At the same time, alternative-to-mainstream groups challenge culture and potentially create cultural change (Sumerau, 2015). As social movements scholars (Fantasia and Hirsch, 1995; Groch 2001; Poletta, 1999; Poletta and Kretschmer, 2013) have shown, such alternative spaces create counter-hegemonic ideas and practices. In the next section, I outline the usefulness of conceptualizing QTROs as safe spaces, before developing a case study for collective identity formation within Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations in Toronto, Canada.

QTROs as Safe Spaces

Safe spaces, alternatively called 'free spaces' or 'havens,' have been defined as "environments in which people are able to learn a new self-respect [and] a deeper and more assertive group identity[28]" (Evans and Boyte 1986, p.17). Social movements scholars have looked at collective identity formation in such 'environments' (Evans and Boyte 1986; Fetner et al., 2012; Poletta, 1999; Poletta and Kretschmer, 2013), arguing that safe spaces produce counter-hegemonic ideology and oppositional consciousness (Fantasia and Hirsch, 1995; Groch 2001; Poletta, 1999). Although some political sociologists (Evans and Boyte 1986; Fantasia and Hirsch, 1995; Hirsch, 1993) have examined safe spaces as incubators of mobilization, others have shown that safe spaces produce a wider range of activity (Fetner et al., 2012; Poletta, 1999).

Poletta (1999) has used a three-fold typology of safe space, or what she calls "associative structures." Distinguishing between transmovement structures, indigenous structures, and

[28] Evans and Boyte (1986) also looked at safe spaces as environments for learning public skills, adopting cooperation values, and embracing civic virtue. The authors argued that these features made safe spaces necessary precursors to democratic movements.

prefigurative structures, she has argued that the relative "associational ties" (or intra and inter group connections) of safe spaces better explain identity formation and mobilization outcomes. Analyzing QTROs as "prefigurative" safe spaces could be useful for understanding how they shape collective identity.

In particular, prefigurative structures are "explicitly political and oppositional" and "are formed in order to prefigure the society that the movement is seeking to build by modeling relationships *that differ from those characterizing mainstream society*" (Poletta, 1999, p.11, emphasis mine; see also Poletta and Kretschmer, 2013). Rather than expand their reach, these spaces purposely restrict membership to strengthen existing interpersonal ties. Examples of prefigurative structures include LGBTQ support groups (Fetner et al., 2012) and women's only spaces.

Thus, conceptualized as prefigurative safe spaces, QTROs can challenge the mainstream and create new collective identities. QTROs can be considered safe spaces in as much as they create conditions for "a deeper and more assertive group identity" (Evans and Boyte 1986, p.17). They emerge in "small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups" (Poletta and Kretschmer, 2013, p.1). They can more specifically be considered as prefigurative structures to the extent that they facilitate the formulation of collective identities in opposition to the mainstream and that they are developed through symmetrical ties (Groch, 2001; Poletta, 1999). Examining the relationship between QTROs and mainstream groups can give us insight to the contexts, relationships, and activities that inform/characterize these spaces (Fetner et. al, 2012). It can show us how QTRO collective identities are articulated in relation to the mainstream, and how multiple experiences of marginalization impact their formation.

While Thumma and Gray (2005) have argued that the 'sectarian impulse' of LGBTQ religious people results in "distinctly gay religious institutional forms" (p. 164), others (Bates, 2005; Wilcox, 2005, 2009) have emphasized the multidimensional identity negotiations taking place within QTROs. Nevertheless, existing analyses have mostly been limited to the relationship between LGBTQ religious people and mainstream religious institutions. As mentioned, broadening the analysis to interactions of QTROs with both the religious and queer mainstream will presumably yield even more insights about the formation of multilayered identities. Moreover, conceptualizing QTROs as safe spaces (Evans and Boyte, 1986; Groch, 2001; Poletta, 1999) may help to provide explanations for *how* they develop collective identities in response to mainstream religious and queer institutions. Hence, through a case study with Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) in Toronto, Canada, I ask: why do LGBTQ Muslims create sectarian organizations? What is the relationship of QTMOs to the religious and queer mainstream? Are QTMOs safe spaces? What, if any, are the collective identities that are created in such spaces? What, if anything, distinguishes the collective character of QTMOs?

METHODS

This chapter draws from twenty-four interviews and two years of ethnographic fieldwork with leaders of six Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) in Toronto, Canada. Out of the twenty-four interviewees, eighteen were core organizers and the remaining six volunteered for QTMOs occasionally or collaborated with them through various projects. Interview questions were aimed at understanding QTMOs in their own right. That is, I asked interviewees to describe the organizations' histories, structures, and constituencies. I also asked each interviewee whether

they were planning to mainstream their organization or whether they preferred to grow their own sectarian groups and why.

As a participant observer, I attended a total of twenty formal events but was also engaged in many informal interactions such as volunteering, attending organizational workshops, and participating in social gatherings. This ethnography, like all ethnographies, was made possible by the participants and community members who showed me ungrudging courtesy and kindness.

Many of the events that I attended took place in Toronto's Church-and-Wellesley 'gaybourhood' (Ghaziani, 2015): the intersection of Toronto's Church Street and Wellesley Street is the hub of the city's gay village. Church Street, paved with asphalt but painted with rainbows, hosts many of the city's drag bars, LGBTQ bookstores, and community centers. The neighbourhood is notoriously known for being 'mainstream.' Indeed, one needs only to take a stroll through one of its blocks to notice the overwhelming presence of white men, the abundance of corporate advertisements, and the ruthless gentrification of residential buildings. As a result, many LGBTQ populations of colour actively resist Church Street and have tried to create spaces outside of the gaybourhood. Thus, I also attended events that took place in Toronto's East or West ends or in suburban municipalities of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Four out of the twenty-four leaders did not identify as Muslim, but they did identify as being spiritual/religious. Two of the interviewees who did identify as being Muslim did not identify as being religious. Many participants noted that their backgrounds were complex and hard to describe. Heeding this caveat, three interviewees reported a European ancestry, two Southern African, six East African, two Middle Eastern, one Caribbean, one South East Asian, seven South Asian, and two North American. All individuals have been given pseudonyms in order to maintain confidentiality.

RESULTS

All twenty-four QTMO leaders prioritized their organization's growth over mainstreaming into either Muslim or queer organizations. Four organizers were open to the possibility of future integration: these leaders saw mainstreaming as the ideal outcome for their organization, but did not think it possible at the present moment. Some were also receptive to outreach or partnerships with the mainstream, but were not in favour of diluting their own organizations. Nonetheless, most interviewees firmly voiced that QTMOs should grow as alternatives and challenges to the mainstream.

I conducted my very first interview with Esi, a thirty-year-old black queer cisgender woman and the founder of an interfaith organization with LGBTQ Muslim constituents. Esi is warm. Within minutes of meeting her, she makes you feel as though you matter—as though you belong. We met for the first time at a coffee shop in Lesliville, an up-and-coming Toronto locality: "Can we hug?" Esi held out her open arms as my prospective handshake lingered. "I prefer hugs," she said reassuringly. However warm, Esi was firm about her organization's refusal to mainstream. She said: "we do not want to integrate into the mainstream, we will attend one LGBTQ event, or one religious event, per year but we do not want to integrate. We want to exist as an alternative space." This response was typical of most leaders, including some of the following examples.

Carter, a gay Muslim cisgender man in his late forties, told me that he was "more interested in growing [LGBTQ Muslim] spaces from within" than in those "other conversations." Similarly, Muneer, who is thirty-two, South Asian, and queer, said that his organization prioritizes their "own people" before attempting "outreach to the mainstream community." Forty-something-year

old Ariel described her organization as attempting to "create a space that feels welcoming, accepting, and healing for people that are not comfortable in mainstream spaces."

