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Queerness, Diasporic Engagement and Notions of Acceptance among First Generation Queer Migrants in London

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UCL
Migration Research Unit

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Queerness, Diasporic Engagement and Notions of Acceptance among First Generation Queer Migrants in London

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Supervised by Dr Richard Mole

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Abstract

This paper explores the experiences that self-defining queer migrants in London from India, China (including Hong Kong), Turkey and Russia have when engaging with individuals, groups and events associated with their diaspora, as well as with other groups comprised of people with whom they share an identity. These countries have been chosen as, out of 55 countries that do not criminalise same-sex relationships, but also do not offer any protection to the queer community (ILGA, 2019), they are the ones with the biggest migrant populations in the UK. Underpinning this project is prior research that suggests that queer migrants experience discrimination both from their diaspora due to their sexual and gender identities, and from 'mainstream' queer communities due to their identities as migrants (Petzen, 2004; Kuntsman, 2009; Mole, 2018). It uses semi-structured interviews to understand how and why queer migrants engage with their diaspora, whether their queer identities influence these engagements, and the extent to which they participate in 'queer diasporas' (Fortier, 2002). The dissertation emphasises the unique experiences of queer migrants and the challenges that they face engaging both with their diaspora and with queer communities, demonstrating that queer migrants often feel a sense of exclusion from and incompatibility with their diaspora. This thus offers a challenge to conventional understandings of diasporas that see diasporas as closely bonded, largely homogeneous communities. Despite this sense of exclusion, most are still able to find communities that they share commonalities with and are accepted by, largely due to London's diversity and its conceptualisation as a tolerant and accepting city. This means that their experiences are not simply those of isolation, but rather of creating and participating in alternative spaces and communities within diasporic, queer and other spaces in London.

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction……5

2. Literature Review……...7

2.1 Migration and Queerness……7

2.2 Diaspora and Queerness……..8

2.3 Queer Migration, Diaspora and the City……11

2.4 Countries of Origin, Legality and Tolerance……13

3. Methods and Participants……15

3.1 Methods……15

3.2 Participant Recruitment……16

3.3 Ethics and Positionality……17

3.4 Participants……...18

4. Results and Analysis……20

4.1 Diasporic Engagement……..20

4.2 Diasporic Disengagement and Queer Identities……22

4.3 (Il)liberal Diasporas……..26

4.4 Queer Diaspora?……...28

4.5 Queer Migration and the City……32

5. Conclusions……...36

Bibliography……38

Appendices……..43

Appendix 1: Original Dissertation Proposal……...43

Appendix 2: Research Diary……...48

Appendix 3: Cover Letter……50

Appendix 4: Consent Form……51

Appendix 5: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule……..52

Appendix 6: Excerpt from Interview with Katya (17/06/19)…..…….55

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, an academic interest has increasingly developed around the migration patterns of queer[1] migrants; that is, of migrants who identify as non-heterosexual or non-cisgender. Common themes in this literature include the reasons why queer people migrate (Gorman-Murray, 2009; Stella, Flynn and Gawlewicz, 2018); the inclusion or (more commonly) exclusion of queer people from certain migration policies (Binnie, 1997); the experiences of queer asylum seekers (Jansen, 2013; Held, 2015); feelings of home and belonging amongst queer migrants (Fortier, 2003), and queer migrants' participation, or lack thereof, in diasporic and queer communities in the destination country (Keogh, Dodds and Henderson, 2004; Petzen, 2004; Mole, 2018).

This dissertation relates predominantly to the final theme, exploring the ways in which queer migrants to London from four countries that offer no legal protections to queer people – India, China (including Hong Kong), Turkey and Russia – engage with people, organisations and events associated with their diaspora, and the extent to which this engagement is influenced by their queer identities. I also aim to understand whether queer migrants engage specifically with queer members of the diaspora, and how engagement with the diaspora, queer members of the diaspora, and the wider London community influences migrants' feelings of acceptance and belonging in London.

Gorman-Murray et al. (2008) suggest that being part of a marginalised community often increases an individual's need to belong to a social group, largely in order to mitigate the effects of marginalisation. Understanding queer migrants' social engagements and networks, particularly within diasporic and queer communities, can consequently provide insight into queer migrants' feelings of (non-)belonging, (dis)comfort, and acceptance, or lack thereof, in London. The core research questions are as follows:

- How do queer migrants' diasporic engagements challenge traditional understandings of diasporas?

[1] I have chosen to use 'queer,' as opposed to 'LGBT' ('lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender'), to reflect the Western origin of the LGBT framework (Manalansan, 2006; Luibhéid, 2008; see also Kopelson, 2014). In many non-Western contexts, sexual and gender identities are not always understood according to these labels (see Manalansan, 2003 for a detailed engagement with Filipino sexual and gender categories, for example). This was reflected by my interview participants: whilst some described their identities using 'LGBT' labels, others described their identities as 'queer' or by using terms that do not neatly fall into the 'LGBT' framework. Using 'queer' is therefore a way to avoid reproducing Western-dominated systems of knowledge production.

- To what extent do queer migrants' identities influence their engagement with the diaspora, and why?
- How useful is the concept of 'queer diaspora' (Eng, 1997; Fortier, 2002) for understanding queer migrants' social engagements?
- What role does London's conceptualisation as a diverse and tolerant city play in queer migrants' engagements in diasporic and queer communities?

The dissertation is divided into five parts: section two will provide an overview of the relevant literature; section three will present my methodology; section four will provide an analysis and discussion of my findings, and section five will offer some conclusions and ideas for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Migration and Queerness

It is important to understand what is meant by 'queer migration,' and who counts as a queer migrant. Gorman-Murray employs a relatively restrictive definition of queer migration, arguing that queer migration is not 'the simple displacement of non-heterosexuals. Many move for education and employment opportunities; this, in itself, I do not denote as queer migration' (2009, p.433). Rather, he argues, a person's sexuality or gender identity must play a role in their decision to migrate. Yet other authors take a broader approach: Mole, for example, argues that queer migration is 'the displacement of queer bodies – whatever their motivation for migrating' (2018, p.87). Carillo (2004) writes on sexual migration, which, I argue, in being specifically about migration for sex or relationship purposes, is distinct from queer migration, which is the migration of queer people, regardless of their motivation. This dissertation will draw on these broader definitions as, even if queerness does not directly influence a person's decision to migrate, it can influence where they migrate to, how long they stay there, or how they feel in that location, even if this influence is subconscious. For instance, in his interviews with queer Eastern Europeans in Berlin, Mole (2018, p.88) finds that many migrants chose Berlin because of the 'relaxed attitudes' of Berliners towards queer people. In this dissertation, I therefore define a queer migrant as any migrant who identifies as non-heterosexual or non-cisgender, whatever their reasons for migrating.