While some of these organizations were open to partnering with larger groups and others were involved in existing mainstream partnerships, none of their leaders wanted to integrate into the wider religious or queer mainstream. The reader may observe that the interviewees quoted above were resolute in their responses: they were primarily dedicated to the growth of their own QTMOs as alternative groups. These organizations do not challenge mainstream groups by contesting LGBTQ Muslim representation from within them. Rather, the 'alternative' that they present is itself a challenge to the mainstream. Indeed, QTMO leaders regarded their groups as 'safe spaces' for LGBTQ Muslims to 'simply exist.'

Creating Safe Spaces

QTMOs were consistently articulated as being alternatives to mainstream Muslim and LGBTQ institutions. Leaders cited safety as being an urgent priority for their organization. Safety was often described as serving two interrelated purposes. First, these spaces were seen as being safe from hostility or marginalization within both the religious and queer mainstream. Second, these spaces were articulated as 'containers' for expressions of 'wholeness' and environments, in which LGBTQ Muslims could simply exist as their authentic 'selves.'

Much of this was initially explained to me by Lyron, the founder and Imam of a sacred LGBTQ Muslim organization. Lyron is fierce; he is in his fifties but has the passion of a young university student; he is welcoming and articulate. Through our many encounters, Lyron has taught me a great deal about the diversity of Islam and the numerous ways that Muslim identity is engaged and practiced. In our interview, Lyron explained to me that, in order for congregants

to simply "be themselves," his organization aims to create a space that is separate from the mainstream. He recalled that when he created his organization, the co-founders "were looking for a place where [they] could just be [themselves] and didn't have to hide who [they] were or what [their] practice or lack of practice was." Every organizer conceptualized QTMOs as safe spaces, where constituents could simply be 'themselves.'

As outlined by Ariel, safety measures are taken in an effort to allow congregants to be "whole" without having to conceal parts of themselves. Ariel is a white Muslim convert and has been a core group organizer for five years. She invited me to her home on a brisk weekday morning and offered me the largest imaginable selection of tea. We talked in the open-concept kitchen, where she described her organization as being born from a need for "spaces where people pray and [where they] don't feel like [they] are marginalized in any way."

Contrary to the efforts of 'mainstreamers' to gain visibility and legitimacy (Cadge, 2005, Primiano, 2005), some QTMO members sought spaces in which they could be themselves without being visible. This was explained to me by Tavi, a South Asian queer Muslim cisgender man and a leader from a social-political QTMO in his mid-thirties. Tavi is an educator by day and a QTMO organizer in his leisure time. He started his affiliation with the organization as constituent and later undertook a leadership role. He is pragmatic, thoughtful, and professional. Tavi is easy to talk to and refreshingly honest. He once jokingly admitted to me that he is addicted to *Ru Paul's Drag Race*[29] despite the criticism that the show has received: "Sorry," he sarcastically proclaimed, "but I love it! And I don't attend local Toronto drag shows either!" Tavi has been an organizer for eight years, and he believes that "people want some kind of space

[29] Ru Paul's Drag Race is a popular reality competition television series, where drag queens engage in a weekly competition. Contestants are eliminated weekly until the remaining queen is crowned 'America's next drag superstar.' The show has received criticism from LGBTQ communities for various reasons, namely that it sensationalizes drag culture and erases the lived experiences of marginalized drag queens.

where they can be themselves and feel comfortable—where they don't have to be out, they don't have to be visible."

Although some leaders, like Tavi, are not interested in representation, others promote the importance of visibility but believe that LGBTQ Muslims need to grow collectively before advocating for public support. As mentioned, these leaders hope for future mainstream integration but believe that it is either too soon or too difficult to undertake this task. One such hopeful is Arqa, a gay Ismai'ili organizer in his sixties who has held leadership positions in several QTMOs since the 1980s. Despite his many years of experience and considerable distinction, he is humble and down-to-earth. We conducted our interview at a popular LGBTQ bookstore in Toronto's Church-and-Wellesley[30] 'gaybourhood' (Ghaziani, 2014). Arqa believes that QTMOs needed to grow as independent groups before joining the mainstream. He said:

> The analogy I think of is post-apartheid. You almost need a certain amount of distance to grow. Because out of that independence comes strength, and after you are stronger you can unite. But I believe it's a long road ahead.

Similarly to Arqa, Riaan, a twenty-three year old gender-questioning artist, is not willing to expend his efforts on mainstreaming, even though he is open to the general idea. Riaan uses he/him pronouns for the time being, but tells me that he is "totally on some sort of a gender spectrum." Riaan is successful and talented; through his artwork, he contributes a great deal to the visibility of queer and trans Muslim representations. He is also involved with some QTMOs. And yet, here are his thoughts on mainstream integration: "I've struggled with the question for so many years. But at this point I'm like 'fuck it, it's too hard!' All I care about right now is allowing queer and trans Muslims to truly be themselves." Again, notice that Riaan's resistance

[30] As mentioned, many people simply refer to "Church Street" or "Church and Wellesley" when talking about the gay village.

to the mainstream is rooted in the idea that queer and trans Muslims should have spaces in which they can be their 'true' selves. This begs the questions: in what ways do mainstream religious and queer institutions prevent LGBTQ Muslims from being themselves? And, relatedly, what does it mean to be 'oneself' as an LGBTQ Muslim?

In the following sections, I will show that QTMOs serve as safe spaces that oppose sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and racism in mainstream religious and queer spaces. In doing so, they also foster oppositional collective identities that are strengthened by their intersectional character.

Mainstream'isms

QTMO leaders articulated the need to form and grow sectarian groups in order to resist sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and racism. Given that these different forms of prejudice often result in trauma, exclusion, and discrimination for LGBTQ Muslims, QTMOs provide spaces of both healing and resistance for constituents. All the more, oppositions to these proverbial 'isms, or what I cheekily refer to mainstream'isms, are addressed through an intersectional framework: rather than categorize experiences of marginalization according to the logic of conflict between sexual/gender liberation and religion, QTMO leaders holistically resist marginalization. That is, they neither see Islam as *causing* homophobia, transphobia, and sexism, nor do they attribute any experience of oppression to one particular mainstream group.

Many QTMO leaders pointed to homophobia, sexism, and transphobia as being prevalent in the Muslim mainstream but still separated these prejudices from Islam. Lyron described these particular experiences of marginalization as "spiritual violence." He said:

> Spiritual violence is when you're told that you're not good enough for your creator; that you're an abomination and that you need to be corrected because you want to be expunged from society;

> that you are a shame to your family and dishonor to their name; that God disapproves of you; that you have no divine agency or autonomy. It's wrong but this is the spiritual violence, which assaults you in your very core.

The organization's response to this spiritual violence is to evoke the sacred through various rituals such as *duas* (prayers of request), *salawats* (prayers of blessing or salutation), and *khutbahs* (sermons). Lyron wants congregants to realign themselves with their spirituality and to heal from the trauma associated with religion. "I would say that religion is undergoing a renaissance," he once told me. It is important to note that rather than revoke Islam itself as being violent, QTMOs challenge the Muslim mainstream's use of Islam to inflict 'spiritual violence.' Lyron endorsed the idea that "Islam is not a monolith and it's not rigid. In fact it's actually historically quite fluid and quite amebic." Muneer similarly conveyed Lyron's ideas. He said:

> For us, the way we talk about Islam is that it's peaceful and we have really nice ideas about what it can be. Our organization is a place where that gets actualized for people. Lots of people have a really patriarchal, transphobic, and homophobic experience with Islam and I think the safest place to talk about that is with other queer and trans Muslims.

Muneer is attentive, intuitive, and a multitasker extraordinaire. He commits a great deal of volunteer hours to his organization and has contributed significantly to its successful growth. He is funny, engaging, and cares genuinely about the future of the organization. "Thanks for loving us," he once told me after I had volunteered at an event for the organization. Truthfully, I should have thanked him for all of the doors he had opened for me that day. We conducted our interview in mid-December at Muneer's place of work. Despite harbouring a thirty-nine degree fever, I was thoroughly engrossed in our compelling conversation. In the quote above, Muneer is affirming that Islam itself is peaceful and that his organization provides a space in which

constituents can address and heal from the spiritual trauma that they may have encountered in the mainstream.

Jama, a black queer Muslim cisgender man in his thirties, strongly resisted the idea that Islam perpetuates homophobia and sexism. Jama is charming and charismatic, and has the sort of enviable confidence that cannot be taught. I continue to admire his poise and assertive disposition. During our very frank interview, he said:

> Sometimes the narrative that we get is that Muslims are inherently homophobic or misogynistic. It's important for us to resist that narrative because we know it's not true: we know that homophobia and misogyny know no boundaries, and we know that it's not essential to our communities. And all around me there are Muslim communities that have held down queer and trans folks in a really powerful and meaningful way.

Thus, although these leaders are attentive to the experiences of homophobia, transphobia, and sexism that may occur in the Muslim mainstream, they do not attribute their occurrence to Islam. Moreover, as described in Jama's statement, QTMO leaders reminded me that such experiences of marginalization "know no bounds." Anwar, a twenty-one-year-old non-binary Isma'ili organizer with a keen fashion sense, reiterated this point. As he (preferred pronoun) reflected on his childhood experiences of homophobia, he assured me that the Ismai'li community did not cause such experiences *per se*. Rather, he explained that "that's just what straight guys did." More to the point, many QTMO leaders criticized mainstream queer spaces for being organized by cisgender men. All four trans and non-binary leaders were critical of the queer mainstream for their often sexist and trans exclusionary attitudes and practices.

In addition to fighting sexism, homophobia, and transphobia, QTMO leaders opposed the racism and Islamophobia occurring within mainstream spaces. For instance, Arqa told me that, in his experience, the identities of all "Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians, get lumped together

because there's an un-understanding of all of three!" Arqa believed that this "un-understanding"—that is, the refusal to try to understand—in queer spaces has led to what he called "perceptions by headlines" or the perceptions informed by Islamophobic media representations of Muslims. Lyron similarly articulated that Islamophobic assumptions were closely linked to post 9/11 perceptions of Muslims: "before 911 nobody knew what a Muslim was right? Now everybody knows what a Muslim is," he said, "a Muslim is a terrorist!"

Such Islamophobic perceptions have been consequential for LGBTQ Muslims in mainstream queer spaces. Mina, a thirty-year-old pansexual cisgender woman involved in various QTMOs, explained this to me. Mina is strong-minded, highly educated, and compassionate. As a successful queer woman of colour and an exceptional leader, she is a role model to those around her. I am indebted to Mina, both for having been a "gatekeeper" in this project, and for having treated me as a colleague and a friend. Mina told me that assumptions are consistently made about queer and trans Muslims: "there are assumptions about our families, about our own feelings, about ourselves. People assume that they know when they don't." Such assumptions have led to interactions like the one described by Jama below:

> I have had white gay men tell me 'aren't you afraid that god will send you to hell? Doesn't the *Quran* say that?' And I'm like, 'have you read the Quran?' And they are like 'of course not!' and then I say 'then what are you talking about?' [Laughs]. But there are these deep-seeded understandings of what Islam says about our lives that people have taken up and continue to take up and continue to perpetuate unto our bodies.

Assumptions have also led to exclusionary practices. These have ranged from slurs or altercations to the exclusion of Muslims from executive positions in mainstream queer organizations.

Yet, QTMO leaders also reminded me that many Muslim organizations fail to respect the diversity of Islamic practices. Whether this was reflected across different Muslim sects, the degree of one's religiosity, or one's cultural affiliation to Islam, these leaders believed that many mainstream Muslim groups were too rigid in their categorization of Islamic ideas and practices. As such, they were equally critical of both Islamophobia in mainstream queer spaces and the inflexibility of Islamic doctrine in mainstream Muslim spaces.

Many Islamophobic assumptions perpetuated in queer spaces are often linked to racism. Arqa reminded me that this is not a new phenomenon: "there's always been a subtle racism," he said. In general, older interviewees recounted that mainstream queer organizations have been excluding LGBTQ Muslims on the basis of racism and Islamophobia for at least thirty years. For instance, Andweli, a forty-seven-year-old gay Tanzanian cigender Muslim man, described the mainstream queer community as excluding "brown and black bodies" since, at least, the 1990s.

I met Andweli in a suburban dessert café on a national holiday. Surrounded by the clamour of what seemed to be the neighbourhood's entire high school demographic, we talked at length about Toronto's QTMOs in the last three decades. Here are some of the examples of racism that Andweli recounted:

> I remember my friends and I in university walking into a store on Church Street with a backpack and either being told that they were not welcome in a retail stores, or being followed around the stores, or having our backpacks searched. That was a pretty common. I remember going to Second Cup [coffee shop] at Church and Wellesley, which was kind of a landmark, ordering a coffee and being told to go back to my country. And that was a very common occurrence. There wasn't a lot of places for brown and black people on Church Street to be get together in a social setting. You can imagine what that is like for someone who's young and coming out and feeling like you don't belong there and feel like you've been kicked out of a community that's meant to

be there for you. Those experiences were very jarring in my first years of coming out.

Jama had similar but more recent stories about racism in the queer community. He is critical of mainstream queer organizations in Toronto and believes that mainstreaming is futile for LGBTQ Muslims. He remarked:

> Doesn't the census say that 51% of Toronto's population is made up of people of color or racialized people? And yet our queer spaces in the city are overwhelmingly white. I know the majority people in my life are queer folks of colour. So why aren't they in these spaces? Often it's because they've been made to feel unwelcome. And so we go elsewhere and create spaces outside of the village.

Although Jama opposes the racism that occurs in mainstream queer organizations, he does not believe that it *only* transpires in such spaces. In fact, he told me that "some of [his] first experiences of anti-blackness or racism were from south Asians and Arab Muslims, in places like the mosque, or places that [his] family would gather." Still, this outspoken leader was adamant about the hostility directed at LGBTQ Muslims in mainstream queer spaces:

> Sometimes I think that [queer organizations] do more than just fail at upholding safety for our community. Sometimes I think it's a very intentional kind of violence against LGBTQ Muslims. For many of us, the Church and Wellesley community isn't the place where we feel safe to come out as a Muslim.

Mina shared the following example of the lack of safety in queer spaces: "Some of our members go to queer spaces wearing hats instead of their *hijabs* because they feel safer. It's pretty bad. I don't think non-Muslim queer folks recognize how bad queer-Muslims have it in queer spaces." Yet, like Jama, Mina framed racism as a broader issue that occurs in both mainstream Muslim and queer organizations. Specifically, Mina believed that the privileging of 'whiteness' "is very toxic and so hard to challenge" precisely because of its widespread

prevalence. The relationship of whiteness to other racial categories, including its embodiment, invisibility, and related privilege, came up multiple times during my conversations with leaders.

Anwar, the 21 year-old fashionista, explained that mainstream queer spaces were simply "really white." Out of the many examples he provided, I found the reactions he had received from white gay men toward his body hair particularly striking:

> People are really racist and will say a thing like '[body hair] is disgusting' without realizing how racialized it is. I went to a queer space recently, and one of the white guys there was talking about how he thinks hair is so dirty. And I was like 'I have worked so hard to love myself and this is so disrespectful.' So do I want to expose myself to these micro aggressions?