Common to many studies of queer migration is the central role of emotions (see, for example, Stella, Flynn and Gawlewicz, 2018). This focus on emotions challenges the 'rational,' economic basis of many classic analyses of migration. Castles and Miller (2009) argue that neoclassical economics have been informing most common theories of why people migrate since the late 1800s. These economics-based theories posit that the decision to migrate is 'based on rational comparison of the relative costs and benefits of remaining at home or moving' (Castles and Miller, 2009, p.12), thus reducing the decision to a 'rational' cost-benefit analysis largely absent of emotions. In contrast, queer migration studies often centre emotions-based reasons for migrating, with Gorman-Murray (2009) identifying 'coming out' migration (migrating to live openly with one's sexual orientation); 'gravitational group migration' (migrating to a place where there are many queer people) and 'relationship migration' (migrating with a partner, or to move in with a partner) as key reasons why queer people migrate. For this reason, Mai and King (2009) have argued that queer migration studies

have contributed to an emotional turn in human geography (see also Anderson and Smith, 2001). This dissertation aims to operate within this emotions-based framework, considering in particular emotions such as comfort, acceptance and belonging, which influence not only the decision to migrate but also queer migrants' experiences in their destination country.

It must nevertheless be noted that queer migrants frequently still migrate for 'rational' reasons like work or study, and that these reasons often cannot straightforwardly be disentangled from emotional reasons for migrating. Sólveigar-Guðmundsdóttir (2018) interviews queer Eastern European migrants living in Iceland, and discovers that most interviewees initially decided to migrate to Iceland due to the economic opportunities on offer there, but their choice to remain in Iceland tended to be influenced by the country's better sexual rights. It is consequently clear that people rarely migrate for one reason alone, and that queer migrants must still consider the economic, political and lifestyle-based factors that their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts typically consider.

2.2 Diaspora and Queerness

The concept of diaspora has undergone significant redefinition in recent years. Traditionally, diaspora was associated with migrants who forcibly had to leave their place of origin, and who hoped someday to return to that place (Gilroy, 2001; Cohen, 2008). Cohen defines a diaspora as a group who experienced 'dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically' and which retains a collective memory about that 'homeland'[2] (2008, p.17). Safran similarly stresses the importance of 'homeland' and return, arguing that diasporic communities 'regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home' and 'believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society' (1991, p.83). These definitions consequently differentiate diasporas from 'ordinary' groups of migrants.

However, in recent years, the term's usage has been broadened, with many additional groups being considered through the diaspora framework. What were once considered key features of diasporas are now increasingly not seen as necessary for a group to be considered a diaspora: Safran (1991) sees forced or traumatic dispersal as unnecessary, and Clifford (1994) even questions the notion that a diaspora must be oriented towards a 'homeland.' Ang

[2] I have put 'homeland' in quotation marks in order to problematise the assumption that ethnic groups have an essentialised, original home. However, I recognise that many individuals and communities view themselves as having an original home, thereby making the concept of 'homeland' a meaningful topic nonetheless.

(2003, p.143) exemplifies this with the way in which 'overseas Chinese' are increasingly being referred to as the 'Chinese diaspora,' despite not fulfilling most of the classic criteria for diasporas. Whilst diaspora once implied a specific type of migrant community that maintained an essentialised identity rooted in an idealised 'homeland,' Clifford (1994) and Dwyer (2013) use it to challenge the idea of fixed identities and discuss the multiple, often transnational (Vertovec, 1999) attachments that many immigrant communities maintain. Thus, the original key features of diasporas are increasingly being downplayed.

In order to prevent the concept from becoming analytically useless, Brubaker (2005) identifies three criteria for modern diasporas: dispersion, 'homeland' orientation, and the maintenance of boundaries with the 'native' population. Drawing on this interpretation, a diaspora can thus be considered any group that does not consider itself native to or fully integrated in the place it is living in, and whose members maintain some kind of transnational or cultural ties to the place considered to be their 'homeland.' Most groups of migrants and their descendants can consequently count as diasporas under this definition.

Despite the term's increasingly broad usage, a core concept that is still seen as central to most definitions of diaspora is that of a collective or common group identity. Cohen discusses diasporas having 'a strong ethnic group consciousness' and 'a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members' (2008, p.17); Clifford (1994, p.305) notes the 'collective identity' of diasporic groups, and Ang (2003) argues that the concept of diaspora upholds essentialist national identities rather than challenging them, as ethnic groups are constructed as homogeneous, clearly bounded communities within the diaspora framework.

Scholars of queer migration have increasingly challenged these assumptions about diasporic community and solidarity, examining who is included within the supposedly homogeneous diasporic identity, and who is excluded. A number of interview-based studies have documented the ways in which queer migrants feel alienated, excluded or even discriminated against by members of 'their' diaspora. Petzen (2004, p.24), for example, shows how queer Turks 'have usually been excluded from or have not felt comfortable with' diasporic Turkish networks that promote heteronormative concepts like opposite-sex marriage. This focus on feelings of exclusion amongst the queer diasporic community challenges the notion that a diaspora is a cohesive group, and that members automatically feel a sense of belonging because of a shared ethnicity.

Gopinath (2005) argues that diasporas' fixation on the past and on traditions associated with the 'homeland' can often cause conservative and traditional beliefs to persist amongst members of a diaspora, even as attitudes within the 'homeland' and the 'host'[3] country towards queerness and similar topics become more accepting. Keogh, Dodds and Henderson (2004, p.22) similarly contend that the diaspora's role is to 'maintain traditions and bonds transferred from the country of origin.' For this reason it is anticipated that those members of the diaspora who identify strongly with the diasporic community; who have a strong 'homeland' orientation and a nostalgic longing for the past; might exhibit conservative attitudes that amount to intolerance towards or exclusion of queer members of the diaspora.

It is, however, important not to Orientalise the views of diasporic communities (see Said, 1978 on Orientalism). Depicting diasporic groups as inherently conservative, and the country they live in as inherently progressive, can perpetuate Western-centric hierarchies and legitimise discrimination against diaspora communities. Yildiz (2017) examines Orientalising attitudes among Dutch people towards the Turkish diaspora, noting that the assumption that the Dutch are accepting of queer communities while Turks are homophobic is based on racist and Islamophobic structures, as well as an oversimplification of the diverse attitudes that exist within both communities. Gopinath's theorisation of why diasporas exhibit conservative attitudes may only apply to those members of the diaspora who are heavily involved with traditional conceptions of the 'homeland' and its culture, whereas co-ethnics who care less about tradition may possess more liberal views.