Anwar also critiqued the sexism and racism perpetuated in his own Muslim community. He thought that, "across the board, the Isma'ili community is too model minority and palliating to straightness and whiteness." He said, for instance, that some would prefer to see themselves as "global citizens" rather than members of a racialized group, or that some women would not address their experiences of sexism within the community: "It's really sad," he told me, "we have a community with so many brown people, and especially brown women, and we are basically expected to ignore intersectionality and our experiences of racism and sexism."

The statements outlined above show that in creating safe environments, QTMOs also challenge mainstream groups' failure to uphold safety for LGBTQ Muslims. Organizers believed that LGBTQ Muslims not only have to 'come out' as being queer or trans to Muslim communities, but that they also have to 'come out' as being Muslim to queer communities. Yet, rather than to create an identity conflict, accepted mainstream ideas and practices create an isolation effect, and cause LGBTQ Muslims to, as Jama once put it, "suffer in siloes."

Recall Jama's statement that LGBTQ Muslims create their own spaces because "they've been made to feel unwelcome." Similarly, Carter emphatically stated the following: "I am all about

the echo chamber! Because there is so much hatred from the mainstream, we need the echo chamber to wrap us up so that we can actually move forward together in love and support." Carter is sassy. He does not hold back on his opinions and will 'tell it like it is.' What Carter is referring to by evoking the "echo chamber" is the notion that QTMOs would rather reverberate their own principals of togetherness and inclusivity than to endure the sexist, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic, and racist exclusionary practices that come from the mainstream. What then do these forms of togetherness and inclusivity look like and who are the constituents that collectively make up these spaces?

Collective Selves

> *I wait patiently for Juma to begin. As always, I am exceptionally early and overly anxious. Lyron walks through the door, ever outstanding. He smiles at me: "I'm glad you came!" I am immediately relieved. Congregants are trickling in. A fresh, steaming, pot of tea and accompanying teacups are brought to the center of the slowly forming circle. Chairs are placed to one side of the room in order to allow accessibility for those who cannot sit on the floor. There are about thirty of us now. We vary in gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, and ability. It doesn't seem to matter. I strike up a conversation with a 20-something next to me. He tells me he stays away from mainstream Muslim groups: "it's not about the LGBTQ stuff," he says, "I just have a community here, you know?" Lyron kicks of the session with a land acknowledgment and some ground rules. We are reminded that this is a judgment-free zone: "if you have a problem with someone's appearance or behaviour," the respected Imam says, "we refer you to the Quranic injunction to lower your gaze." Everyone belongs and that much is clear. Printed prayers are passed around so that everyone can follow and read along. This week's Khateeb is a black woman in her 40s-50s. She delivers a light-hearted and cheerful sermon. We all take turns introducing ourselves and disclose our preferred gender pronouns. We are invited to send Salawats—for our families, our friends, for humanity. And we pray. Together we pray.*

Thus far, we have seen that QTMOS create safe spaces that oppose sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and racism. Yet, rather than categorize each form of oppression as occurring in a particular mainstream, QTMO leaders take a holistic approach to marginalization.

This approach, in turn, confronts the false dichotomy between religion and gender/sexual liberation; instead, it calls attention to the limitations imposed by mainstream spaces for LGBTQ Muslims to simply be their 'true' selves. In this section I address the related question of what makes such 'selves' collective. I show that by resisting the practices of marginalization outlined above, QTMOs formulate oppositional collective identities. As previous studies of safe spaces have shown (Poletta, 1999), such identities do not emerge out of thin air, but are made. In this case, QTMOs, as safe spaces, serve as incubators for QTMuslim collective identity formation.

Throughout this text, LGBTQ Muslim collective identity is already intuitively present. One needs only to revisit the quotes above and below to trace the number of times that interviewees referred to LGBTQ Muslims by using a collective "we." But what are the specific qualities that characterize this 'we' as a collective group of people? In other words, what do QTMO constituents share? I argue that the collectivist features emerging from QTMOs are strengthened by (1) their opposition to what they do *not* represent and, simultaneously, (2) their endorsement of the diversity of thought and membership that they *do* represent. That is, QTMOs foster oppositional identities that are antithetical to what I have called 'mainstream'isms' (e.g. sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamaphobia, and racism) and, in doing so, they cultivate LGBTQ Muslim collective identities that are intersectional.

By providing spaces that are 'safe' from prejudice and discrimination, QTMOs legitimate previously erased lived experiences. Put differently, having a space to cultivate hitherto ignored lived experiences makes such experiences meaningful and impactful. This is, for instance, clear in Jama's following statement about QTMOs:

> I think there's always something really beautiful about having specific spaces for your communities. I love the fact that we have our own space, free from the misunderstandings of our lives or our experiences. There's something really beautiful about that. In the midst of all of these

> violent systems that want to see us see disappear, we're carving out real joy for each other and for ourselves. And I want to see more of that you know?

The quote demonstrates two points. First, as described in the previous section, QTMOs are safe spaces that resist "violent systems" contributing to the erasure of LGBTQ Muslims. This gives QTMOs and their constituents a collective *oppositional* character. Second, in response to this erasure, QTMOs create spaces that are described by their leaders as beautiful and joyous. These spaces validate previously excluded lived experiences that can be shared by LGBTQ Muslims as collective experiences, regardless of their idiosyncrasies.

Surely, these organizations do not wish to perpetuate the same mainstream'isms of which they are so critical. As such, the collective identities cultivated in QTMOs are substantiated by their intersectionality. Coming back to the opening memo, one may recall that Lyron opened the *Juma* (Friday prayer) session with an Indigenous land acknowledgment and ground rules about mutual respect, that organizers set up chairs to accommodate different abilities, or that congregants declared their preferred pronouns to acknowledge different gender identities. Lyron accordingly described his organization as a place that was "entrenched in sexual and gender justice," that promoted "equality for all people," where "everybody could give a sermon and everybody could lead prayer." He emphasized the "egalitarian structure" and "the gender equal part." But he also described the organization as "a place that celebrated Muslim diversity." These ideas and practices, I argue, not only allow LGBTQ Muslims to come together and 'be themselves,' they also strengthen their collective identities through pluralism and intersectionality.

Although constituents already share the experience of being LGBTQ and Muslim, the heterogeneity of their queer, trans, and Muslim expressions further accentuates their group identity. Hence, in telling me that he, "yearn[s] for a community space where [he] can be brown, queer, and Isma'ili, and just be [himself]," Anwar, like others, means to convey both a collective

sense of 'community space' for LGBTQ Muslims, and a multidimensionality that reflects his individual brown-ness, Ismai'li-ness, queer-ness, and (although not directly evident in this quote) non-binary-ness.

As Muneer explained, QTMOs "intentionally create spaces for people who want to connect with their Muslim culture or rituals without having to be defensive about different *layers* of their identity" (emphasis mine). As Kara, a 30-something-year-old black queer cisgender woman, differently said, these organizations provide spaces from which to "honour folks as they are." Hence, through QTMO membership, being oneself becomes more than an amalgam of one's Muslim and sexual identity: it becomes an active resistance against mainstream ideas and practices that limit the parameters of LGBTQ Muslim identity, and simultaneously, an expression of this identity as collectively multidimensional and intersectional.

While QTMO leaders acknowledged that some members *do* experience psychological identity conflict, they simultaneously resisted the notion that identities need to 'fit a box,' particularly because the mainstream has pushed them to do so. Tavi described this 'boxing' of one's identity as a feeling of "constantly ripping yourself apart." He explained that QTMOs provide spaces in which people can simply be without any associated commitments:

> There is something nice about allowing people to come in and feel like they don't have to make that choice of like 'I don't need to now participate in pride' or 'I don't need to go back to my mosque and tow the line' and 'I can create sort of my own resistance in pockets.' Maybe they don't have to be big political gestures or statements. Being myself can be an act of resistance.