Moreover, it is unclear whether Gopinath's theorisation holds up in empirical research. Mole et al. (2017) offer a contrasting perspective, suggesting that migration to a broadly more tolerant country often causes migrants' attitudes to become more tolerant. They illustrate this with migrants to London from Eastern Europe, who frequently become more tolerant of homosexuality the longer they stay in London. They note, however, that whilst tolerance of homosexuality increases after some time in London, it does not fully converge with the general tolerance level of the British population. This could mean that, although queer migrants may be accepted by many members of their diaspora, intolerance may still be more overt amongst the diaspora than amongst the British population at large, particularly in a city like London that is known for its predominantly liberal attitudes (Ryan-Flood, 2015). This

[3] I have placed 'host' in quotations to acknowledge that not all 'host' countries and populations are necessarily welcoming to migrant communities.

could thus perpetuate feelings of exclusion amongst queer migrants like those reported by Petzen (2004).

Fortier (2002) and Eng (1997) have suggested that queer migrants often create and feel a sense of belonging to a 'queer diaspora.' This tends to arise as a result of 'double discrimination' (Petzen, 2004; Kuntsman, 2009), which is where queer migrants face discrimination from diasporic communities because of their sexuality, and from mainstream queer communities because they are migrants. Some scholars have suggested that queerness is inherently a diasporic condition, as many queer people are forced to leave home in order to 'come out,' and they tend to assemble in queer communities that share a sense of solidarity with each other, thus mirroring many features of an ethnic diaspora (Sinfield, 2000; Fortier, 2003). However, for the purpose of this dissertation, 'queer diaspora' will be more straightforwardly understood as the creation of queer sub-communities 'within ethnically-defined diasporas' (Fortier, 2002, p.183).

To date there has been relatively limited empirical research on queer diasporas, however Gursel (2018) and Mole (2018) have conducted useful studies of groups that cater for queer Turks and queer Russians respectively. Minwalla et al. (2005) and Rouhani (2007) examine an American organisation for queer Muslims called Al-Fatiha, which could also be likened to a queer diasporic group. These studies suggest that queer diasporic contacts prove an immensely valuable resource to queer migrants, who often experience multiple forms of exclusion. I hope to explore this topic further, looking at how queer migrants engage with other queer co-ethnics on an informal as well as semi-formal basis, and the extent to which these can be considered diaspora-like formations.

2.3 Queer Migration, Diaspora and the City

Another key theoretical topic to address is the importance of the urban, specifically London, as a destination for queer migrants and a location for diasporic interactions to take place. London is a space in which queer people are often particularly visible (Mole et al., 2017). Whilst London is not unique in this respect – many cities, particularly in the West, have a reputation for being queer-friendly (see Petzen, 2004, Mole, 2018 and Gursel, 2018 on Berlin; Yildiz, 2017 on Amsterdam; Myslik, 1996 on Washington DC and Manalansan, 2003 on New York) – the significance of the urban is paramount for understanding queer people's migration decisions.

Aldrich (2004) provides a historical overview of the development of the city as a space that attracts queer communities, examining the development of queer (predominantly gay male) spaces in European, North American and Asian cities. Aldrich notes, along with Johnston and Longhurst (2010), that large cities appeal to queer people primarily due to their anonymity, as well as the larger, more diversified populations increasing the likelihood of finding fellow queer contacts. Whilst the preference for anonymous spaces stems primarily from a time when homosexuality was criminalised in most Western countries (Aldrich, 2004), recent research by Stella, Flynn and Gawlewicz (2018) suggests that queer migrants nowadays still appreciate the anonymity of large cities, often linking this to increased feelings of safety.

Sólveigar-Guðmundsdóttir's (2018) analysis of queer migration to Iceland emphasises the role that Iceland's small, relatively homogeneous population plays in contributing to queer migrants' feelings of isolation, and therefore differs from analyses that concentrate on large, cosmopolitan cities. I intend to contrast this with London, a populous city of over eight million people, where less than half the population identify as White British (Office for National Statistics, 2018). I suggest that London's large and diverse population lessens the likelihood of queer migrants feeling isolated or unaccepted, as they are more likely to meet fellow queer and migrant contacts, and find networks that accept them even if parts of their diaspora do not.

Several works on queer migration to date have focused specifically on London (see Mole et al., 2014; Ryan-Flood, 2015). Ryan-Flood (2015, p.46) notes that queer Irish migrants appreciate London for its 'tolerant' atmosphere and designated queer spaces, the prime example of which is Soho in Central London. These queer spaces challenge the implicit heteronormativity of urban public space and thus allow queer people to express their identities in a safer and more accepting environment. However, queer spaces still operate under racialised and nationalist principles, and thus can exclude people of certain ethnic or national backgrounds (Oswin, 2008; Dasgupta and Dasgupta, 2018). As such, while the city offers a generally more accepting environment for queer people, it is important to interrogate the extent to which this acceptance is extended to all queer users of the space. For this reason, public space – particularly diasporic and queer public space – will be an important theme in my analysis.

2.4 Countries of Origin, Legality and Tolerance

In order to explore the above topics, I interviewed queer migrants from India, China, Turkey and Russia. These four countries were chosen because they belong to a group of fifty-five countries that, according to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), do not criminalise same-sex acts or relationships, but also offer no legal rights or protections to the queer community (ILGA: Ramón Mendos, 2019).[4] This includes not offering protection against institutional discrimination; not criminalising hatred towards queer people, and not legalising additional rights for the queer community such as same-sex marriage, civil partnerships or adoption. I selected India, China, Turkey and Russia because, of the fifty-five countries in this list, they are the four with the largest migrant populations in the UK and in London (Office for National Statistics, 2019).

Country classified as 'no protection, no criminalisation' by ILGA	**Number of UK residents born in this country**	**Number of London residents born in this country**
India	862,000	319,000
China (incl. Hong Kong)	210,000	53,000
Turkey	85,000	59,000
Russia	63,000	24,000

Table 1: Population of the UK and London by country of birth for the four countries featured in this study, July 2017-June 2018. Source: ONS, 2019.

Focusing on origin countries with common legal frameworks vis-à-vis the queer community differentiates this project from most related studies, which either focus on queer migrants from one country (Petzen, 2004; Gursel, 2018), or from multiple countries within the same region (Mole, 2018; Sólveigar-Guðmundsdóttir, 2018; Asante, 2018). Looking at four origin countries avoids focusing too heavily on the specific issues facing people of one nationality, but equally avoids grouping countries together that are geographically close yet have vastly different levels of protection for the queer community. For example, studies which focus on queer Russians and Eastern Europeans bring together migrants from Estonia, which offers many rights to the queer community, including same-sex marriage (ILGA, 2019), and Russia, which offers no legal protection to the queer community – and in many cases, such as in

[4] See ILGA (2019) for a map that provides a more concise overview of worldwide sexual orientation laws.

Chechnya, still actively persecutes queer people (Roth, 2019). Focusing on migrants from countries with comparable – though nevertheless diverse[5] – legal infrastructures increases the likelihood of identifying patterns within participants' experiences in their countries of origin or diasporas.

Valentine and Harris (2016, p.917) refer to the law as a structure 'with which, and through which, the social world is made.' Thus, the legal framework of a country can influence the opinions of people who have been socialised in that country. Piekut and Valentine (2016) note that in Poland, for example, the fact that marriage is enshrined in the Polish constitution as being between a man and a woman may influence the country's low support for same-sex marriage. Migrants who are socialised into certain attitudes in their country of origin often bring these attitudes with them upon migrating (Mole, 2018) and, as Gopinath (2005) has theorised, members of the diaspora may promote traditional attitudes associated with their country of origin in order to uphold its culture. This implies that the migrant and diasporic communities featured in this study may be less tolerant of queer people than the general population of London, and therefore queer migrants' experiences in their diasporas may be noticeably different than their experiences in London overall. However, in line with Mole et al.'s (2017) study on resocialisation, this may vary according to an individual's length of time in the UK, education, age, and political persuasions.

[5] Although all four countries had similar legal frameworks regarding the queer community at the time of research, significant differences in the countries' histories and trajectories still exist. Most notably, India only decriminalised homosexuality in September 2018, meaning that all of my Indian interviewees had spent time in India while homosexuality was still illegal. This differs considerably from the other countries, which decriminalised homosexuality many decades ago. Moreover, whilst India can be considered to be on a positive trajectory regarding LGBTQ+ rights, other countries in the study have seen a reduction in rights for the queer community in recent years. Significantly, Russia introduced a law in 2013 prohibiting the spreading of 'gay propaganda' to under-18s (ILGA: Ramón Mendos, 2019) and Turkey has banned the Istanbul Pride march every year since 2015 (Dalton, 2019).

3. Methods and Participants

3.1 Methods

The main method employed for this research was semi-structured interviews. These closely resemble what Holstein and Gubrium (2012, p.296) call 'active' interviews, in which the researcher identifies some themes they wish to cover, but also allows the participant to guide the discussion. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they permit a 'more thorough examination of experiences, feelings or opinions' than standardised or closed questions (Kitchin and Tate, 2000, p.212). This meant that I was able to explore topics in depth, and could ask follow-up questions or deviate from my initial lines of inquiry depending on what was relevant to the participant, or in order to obtain more detail.

Unlike standardised questionnaires, semi-structured interviews allow respondents to answer questions in ways that are meaningful to them, as they can use terminology that they understand and bring up specific experiences or topics that they feel are important (England, 1994; Valentine, 1997). This was particularly important for my research, as I wished to take an iterative or 'grounded theory' (Burgess, 2003, p.247; Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014, p.153) approach, meaning that I began with only broad assumptions about what participants would tell me, and was open to building my subsequent questions, framings and analyses around their responses. Taking an iterative approach, and using a method that complements it, prevents me, as the researcher, from setting the parameters of the discussion, and instead allows me to understand the ways in which participants frame issues, and which issues are most important to them. This was particularly important because, as I am not a migrant, participants were often discussing experiences that I had no personal familiarity with, and I did not wish to let my own preconceptions influence their responses too much.

After formulating a list of topics to cover in the interviews and drafting an interview schedule, I conducted a pilot interview with a friend. This gave me an insight into how my questions may be interpreted, including any instances in which they were misunderstood. Based on this pilot, I was able to reword some of my questions, omit some topics that came across as repetitive, and also gain the confidence to conduct an in-depth interview using only a rough, semi-structured approach.

3.2 Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited using a variety of channels. In addition to finding some participants through personal contacts, I contacted charities, community groups and Facebook groups aimed at queer/LGBTQ+ people. Of these, some agreed to share my study with their networks. Interested participants would then contact me directly, either via email or via Facebook. I chose to only contact groups aimed at the queer community to avoid encountering prospective participants who may not be 'out' to the rest of the group, thus minimising the risk that their expression of interest in the study would reveal their sexual or gender identity to those who did not already know about it. The downside of this is that only those queer migrants who conform to Western standards of being confidently 'out' (Luibhéid, 2008; Dasgupta, 2018) would find out about the study. However, this seemed an important step for ensuring the comfort of participants.

Overall, seven participants were recruited via Facebook, making it a far more effective platform for finding participants than advertising via official community groups or charities. This may be due to its more transparent nature: participants were able to see who I was, via my public profile, before deciding whether to contact me. Those groups that elicited interviews included groups for queer people in London, groups for queer students, and groups for queer people from specific countries and regions. Two further participants were recruited using the snowballing method (Valentine, 1997), which is where participants identify friends and contacts who may be interested in the study, and invite them to participate.

I offered participants the choice of conducting the interview on my university campus, or at another public location. This was in recognition of the fact that some participants may find the university setting too formal (Valentine, 1997). Most participants chose to meet on campus, with some preferring public locations nearby and four requesting to be interviewed over Skype. All interviews were recorded, and after each interview I transcribed the full audio recording verbatim to ensure that I did not omit anything that may later become relevant. I then coded the transcripts using Atlas.ti. Charmaz (2006, p.43) defines coding as 'naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data.' This process enabled me to work out what topics had come up most frequently during interviews and understand the different ways in which participants had engaged with certain themes. These themes then formed the basis of my analysis.

3.3 Ethics and Positionality

This project received ethical approval from the UCL Department of Geography, and maintaining good ethical conduct throughout the research process was a priority. Participants were given a full briefing on the project's aims, the ways in which their data would be used and stored, and who to contact if they had any concerns. Informed consent was sought at each stage of the research, and I emphasised before each interview that participants were free to decline to answer any questions and could withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason.