Tavi's statement is demonstrative that the act of 'being oneself' is one of an interactive resistance rather than an individual or psychological one. That is, Tavi is not referring to the reconciliation of conflicting identities but to an active resistance toward external structures that create pressures to execute one's identity within mainstream institutions. That is not say that

Tavi denied the importance of psychological identity reconciliation for some LGBTQ Muslims. While QTMOs were prepared to support those who experienced identity conflict, they challenged the idea that barriers were always psychologically instituted.

Therefore, in promoting multidimensional and intersectional LGBTQ Muslim identities, QTMOs are contesting mainstream identity politics. More specifically, they are resisting the identity-based accountability that is placed on queer and trans Muslims in mainstream communities and organizations (see Sumerau, 2015 for a similar finding in the Christian context) Roxanna, a thirty-something-year-old queer Muslim and Middle Eastern woman, articulated this as the pressure to 'out' oneself in very specific and visible ways. We met at 9 a.m. on a warm summer morning in a bright an airy conference room, where we discussed mainstreaming and identity politics over a cup of coffee. Roxanna said:

> Many mainstream spaces seem to demand or require that, in order to be validated in my queer *and* Muslim identity, I have to be out and that my outness has to look a very particular way. So that outness means your face has to be visible all of the time, you have to be living this bold life where everybody knows your name and you're connected to the community in very visible ways.

This statement shows that many LGBTQ Muslims see the expectation of being "visible all the time" as a forced "outing" that is unnecessary. In response to this pressure of visibility, Roxanna and two other interviewees, Gia and Haylie, have launched a campaign called "I Am Enough." The campaign contests the notion that LGBTQ Muslims need to lay claim to any particular version of 'LGBTQ Muslim.' Here is how Haylie described the campaign:

> The tagline came out through our various conversations and Gia pitched this idea that 'I am enough.' I am Muslim enough; I am queer enough. Whatever your Muslim or LGBTQ identity is, it is sufficient. It allows us to meet people where they're at. You can exist in different ways,

> and we're all worthy of affirmation and celebration. So it's about recognizing their wholeness, not just fragmented or parts of their identity, but their wholeness.

I asked Gia, a Muslim newcomer who is "forty—no, thirty-nine-and-a-half" years of age, to explain her thoughts about the campaign. Gia is cool, relaxed, and eloquent. Here was her response:

> Being Muslim, queer, or trans can mean so many different things to different people. For me I want to say that I identify as these things but not explain it. I am enough. We are always looking for validation, whether it's from ourselves, or the people we love or the people close to us. That endless quest for each one of us is different. So one approach was to tell people to treat us better. But this approach is different, it's self-validation, it's pride.

Again, it isn't that Gia is dismissing identity conflict but that she is approaching it from the perspective of being externally imposed. The self-validation that she is referring to evokes both the collective sense of being LGBTQ Muslim and the individual sense of being LGBTQ Muslim according to oneself. The 'I am Enough' campaign exemplifies QTMOs' efforts to destabilize mainstream identity categories while simultaneously cultivating LGBTQ Muslim collectives. Rather than to integrate into mainstream LGBTQ or Muslim organizations, QTMOs challenge identity politics in the mainstream by focusing on the growth of their own groups as being "enough."

CONCLUSION

This chapter has served as a case study of collective identity formation in LGBTQ religious groups. I have drawn on twenty-four interviews and two years of ethnographic fieldwork with leaders of Queer Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) in Toronto, Canada. In doing so, I have followed an 'institutional' shift (Thumma and Gray, 2005) in the study of LGBTQ religious

identity (Coley, 2018, 2020; Fuist, 2016; Fuist et al., 2012; Wilcox, 2009). That is, rather than examine the reconciliation between conflicting religious and queer identity (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Mahaffy, 1996; Minwalla et al., 2005; Schnoor, 2006; Rodriguez and Ouellette 2000; Thumma, 1991), this chapter has looked at the relationship between LGBTQ religious people and mainstream institutions. I have argued that Thumma and Gray's (2005) twofold typology of 'gay religion' is useful for understanding collective identity formation: whether queer religious people reform existing religious institutions or follow what Thumma and Gray have called a 'sectarian impulse' is consequential for shaping their collective identities. Mainly, these actors must choose between gaining legitimacy in exchange for the cooptation of their collective identities or nurturing such identities without institutional support or resources.

This chapter has shown that Queer and Trans Religious Organizations (QTROs) generate powerful collective identities. This, in itself, is not surprising. Yet, I have argued that rather than creating "distinctly gay religious institutional forms" (Thumma and Gray, 2005, p. 164), or "putting gay before god" (Thumma, 2005, p.72), the identities created in QTROs can be multidimensional: they can cut across multiple experiences of marginalization, including gendered and racial ones (see for instance, Bates, 2005; Wilcox, 2005, 2009). In order to understand these nuances, I have broadened the analytical framework to examine (1) trans and non-binary group participation in addition to queer participation and (2) the relationship of queer and trans people to both the religious and queer mainstream.

One useful way of conceptualizing QTROs is to look at them as what social movements scholars have called "safe spaces[31]" (Evans and Boyte 1986; Fetner et al., 2012; Poletta, 1999; Poletta and Kretschmer, 2013). I have shown that Muslim QTROs, or QTMOs, can be thought of

[31] Another potentially useful way of looking at QTROs is through Foucualt's notion of "heterotopias" (Foucault, 1967) or spaces which are subversive and transformative because they are different from the mainstream.

as safe spaces that challenge hegemonic ideologies and produce oppositional collective identities (Fantasia and Hirsch, 1995; Groch 2001; Poletta, 1999). In particular, QTMOs are "prefigurative safe spaces" in their symmetrical associational ties and their imperative to distinguish themselves, their relationships, and their practices from the mainstream (Poletta, 1999). The QTMO leaders interviewed for this project explicitly look at their organizations as safe spaces, where LGBTQ Muslims can be free from the hostility of the mainstream and, instead, simply be their 'true' selves. Such selves, I have shown, collectively resist 'violent systems' that they perceive as being perpetuated from the queer and religious mainstream. In this sense, they are oppositional: QTMO members are *not* sexist, homophobic, transphobic, Islamaphobic, or racist. Accordingly, their collective identities are multidimensional and intersectional: while QTMO members are bound by the experience of being both LGBTQ and Muslim, it is their boundless expressions of LGBTQ Muslim identity that strengthen its collective character.

Conclusion and Discussion

Summary of Main Findings

At its core, this dissertation has been about QTMuslims and the social world around them. I have argued that shifting the scope of inquiry away from LGBTQ religious identity conflict and reconciliation is analytically fruitful. In making this shift, my three standalone chapters have respectively demonstrated that (1) religious belief does not necessarily prevent LGBTQ acceptance, although religious organizations *can* create barriers for rainbow religious people; (2) mainstream queer organizations' relationship to LGBTQ religious individuals can be contentious in ways that reflect larger structural inequalities impacting marginalized LGBTQ groups overall; and (3) queer and trans people of faith collectively resist the exclusionary practices that they encounter in mainstream queer and religious organizations.

In Chapter 1, I showed that broadening the criteria through which to measure both religion and acceptance yields fundamentally different results than those found in previous social scientific research. Quantitative studies with heterosexual individuals (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill 2005; Hooghe et al., 2010; Olson et al., 2006) have consistently found a correlation between religiosity/religious belief and homonegative attitudes. Similarly, qualitative interviews with LGBTQ religious people themselves (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2010; Siraj, 2006; Yip, 2004, 2008) have linked instances of exclusion from faith-based communities to the interpretation of religious texts. Using a wide set of measures—reflecting both attitudes and actions—to capture ideal types of both 'acceptance' and 'non-acceptance,' I found consequential variance in mainstream Muslim leaders' acceptance levels toward QTMuslims.

Moreover, measuring 'religion' as it related to Muslim leaders' interpretations of scriptures, their personal beliefs, and their socio-cultural positions showed that Islam may be used to justify

both acceptance and non-acceptance. Results additionally showed than non-religious or 'meta-religious' factors may also prevent the acceptance of QTMuslims from Muslim mainstream groups. Hence, while the chapter has demonstrated that singular measures of religion cannot explain LGBTQ acceptance, I have advocated for more nuanced explanations concerning QTMuslims' encounters with mainstream Muslim organizations.

In Chapter 2 I further expanded on QTMuslims' social experiences and analyzed their relationship to the queer mainstream. This chapter has contributed to existing critiques of diversity policies and practices (Ahmed, 2012; Alexander, 2005; Banjerri, 2000; Bell and Hartmann, 2007; Dua, 2009; Hunter, 2009; Puwar 2004; Ralston, 1998) to show that the white and secular normative identities around which diversity discourses are based prevent them from including intersectional identities. Drawing on interviews with leaders of mainstream queer organizations and triangulating the findings with archival data, content analysis, and interviews with QTMuslims themselves, I found that the queer mainstream's diversity initiatives failed to adequately include QTMuslims.

The results presented in Chapter 2 pointed to two limitations of diversity policies and practices: first mainstream organizations adhered to a model of inclusion that supported diverse communities on the basis of their sexual identities, rather than on their racial or religious ones. Because diversity initiatives were predicated on the assumption that all sexual minorities were the same and therefore deserved to be included into queer spaces, they failed to account for the specific needs of non-white and non-secular minorities. Such assumptions were also intertwined with the idea that LGBTQ identities were irreconcilable with religious ones.

Second, diversity mandates tended to obscure the structural inequalities embedded in mainstream queer organizations: the positive language of diversity discourse seemed to conceal

institutional barriers (such as inequitable space-use policies, hiring practices, or funding models) impacting minority groups like QTMuslims. In addition to contributing to the diversity and inclusion literature, Chapter 2 has shown that QTMuslims' relationship to the queer mainstream is complicated and they face barriers within such organizations.

Finally, in Chapter 3, I focused more closely on how QTMuslims navigate institutional barriers. I showed that QTMuslims respond to mainstream exclusion by creating their own sectarian groups. Situating QTMuslim group engagement within social movements literature, I argued that Queer and Trans Muslim Organizations (QTMOs) can be thought of as 'safe spaces' or 'free spaces' (Evans and Boyte 1986; Polletta 1999). As safe spaces, QTMOs help QTMuslims cultivate strong collective oppositional identities, which resist the sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and racism perpetuated in mainstream Muslim and queer organizations. In turn, QTMOs encourage collective identities that are intersectional rather than dichotomous.

Research Implications

The overarching contribution of the dissertation has been to reframe QTMuslim identities in the context of their institutional encounters. That is, while most of the previous literature has focused on LGBTQ religious individuals' presumed psychological dissonance, my dissertation shifted the focus in order to examine how QTMuslims interact with mainstream Muslim and queer groups and vice versa. My case study has shown that rather than reflecting a dualism between Islam and sexual/gender liberation, QTMuslim identities are multidimensional and complex. As such, analyzing their encounters with social structures through intersectional frameworks provides a fuller picture of their experiences. Not only should QTMuslim experiences account

for the analytical categories of [at least] race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality, gender, and religion, but as Collins and Bilge (2016) have argued, intersectional analyses of these categories ought to examine how they gain meaning from power relations.

These findings have practical implications for both QTMOs and mainstream groups. Leaders of both Muslim and queer groups can reflect on the ways that their organizational structures, policies, and practices may harm QTMuslims. Chapter 1 showed that leaders of Muslim organizations perceived changing the long-established procedures that excluded QTMuslims as being an administrative "headache." Other leaders avoided "policing" members' decisions to sit in the men's or women's section, but nonetheless practiced segregated seating. Others still, believed that their organizations required the presence of an authoritative Islamic voice to convince constituents of the compatibility of QTMuslim identity.

Therefore, rather than change their religious beliefs or the religiosity of their members then, mainstream Muslim leaders can implement practical solutions—such as changing their organizational procedures, authorizing mixed gender seating, or inviting LGBTQ-accepting Islamic scholars to speak at their events—to include QTMuslims. Equally, mainstream queer organizations can include QTMuslims by changing their funding models, hiring practices, and space-use policies.

In Chapter 2, I showed that the secularism embedded in these organizations' funding structures and space-use policies can exclude QTMuslim in fundamental ways. Moreover, while racialized LGBTQ groups like QTMuslims may be included in mainstream spaces to fulfill diversity mandates, they are often lacking in representation in positions of power and decision making. This again, provides a clear roadmap for queer organizations to hire QTMuslims on their boards of directors or senior administrative positions.

Overall, both Muslim and queer mainstream organizations will benefit from accounting for the intersectional character of QTMuslims identities. This means recognizing that QTMuslim experiences are impacted as much by race, class, and ability as they are by sexuality, gender, and religion. One useful starting point would be for mainstream groups to speak to and partner with QTMOs about how to create safe spaces for QTMuslims in ways that foster intersectionality.

The empirical findings of this dissertation can also be useful to QTMOs who wish to strategize for future mainstream interventions. Given the integration of mainstream leaders' perspectives, QTMO leaders can look to this research to objectively identify the institutional barriers that prevent mainstream organizations from including them. Moreover, my findings indicate that despite the current lack of full-scale inclusion, many mainstream leaders are keen and willing to include QTMuslims. This may foster dialogue between QTMO leaders and mainstream ones, who can collaborate to cultivate policies and practices that are equitable and oriented toward social justice goals.

Limitations

Several limitations should be addressed. First, given my use of purposeful sampling, the results of this research cannot be generalized. As I noted in Chapter 1, it is possible that less accepting Muslim leaders did not respond to my recruitment efforts. I attempted to mitigate this sampling bias by concealing the purpose of the study during the recruitment period. Nonetheless, leaders could have been hesitant to conduct an interview me for many reasons, such as my position as a university student or my Westernized manner of speaking. Even a simple google search will have generated information about my academic interests in gender and sexualities studies. Moreover, because Canada and Toronto are both locales in which pro-LGBTQ discourse and

rights are commonly and publicly practiced, leaders may have been hesitant to share unpopular anti-LGBTQ sentiments.

The same sampling biases could be applied to leaders of mainstream queer organizations. Mainstream queer leaders could have concealed or exaggerated their sentiments toward QTMuslims, particularly in a moment where privilege and whiteness are constant subjects of scrutiny in social justice organizations. Furthermore, it is important to remember that these leaders were the employees of the organizations about which they were asked to speak. It is therefore possible that their responses reflected attempts to safeguard their jobs. Again, I attempted to reduce this bias by assuring interviewees that their identities would be kept confidential, but my efforts may have been unsuccessful.

My interviews with QTMO leaders were biased in the sense that they did not reflect the sentiments or positions of all QTMuslims. For one thing, as Chapter 3 showed, QTMO membership is itself associated with oppositional collective identity building. Thus, the answer to my research questions may have differed if I interviewed non-QTMO members. Moreover, QTMO members may have given responses that differed from QTMO leaders. Yet, this bias is weakened by the fact that most leaders were also members at some point, by the non-hierarchical structures of QTMOs, and by the reiteration of members' sentiments during informal conversations and participant observation.

Ideally, I would have been able to recruit an exact number of interviewees from each organization and would have captured an equal number of organization 'types' (e.g. in terms of hierarchical structures, sizes, and functions). My mainstream Muslim sample would have also benefited from more even distributions of religious sects.