All participant data has been anonymised to ensure confidentiality (Dowling, 2005). Pseudonyms have been used, as these allow the reader to more easily follow participants throughout the analysis. Pseudonyms have been selected to match the country of origin of the participant. Where participants had Anglophone names I have assigned them an Anglophone name, and where participants did not identify with a gender, the gender of their pseudonym matches the gender of the name that they introduced themselves with.

One key issue that I had to consider was positionality, defined by Valentine as 'the different power relationships that exist between yourself and your informants' (1997, p.113). As England (1994, p.85) notes, '[a] researcher is positioned by her/his gender, age, "race"/ethnicity, sexual identity, and so on, as well as by her/his biography.' These characteristics implicitly inform a researcher's interests, frameworks and biases, as well as what participants feel comfortable telling them. Whilst my identity as a queer woman could help participants feel comfortable discussing their experiences with me, my identity as a white, British non-migrant positions me as an 'outsider' who is unable to fully relate to participants' experiences (Hayfield and Huxley, 2015). It was therefore essential that my own experiences and assumptions did not hinder participants' abilities to tell their stories in their own terms. I aimed to approach this issue by acknowledging what England (1994, p.86) calls 'the partiality of our perspective.' This requires an acknowledgement by the researcher that their approach to and representation of a topic is never truly objective, but rather reflective of their own experiences. In this way, I aim to resolve these issues of positionality by accepting that my interpretation of participants' stories is only one of many possible interpretations, and that this research can only aim to present their stories as I understood them, rather than offering any objective 'truth' about them.

The choice to use semi-structured interviews further helped me contend with the issue of positionality by giving participants multiple opportunities to direct the conversation. At the start of each interview I asked participants to broadly describe their experiences in London as a queer migrant, and offered the opportunity to bring up any further topics of interest at the end of the interview. This enabled each interviewee to give me an idea of the topics that were relevant to them and direct the conversation without my own assumptions influencing them too much.

3.4 Participants

In total I conducted eleven interviews, which lasted from half an hour to over an hour. All participants self-identified as queer/LGBTQ+ and were first generation migrants, meaning that they had been born outside the UK. Of the eleven participants, four were from China (including Hong Kong), three were from India, two were from Turkey, and two were from Russia. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 40, but were mostly young, with a mean age of 28. Six identified as men, four identified as women, and one identified as non-binary. Participants had been living in the UK for anything from nine months to over twenty years. All but one were living in London at the time of interviewing; the participant who was no longer in London had previously lived in London for more than a decade, and could therefore reflect on their experiences throughout this decade.

Several participants were students at the time of interviewing, and those who were not had all previously obtained a university degree. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that high social and cultural capital are often required for migration, particularly when migration takes place from outside the EU and is therefore usually subject to the migrant obtaining a visa for work or study (Mole, 2018). Additionally, the fact that interviews were conducted in English automatically prioritises those whose knowledge of English is good, which is frequently a result of being highly educated. This study therefore cannot comment on the experiences of lower-skilled or non-English-speaking queer migrants (for a study that does, see Keogh, Dodds and Henderson, 2004). Whilst I acknowledge this as a limitation, I also accept that a study like this is too small to claim to be representative of the general migrant population, and, as noted by Sandelowski (1995), qualitative research's strengths lie in its emphasis on gaining relevant data, rather than the most representative data.

Many participants had engaged in multiple migrations during their lives. Some had migrated within their country of origin before emigrating; some had migrated to another part of the UK before moving to London, and some had lived in one or more countries between leaving their country of origin and arriving in London. This is noteworthy as many participants compared their experiences in London to other places they had lived in. It also demonstrates that when queer migrants migrate, they often move from rural or smaller urban areas to larger cities (Gorman-Murray, 2009). This was the case for several participants, who started off living in smaller towns in the UK or in their countries of origin, sometimes as children, before subsequently moving to London.

Pseudonym	**Country of Birth**	**Age range**
Arjun	India	18-24
Georgiy	Russia	18-24
Divya	India	25-30
Ben	China	18-24
Emre	Turkey	31-39
Katya	Russia	40-49
Huan	China	18-24
Chris	China (Hong Kong)	25-30
Faruk	Turkey	31-39
Indira	India	18-24
Joey	China (Hong Kong)	31-39

Table 2: Participants' demographic details (in order of when interviews were conducted).

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Diasporic Engagements

All participants exhibited an overall lack of engagement with their diaspora. This lack of engagement was particularly evident when it came to participants' engagement with formal or semi-formal diasporic groups and events, such as community groups or cultural events. When asked whether they engage with the diaspora in these ways, several participants, including Divya (India) and Joey (China – Hong Kong), simply answered 'no' or 'not really.' Those without such stark answers also noted a general lack of engagement, often knowing of diasporic events that were taking place but choosing not to attend them, or being largely unaware altogether.

Some participants, however, were more active within their diaspora, though this was often a result of having close contacts in the UK. Katya (Russia) says that she does not know many Russians and has 'never purposefully sought out Russian people just for the sake of a shared language,' however as her parents live in the UK, she often engages more with the diaspora when visiting them, such as by visiting a Russian church. She says:

> 'My parents celebrate Easter, it's really big for them, so I tend to go and visit them and we go to church, there's a [Russian] church in [parents' city] which they go to.'

Other participants used special occasions such as festivals and holidays as opportunities to engage with their diaspora. Ben (China) says that he went to Chinatown's Chinese New Year event, and Indira (India) went to a Diwali party organised by her university's Indian Society. These, however, generally present exceptions to the rule: Ben notes that, aside from this event, he does not engage with the Chinese community 'in any formal sense,' and Indira says that she 'very rarely' goes to events organised by the wider Indian community.

Where diasporic engagement did occur, it more commonly took place on an informal basis. Most participants had friends or other contacts within their diaspora, though the number of contacts and the frequency of engagement with them varied considerably. Emre (Turkey), who came to London for postgraduate studies, talks about having made a close-knit group of Turkish friends in London, stating:

> ‘There was this core Turkish PhD community in London, but then we introduced our own friends from all over the world, including British friends, to that community, it became an extended family, but almost the Turks in that community were the facilitators of that big-ish kind of group.’

His impression, however, is that this group of Turks who came to the UK for academic purposes differs from Turks who, in his words, ‘genuinely belong’ to the diaspora. Whilst he notes having some ‘genuinely’ diasporic contacts, including one close friend, he still considers his engagement with the wider Turkish community in London to be fairly minimal and based mostly on fleeting encounters in Turkish supermarkets and restaurants.

Most participants have still less of a solid diasporic network. Whilst many participants have some friends from the diaspora, these are not necessarily close friends: Divya (India) notes having some ‘okay friends’ in the Indian diaspora, and Chris (China – Hong Kong) has a couple of Chinese friends in his ‘closer’ group, though he emphasises that he knows no one from Hong Kong in London. Three participants have immediate family living in the UK, yet familial connections were often treated as separate from the wider diaspora, particularly as participants often migrated with these family members as a singular unit. For instance, Indira (India) talks about how her family rarely gets involved with the wider Indian community, stating: ‘we don’t really organise things, we don’t have house parties and stuff, we just kind of are ourselves.’ The repeated use of ‘we’ suggests that Indira may not view her immediate family members as diasporic contacts, but rather as people closer to her with whom she would engage (or not) with the wider diaspora as one unit. Thus, whilst diasporic engagement varies throughout the sample, no participant can be said to have frequent or extensive engagement with the diaspora, and most hardly engage with it at all on an organised, community-wide scale. This poses a challenge to theories that see diasporas as closely bonded, cohesive units, and raises the question of whether these queer migrants can even be considered as members of a diasporic community when they are so disengaged from it.

Participants’ lack of engagement comes despite the fact that most maintain an attachment to their country of origin’s culture, whether through their use of language (Huan, China); their engagement with customs (Indira, India; Georgiy, Russia), or even the food they eat (Ben, China; Emre, Turkey). All maintain transnational (Vertovec, 1999) ties with people in their country of origin or co-ethnics who live abroad, and many do not feel a full sense of belonging within British society. As such, it is too simplistic to state that these migrants are not part of

a diaspora, as cultural ties and a sense of separation from the 'host' society are key features of diasporas as defined by Safran (1991) and Brubaker (2005). Instead, it is useful to draw on Vertovec's concept of 'diaspora consciousness,' which places less importance on the existence of a diasporic community with which a migrant can engage and more on 'a state of mind' that commonly exists amongst individuals living in diaspora, in which they identify with their country of origin and its culture (1997, p.281). This echoes Mole's findings: his queer migrant interviewees are similarly not necessarily 'keen to be part of their ethno-cultural diaspora community,' but nevertheless mostly 'define their identities with reference to the ethnic homeland' (2018, p.94). Thus, participants can be described as having a 'diaspora consciousness,' as they identify with their country of origin but rarely engage with their wider diasporic community. The reasons why participants follow this pattern must, however, be examined in further detail.

4.2 Diasporic Disengagement and Queer Identities

In order to understand why these migrants are mostly disengaged from their diasporic community, it is essential to examine whether their identities as queer people influence their engagements. For some, disengagement from the diaspora was due to a general disinterest in meeting people from the country of origin. Arjun (India), who arguably has the least diasporic engagement of any participant, says that he does not 'even pay attention' to events related to India. This is an almost ideological choice, based on his wish not to be tied down to one culture, Indian or otherwise. He says:

> 'I'm not really interested in one particular culture, and I'm not really looking for people or cultural groups or societies that are meant for India or any particular other culture.'

However, many participants note the diasporic community's attitudes towards queer people as reasons not to engage with the diaspora, or to be cautious when engaging, thereby demonstrating that migrants' sexual orientations or gender identities can impact the ways in which they engage with the diaspora. Eight participants discussed experiencing or fearing a lack of acceptance of their queer identity, or of queerness in general, from within the diaspora, and some linked this directly to their choice not to engage with the community, or their

feelings of discomfort when engaging. This is most clearly stated by Divya (India), who says that, due to the influence of Christianity on India ever since the colonial era, Indians

> 'think that homosexuality […] is a sin, so I feel very uncomfortable being myself in Indian groups, because I have to act straight.'

She notes that these attitudes are not confined to Indians in India, as exemplified by the following interaction:

> Interviewer: 'Do you find that Indians in London also express those views?'
>
> Divya: 'The ones that I've met? Yes, although they live here and some are British-Indians, but they still have very backward Indian thinking, it's surprising.'

Georgiy (Russia) similarly notes the impact of intolerance on their decision to avoid certain groups of Russians, stating that the Russians they have met in London are

> 'not so…queer-friendly, actually my younger brother has a lot of house parties with […] people from Russia and Kazakhstan and I never go.'

They then say that, whilst they 'wouldn't mind interacting' with Russians in these contexts, they prefer not to as their lifestyle, beliefs and opinions are 'very incompatible' with those of the other Russians they have come across.

Moreover, when participants do engage with the diasporic community, they frequently make adjustments to the ways in which they express their queer identity, often exercising caution or restraint regarding their behaviour. For some, this involves not revealing their queerness in certain diasporic spaces. Katya (Russia) discusses how she is not 'out' to her parents and in the Russian church, saying that she feels 'fine' visiting the church, but that she 'wouldn't dream of being out' there. Emre's (Turkey) strategy when meeting Turkish people in London is not to deny his sexuality but rather to say that he is single and not challenge people's heteronormative assumptions. He discusses a typical encounter with a Turkish taxi driver, saying:

> 'He's asking whether or not I'm married and so on, but at those moments I never intervene and just say that, wait a minute, why are you assuming that I'm straight,

> […] and I think this is quite widespread, at least in my generation there is this kind of hidden contract, you don't confront, you just nod your head and move on.'

A few participants additionally discussed modifying their behaviour in order to tone down their queer self-expression. Emre (Turkey) talks about feeling the need to be cautious about his 'mannerism on the street' when in heavily Turkish areas, and Faruk (Turkey) describes his adjustments as 'auto-censorship.' Ben (China), in addition to noting that he often adjusts 'how [he's] dressed, how [he's] talking, how [he] behave[s]' when in diasporic spaces such as Chinatown, also uses language in order to tone down his queerness by speaking Mandarin in Chinese areas. He says that in Mandarin

> 'I'm not able to access terminology or rhetoric regarding my queer identity, so I'm less able to talk about those things, so in that sense it's a strategy for me to enter those spaces and feel safe.'

Ben's strategy is a relatively novel one, however it sheds light on some of the ways in which queer migrants' identities prompt them to adjust their behaviour in diasporic spaces in order to feel comfortable. However, whilst these adjustments were made more frequently in diasporic contexts than in London at large, it must be noted that there were other spaces where participants made similar adjustments: Chris (China – Hong Kong) says that he would adjust his behaviour in neighbourhoods 'where more crime happens,' and Joey (China – Hong Kong) says he would tone down his queer self-expression if he was around anyone 'dodgy-looking'.