My archival research was also limited in several ways. As mentioned in the methods chapter, LGBTQ archives often have implicit biases. Because queer and trans rights have only been acquired in recent history, LGBTQ archives have not formally existed for long periods of time and many archival records have historically been compromised by police raids or governmental interventions. Moreover, community archives have fewer formal oversights, regulations, and archive management schedules. This means that their archival records are less consistently organized than non-community archives.

My own lack of expertise in doing archival research also contributed to some limitations. I had little knowledge of information management, including the proficiency to read through finding aids and file listings. Finally, the unexpected arrival of COVID-19 abruptly put an end to my archival research. I had originally intended to study the archival materials of three additional organizations and to look at more records of the organizations that I had already surveyed.

New Directions in Future Research

Culture, Institutions, and Social Movements

One exciting area of future research potentially coming out of this dissertation is the exploration of QTMuslims' encounters with and resistance to inequality within political sociology and social movements scholarship. A small number of sociologists have already begun to place LGBTQ religious activity in the context of activism (Buzzell, 2001; Coley, 2018; Kane, 2013). This research has not only provided new analytical frameworks from which to examine rainbow religious group engagement but has also contributed to existing interventions in the study of social movements.

Most notably, these new directions pose a challenge to Political Process Theories[32] (PPTs), which have been critiqued for ignoring culture and identity in social movements and for their explicit focus on States as targets of change (Armstrong and Berstein, 2008; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Jasper and Goodwin 1999; Johnston and Klandermans, 1995; Melucci, 1980, 1995; Poletta, 2008).

Given PPTs' explicit focus on collective action within the political arena (McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978; McAdam et al., 2001), LGBTQ religious activity has typically been examined outside of social movements scholarship. More generally, political sociology has tended to separate religious activity from the political sphere, often assuming that such activity is apolitical (see critiques in Barkun, 1997; Buzzell, 2001). Deviating from this trend, research on rainbow religious activism has highlighted the role of culture and identity in social change efforts (Buzzell, 2001; Coley, 2018; Kane, 2013) and has required a "multi-institutional approach[33]" to social movements analysis (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008).

These novel studies have demonstrated that rainbow religious individuals engage in protest in non-governmental religious institutions, challenging and changing their culturally accepted norms (Buzzel, 2001). Importantly, they have shown that 'protest' need not resemble the violent

[32] Political Process Theories (PPTs) have been the most widely used and accepted theories of social movements analysis. Like the earlier Resource Mobilization Theories (RMTs) on which they have been built, they have deployed structural, rationalistic and goal-driven explanations of social movements. As opposed to classical collective behaviour theories (Smelser, 1962), which were focused on the psychological causes of social movements, RMTs argued that movements are resource dependent and that actors' make rational calculations in engaging in them (Gamson, 1975; McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Building on this, PPTs have traced social movements from birth until death and look at the ways that they respond to external political processes (opportunities, mobilizing structures, and collective active frames) within the polity (McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978; McAdam et al., 2001).

[33] Armstrong and Bernstein's (2008) multi-institutional approach has broadened the scope of social movements to analyze challenges to authority in both State and non-State institutions. This model has advanced a view of society as being made up of multiple institutions with competing and 'distinct logics.' Accordingly, social movement actors' goals and strategies are expected to vary depending on the institutions being targeted. Moreover, this model sees culture as being "constitutive of structures" (Armstrong and Bernstein's, 2008, p. 83), meaning that social movement actors may seek both structural and cultural changes and may often do so in interconnected ways.

and law-breaking repertoires of contention that are characteristic of PPT frameworks. For instance, Coley's (2018) ethnographic research with Christian Queer and Trans Religious Organizations (QTROs) on college campuses has shown that LGBTQ religious group activism is wide-ranging and context dependent. Coley's book persuasively linked the varying "group ethos" of three different QTROs to their mobilizing outcomes[34]. While one of three groups in the study used "confrontational forms of collective action" (Coley, 2018, p. 71), such as rallies or sit-ins, to achieve structural/policy changes, the others engaged in non-political activity, such as conducting awareness workshops or participating in plays and films, to impact long lasting cultural changes, which are "often understood as unintended consequences of activism" (p.94).

Katzenstein (1998) has defined 'protest' as "context specific," "nonnormative behavior," which "disrupts existing understandings, and challenges established roles" (p.8). In this sense, LGBTQ religious individuals can protest the established norms, roles, and values of multiple institutions and society at large. In what ways do QTMOs challenge cultural norms? As Kane (2013) has argued, the very existence of rainbow religious organizations contests "widely held cultural beliefs that same-sex sexuality and religiosity are incompatible" (p.153). Indeed, through their very proliferation—but also in much more active ways (see below)—QTMOs challenge the cultural expectations that QTMuslims live impossibly dualistic lives in which their religious and sexual/gender identities are fundamentally at odds.

My own ethnography has shown that QTMOs provide spaces through which to encounter positive and pluralistic representations of Islam. In chapter 3, I outlined, for instance, Lyron's (the well-respected and passionate Imam in his fifties) insistence that "Islam is not a monolith"

[34] In Coley's (2018) study, groups with a 'direct action ethos' carried out the goal of producing policy/structural changes, groups with a 'educational ethos' were engaged in awareness-raising, and those with a 'solidarity ethos' created safe spaces for LGBTQ groups. Coley (2018) has argued that the members of each of these three groups engage in activism and that such activism varies on the basis of the group ethos.

or Muneer's (the 30 something-year-old queer brown multitasker) promotion of Islam as being "peaceful." This idea of actively promoting a multifaceted and gentle Islam was repeated to me by many interviewees and reinforced in my observations.

Broadly, such cultural challenges respond to the urgency of resisting Islamophobia in the Canadian context, which is, at worst, exemplified by the dramatic rise of hate crimes against Muslims (Perdeaux and Freeze, 2017), the Quebec Mosque shooting (Austen and Smith, 2017), and the murder of several Muslim Queer men in Toronto's gay village (Moon, 2018). Moreover, in opposing cultural understandings of Islam as being antithetical to gender/sexual liberation (see critiques in Abraham 2009; Awwad 2010; El-Tayeb 2012; Haritaworn 2010), QTMOs challenge Orientalist representations. Such representations have been argued to have far-reaching consequences, such as mobilizing human rights discourse as a political strategy of intervention and surveillance on Middle Eastern/Muslim bodies (Grewal, 2005; Puar, 2007, Razack 2008).

More specifically, accepting that culture is "constitutive of structures" (Armstrong and Bernstein, p. 83) allows us to analyze the ways that QTMOs challenge both mainstream queer and Muslim groups' institutional and cultural practices. In Chapter 1, for instance, I showed that QTMO leaders critiqued the 'moderate acceptance' of some mainstream Muslim organizations. These leaders demanded more of moderately accepting organizations, taking them to task for preventing QTMuslims from being their 'whole selves.' Sarni (fifty-something-year-old South Asian leader of an Isma'ili group) described such organizations as using "professionally disguised excuses" for not fully accepting QTMuslims. Tavi (South Asian educator and leader in his mid-thirties) said that allowing QTMuslims to frequent Muslim spaces without publicly acknowledging their queer/trans identities could be equated to "an open secret" or an "erasure" of their experiences. In this sense, QTMO leaders opposed institutionally embedded cultural

norms that limited QTMuslim expressions within mainstream Muslim groups.