Participants generally make these adjustments based on their impressions of how the diaspora might respond to their queerness. Sometimes, participants fear explicit discrimination, however more commonly they fear or have experienced a culture within the diaspora that is less accepting or less aware of what it means to be queer. This lack of awareness often manifests itself in inconsiderate comments, stereotypes, or a general lack of understanding of what queerness is. Indira (India) mentions that, when coming out as bisexual to her parents, her dad 'told [her] that eventually [she'd] pick' one gender to be attracted to, and Huan (China) notes that, when telling her Chinese friends that she was queer, they responded that she 'still look[s] straight,' thus perpetuating stereotypes that queer women look different to straight women. Faruk (Turkey) discusses the inconsiderate questions he has been asked by fellow Turks in London, who rarely meet queer people and whose curiosity consequently sometimes becomes 'humiliat[ing].' He says:

> ‘There were people that [were] just trying to ask me really like, are you top, are you bottom […]. I mean, okay, [they] do understand that I am gay and [they] do know that [they] should respect, but at the same time [they] don’t need to know, […] this is none of [their] business, so this is actually like respect in a way, but at the same time this is horrible.’

Faruk’s experience demonstrates how many people’s reactions are more nuanced than straightforward intolerance. These diasporic Turks accept Faruk’s identity, but see it as unusual and intriguing, leading them to ask inappropriate questions that would not be asked of a non-queer person. Some participants similarly note that their concern is less about intolerance of their identities, and more about a general incompatibility with the diaspora, meaning that diasporic engagements are irrelevant or uninteresting. Ben (China), for example, notes that he does not engage with Chinese groups because he cannot ‘identify with a lot of the values of, say, heteronormative marriage,’ which are commonly promoted in these circles.

These findings parallel and reinforce those found in previous studies of queer migrants’ diasporic interactions, such as those by Petzen (2004) and Mole (2018), showing that a migrant’s queer identity can significantly influence the extent to which they engage with the wider diaspora. Some participants avoid contact with the diaspora, or certain groups within it, due to a lack of acceptance or awareness, and participants who have not experienced explicit anti-queer sentiments still sometimes adapt their behaviour, often out of concern that the diaspora may be intolerant of queerness.

Furthermore, participants’ testimonies suggest that queerness influences not only the frequency of engagement, but also the channels through which queer migrants engage with the diaspora: many appear to prefer informal engagements, primarily through individual, trusted friends, rather than formal and semi-formal engagements via community organisations. This may be because, as suggested by Gopinath (2005), organised diasporic groups often exist to promote traditions associated with the country of origin, which may not provide a welcoming space for non-traditional sexuality and gender expressions. Moreover, these groups may be centred around values such as heterosexual marriage that are simply irrelevant to many queer people. In contrast, participants are arguably more able to ‘vet’ individual contacts within the diaspora, judging for themselves whether that individual is accepting of their queerness and thus worth engaging with.

These findings further challenge the notion of diasporas as cohesive communities, suggesting that many queer people within the diaspora feel unaccepted by, or simply incompatible with, the majority. This parallels Mole's (2018) finding that the diaspora can promote traditional culture at the expense of respecting those within the diaspora who pursue alternative lifestyles. However, my participants' focus on informal networks shows that this issue is not limited to semi-formal organisations. Instead, even individual friends and relatives can be intolerant or largely unaware of the queer community. While most participants know at least some people within the diaspora who respect their identities, many consequently see the diaspora as a space where they are not fully comfortable.

4.3 (Il)liberal Diasporas

Despite participants' prevailing concerns, most acknowledge that the diaspora is not a homogeneous entity, and that members of the diaspora differ in terms of their tolerance of queerness. As noted above, several participants have (non-queer) friends within the diaspora who they feel comfortable expressing their sexuality or gender identity around, and many mention being comfortably 'out' to at least some diasporic contacts.

Many participants identified generational difference as a decisive factor in the extent to which people within the diaspora accepted them, with most agreeing that the younger generation is more tolerant of queerness than the older generation. Katya (Russia) notes that older Russians in the UK, such as her parents' friends, 'haven't accepted alternative ways of life necessarily,' contrasting these with the Russians of her age who she is more likely to come across in London. Divya (India) says that part of her discomfort about being around diasporic Indians is because

> 'the older generation, like even five years older [than] me, […] have such thought processes that it just doesn't match with my ideologies.'

Several participants note that developments within the diaspora parallel those that are taking place in their country of origin. Huan (China) for example says that, in China, more and more young people are 'tolerating' and 'accepting' queerness, but 'the older generations [are] definitely not.'

Some participants, however, exercise caution, pointing out that only some younger people are more accepting. Joey (China – Hong Kong) acknowledges that members of the Chinese diaspora who are heavily influenced by traditional Chinese parents may not be any more tolerant than their parents, and Georgiy (Russia) says that young Russians in the UK are 'more aware' of queer issues, but 'not necessarily more open-minded.'

A key topic that came up for some participants was that the diaspora, despite its flaws, is more tolerant of queerness, and more liberal generally, than the population of the country of origin, who tend to be more conservative. Arjun (India) notes that London's Indian community is 'much more liberal than it is in India.' Arjun repeatedly states that he feels very welcome in London, including amongst the Indian diaspora (though his contact with Indians is minimal), however he contrasts this with his feelings in India. For example, he says that in London he dresses far more 'flamboyantly' than in India 'because people are able to accept' it, however dressing this way in India would be 'very hard' due to the country's less tolerant culture. Similarly, Faruk (Turkey) says that the Turks he has met in London are 'more liberal' than other Turks, and Katya (Russia) says she thinks that most Russians in London would accept her sexuality because London is 'a very different society.'

This conception of the diaspora as more open-minded than the residents of the country of origin provides weight to Mole et al.'s (2017) argument that people who migrate to a country that is more tolerant of queerness tend themselves to become more tolerant over time. However Gopinath's (2005) conceptualisation cannot be refuted entirely: many participants provide examples of conservative attitudes expressed by members of the diaspora, and Divya (India) suggests that some older British-Indian families still behave as though they are living in '1960 India,' thus implying they are more traditional than many other Indians. Even those who see the diaspora as more liberal than the country of origin frequently still have reservations: Ben (China) states that Chinese people who have emigrated 'definitely have a more open mind,' but that he is not confident that they have sufficient knowledge of the struggles faced by queer people to be fully 'comfortable' around them.