Hence, QTMO leaders were attuned to the ways in which institutional practices were rooted in cultural assumptions. As I outlined in Chapter 2, these leaders challenged mainstream queer organizations' assumption that some static or normative queer or trans identity exists. Disrupting the assumed [white and secular] universality of queer identity in this way is not only consequential for QTMuslims, but also has implication for all non-normative LGBTQ groups. While QTMO leaders advocated for QTMuslims' specific needs and criticized mainstream queer organizations for failing to accommodate them on the basis of sameness, they also called attention to the ways that 'sameness' models excluded queer and trans minority communities as a whole. By contrast, Chapter 3 showed that within their own groups, QTMOs promoted practices that accounted for multidimensional QTMuslim identities, especially as they cut across experiences of race and ethnicity.

Moreover, while QTMOs were attentive to the complexity of QTMuslim experiences, they more generally promoted social justice ideologies that either directly or indirectly impacted their own organizations, mainstream organizations, various other social movement organizations, and general society. The promotion of such ideologies was directly observable through my participant observation, content analysis, and interviews. On their brochures and websites, QTMOs promoted "pluralism," "social justice," "inclusivity," and "accessibility." They emphasized the acceptance of all groups "regardless" of their various social positions (including those informed by religion, gender, and sexuality, but also extending to race, class, disability, and other identity categories).

At the events that I attended, QTMOs not only denounced social injustice of all kinds (e.g. gender, racial, ethnic, environmental, classist), but they also implemented practices (e.g. creating

accessible spaces, incorporating Indigenous land acknowledgements or smudge ceremonies, asking members to declare preferred gender pronouns) that reinforced intersectional and equitable models of inclusion. I described some of these practices in the memo from Chapter 3, where Lyron's organization conducted a social justice oriented *Juma* (Friday prayer) session.

Hence, QTMOs challenge the harmful cultural norms embedded in mainstream organizations and in larger society. These groups refute simplistic assumptions about QTMuslim identities and resist the mainstream inclusion models on which such assumptions were built. In turn, they develop organizational practices that accommodate the intersectional experiences of their members and promote larger social justice ideologies and equitable inclusion models.

Oppositional Consciousness

Rather than thinking of QTMuslims as individuals who necessarily experience identity conflict, I have shown that they constitute a social group experiencing exclusion from mainstream Muslim and queer organizations. The QTMO leaders with whom I conducted interviews not only identified the various forms of marginalization that they experienced in the mainstream, but they also opposed them. More specifically, in chapter 3 I showed that QTMOs help their members develop strong oppositional collective identities.

Future studies can look at the ways in which QTMOs foster what Mansbridge and Morris (2001) call 'oppositional consciousness,' which refers to a "constellation of incentives… composed of principles, ideas, and feelings" through which "historically subordinated groups" are encouraged to participate in social movements (p.1). Drawing on basic requirements of oppositional consciousness, it is clear that QTMuslims (1) identify as being part of an unjustly subordinated group, (2) recognize that their group faces injustice; (3) oppose the injustices faced

by their group; and (4) view the group as having a shared interest in minimizing/ending the injustice (Mansbridge and Morris, 2001).

Yet, it isn't that every QTMuslim necessarily shares these characteristics, but that oppositional consciousness is produced through QTMO membership. In chapter 3, I showed that QTMOs were seen by their leaders as being safe spaces or "containers" where QTMuslims could be their "whole selves." Such spaces were consistently described as alternatives to the mainstream queer and Muslim institutions that contributed to the marginalization of QTMuslims. In this sense, QTMOs help their member *create* an oppositional consciousness from which to resist mainstream marginalization.

More specifically, by opposing what I have called the "mainstream'isms" or what Stockdill (2001) has called the "intracommunity isms" embedded in queer and Muslim institutions, QTMOs foster a "multidimensional oppositional consciousness" (Stockdill, 2001). Rather than focusing on a single form of inequality impacting QTMuslims, the QTMOs in this study deployed a multi-issue critique of the sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and racism that they perceived as occurring in mainstream organizations. Yet, in doing so, they resisted confining any given 'ism to a particular mainstream group and therefore avoided re-ascribing dichotomous LGBTQ and religious experiences. They neither attributed homophobia/transphobia to Islam nor did they see racism as being restricted to the queer mainstream. Rather, they opposed marginalization through an intersectional framework and simultaneously challenged it within multiple institutions.

As Mansbridge and Morris (2001) have shown, developing an oppositional consciousness can potentially lead to collective action. While oppositional consciousness does not cause collective action *per se*, those who engage in collective action have generally developed an oppositional

consciousness. More research is needed to examine the link between QTMO oppositional consciousness and collective action. This includes systemic analyses of opportunities and resources available to various QTMOs. Nonetheless, I have found evidence to suggest that QTMO members do act on behalf for their groups.

Collective Action

Like Coley (2018), who argued that "there is more than one way to be an activist" (p. 4), I have found that different QTMOs engage in various types of activism. Although all QTMOs insist on maintaining their own sectarian organizations, some still participate in "intracommunity action" (Stockdill, 2001) in order to create QTMuslim visibility in the mainstream. This type of collective action should not be mistaken as amalgamating QTMOs into the mainstream, but rather as demanding the right of QTMuslims to exist in otherwise excluded arenas. Out of the six organizations in the ethnography, four engaged in explicit forms of intracommunity action while the other two challenged cultural norms from within their own groups. And again, out of the four groups organizing within the mainstream, two could be categorized as engaging in more conventional 'contentious' forms of collective action.

Some QTMOs collectively attended mainstream Muslim organizations so as to 'take up space' therein. Others publicly pressured Muslim groups to create inclusive spaces for QTMuslims by hosting LGBTQ events, changing administrative forms to include same-sex common law partners, or performing gay marriage ceremonies. In some of these instances, QTMOs have successfully changed mainstream practices and policies and, in others, they have been unsuccessful. Thus, while QTMOs have been intent on keeping their own sectarian groups, they have nonetheless advocated for QTMuslims' 'right to exist' in mainstream Muslim spaces.

Similarly, QTMOs promoted QTMuslim inclusion in mainstream queer organizations by participating in mainstream queer events or by renting spaces from mainstream groups for QTMO events. This strategy was often referred to as "outreach activism." Yet, as Chapter 2 showed, mainstream queer organizations were not always open to hosting QTMuslim events. QTMO leaders recounted experiencing "an enormous backlash" when challenging these groups, often equating their experiences to "talking to a brick wall." Hence, these examples of "outreach activism" can be thought of as forms institutional protest (Buzzell, 2001; Coley, 2018; Kane, 2013), which take place outside of the political arena (Armstrong 2002; Armstrong and Bernstein 2008) and are neither violent nor illegal (Katzenstein, 1998).

Although some QTMOs had less of a purposeful contentious presence (or none at all) in mainstream groups, they nonetheless participated in awareness campaigns, facilitated training workshops, and hosted events to promote QTMuslim identities. Each of these required various forms of action, such as engaging in outreach (e.g. distributing flyers or contacting people via e-mail, phone, and social media) and publicly advocating on behalf of QTMOs (e.g. being spokespersons in awareness campaigns, speaking at events, writing blog posts, or signing petitions). Setting up chairs, cleaning up, or volunteering in some other physical capacity can also be conceived of as a form of action.

These findings show that while 'action' may not resemble the violence or contention typically depicted in PPTs, QTMuslims *do* collectively act on behalf of their groups as a means by which to facilitate social justice causes. Future research can examine the specific motivation for collection action or the relationship between the types of action and factors such as resources, opportunities, "group ethos" (Coley, 2018), and institutional "logics" (Armstrong, 2002; Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008).

Nonetheless, this chapter has further strengthened the overall contribution of the dissertation: I have argued that analytically shifting the focus of research from psychological conflict to group dynamics yields unrealized possibilities in the study of LGBTQ religious identity. I have empirically demonstrated that QTMuslims' experiences are largely determined by their institutional interactions. Given the complexity of queer and trans religious identities and experiences, sociologists will do well to design more comprehensive accounts of how such individuals encounter the social world around them.

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