Nevertheless, aside from Divya's concern about older British-Indians, no participant suggests that the diaspora is more conservative than the country of origin overall. It consequently seems clear that attitudes towards queerness do tend to become more tolerant upon moving to a more tolerant country. This may be because participants' diasporic engagement is mostly through informal connections: organised groups, in contrast, may take a more conservative approach due to their focus on maintaining traditions (Keogh, Dodds and

Henderson, 2004). Two Chinese participants, Ben and Huan, make a similar point, noting that Chinese groups in London can be closely politically aligned with the Chinese state and therefore highly conservative. However, neither suggests that this makes the groups' members more conservative than Chinese society overall; in contrast, Huan says that Chinese people in the UK, including, implicitly, those who are part of these organisations, are more 'tolerant' than the Chinese community at large. It is thus clear that Gopinath's (2005) conceptualisation of diasporas as bastions of tradition and conservatism does not always hold up: even if certain individuals or groups within the diaspora maintain conservative attitudes, they are not considered more conservative than the general population of the country of origin, and in many cases are seen as significantly more liberal.

4.4 Queer Diaspora?

A key topic explored by scholars of queer migration is the extent to which queer migrants participate in a 'queer diaspora' (Fortier, 2002). To date, this has mostly been explored by studying organised groups that cater for queer migrants from one national or ethnic background (Petzen, 2004; Mole, 2018). These groups often provide practical and emotional support to queer migrants, as well as organising cultural events and political demonstrations. This can foster a sense of community and solidarity amongst queer members of a diaspora, who may experience exclusion both from their core diaspora and from the mainstream queer community.

Many participants had queer contacts associated with their country of origin, however these were generally individual friends and acquaintances, often met through work, studies or mutual friends, rather than through formal networks such as queer diasporic support groups. Joey (China – Hong Kong) mentions, for example, that he met several queer people from Hong Kong through his studies and his job. Faruk (Turkey) has perhaps the most queer connections within the diaspora, noting several close friends who are queer and Turkish as well as a queer cousin who was living in the UK when he first moved to London. Even in Faruk's case, however, these connections are almost entirely informal.

Only a couple of participants discussed participating in organised queer diasporic groups. Georgiy (Russia), for example, is a member of a Facebook group for queer Russians, though they note that they only engage with the group online and have never attended events

organised by the group. Where engagement with queer groups associated with the country of origin did occur, it was more commonly transnational engagement with activist networks or support groups that were based in the country of origin, and which participants had usually been involved with prior to migrating, rather than engagement with diasporic groups. Emre (Turkey), Faruk (Turkey) and Divya (India) had all been involved with queer activism in their countries of origin and continued to be involved after emigrating, usually via social media. This suggests that the focus of queer migration studies to date on semi-formal queer diasporic spaces such as support groups may only capture a relatively small subset of the queer migrant community, and that many queer migrants may only meet other queer members of their diaspora through informal connections.

Moreover, for some participants these networks of queer diasporic contacts are not extensive, and are often comprised of acquaintances rather than close friends. Katya (Russia), for example, says that she socialises with some queer Russians 'every now and then,' and only met them because a friend of hers knew them, rather than because she specifically sought them out. Some participants did not have any queer diasporic contacts at all, though they often knew other queer people who were migrants. This presents a challenge to the notion, expressed by Fortier (2002) and Sinfield (2000), that queer migrants assemble in certain locations and create organised queer diasporic sub-communities. Whilst many queer migrants live in London, the reality is perhaps that they are dispersed among many social networks comprised of both queer and non-queer, and migrant and non-migrant, members, and that relatively few actively seek out queer diasporic contacts through organised groups and events. This may be because they are living in a society in which many people – though by no means everyone – accepts their queer and migrant identities. Faruk (Turkey) makes a similar point, suggesting that queer Turks' relative lack of queer diasporic engagement may be because, as London is 'safer' for queer people than many other places, including the country of origin, queer migrants do not feel as great a need to 'gather up and do something' as they would in a significantly more oppressive society.

Notably, for several participants, it is less important to have queer friends from their specific country of origin than it is to have queer contacts who are also migrants, or who come from similar backgrounds. This provides participants with someone who can relate to the specific issues they face as a queer person who is from a migrant background; who (in some cases) is non-white, or who is from a culture that is considered quite different from British culture, even if they are not from the same country. For instance, Divya (India) mentions a

good friend who is queer and British-Pakistani, and stresses that, as they are both non-white, they often have similar experiences within the mainstream queer community with regards to feeling 'overlooked' due to their non-European appearances. Emre (Turkey) was formerly engaged with an LGBT collective in London, which he stressed contained lots of migrants, and that this was important because it gave the group a more 'intersectional approach' to political issues. Nevertheless, this was not a group solely for queer migrants, let alone solely for queer Turks, and as such cannot be considered an organised queer diasporic group in the traditional sense.

With regards to queer spaces, a similar pattern emerged. Faruk (Turkey) talked about attending queer diasporic events in London, in his case a club night aimed at queer Turks. Most other participants, however, had no involvement with specifically queer diasporic spaces, even though many were actively involved in London's queer scene, both on an organised basis, such as through volunteering and activism, and on an informal basis, such as through visiting queer bars and nightclubs.

Similarly to above, what often made queer spaces such as bars most welcoming to participants was not that they contained lots of people from their country of origin, but that they were generally diverse spaces frequented by other migrants or ethnic minorities. Those queer spaces that were noticeably less diverse were usually pointed out, and often led to participants feeling less comfortable, though not necessarily to them avoiding those spaces. Ben (China) says that

> 'Even in London, a city that's super super diverse, entering these queer spaces has been a little bit alarming because they have been predominantly white.'

Divya (India) similarly discusses how, when she is the only queer migrant in a space, it often leads to her feeling 'overlooked…like I'm there but I'm not there.' In this way, less welcoming queer spaces in London were often contrasted with other queer spaces, with more commercialised, 'mainstream' spaces generally being described as those that are less diverse and less welcoming to queer migrants or queer people of colour. Soho in particular was identified by some participants as a space that is only truly welcoming to white, cisgender, gay men. Georgiy (Russia) says that Soho's most famous club, Heaven, is visited by 'mostly white people and it's not very diverse,' and Emre (Turkey) says that he avoids the Soho nightlife because 'it's not as diverse' and he is 'very much used to a very diverse place.'

It is arguable, based on these participants' experiences, that focusing on queer migrants' relationships with nationally-defined 'queer diasporas' is too restrictive an approach. Instead, some queer migrants' 'queer diasporas' are not comprised wholly or even mostly of people from their national background, but of people who they share common cultural or ethnic traits with, or even simply the common experience of being a migrant. This is not a topic that has been explored much to date. Rouhani's (2007) examination of a group for queer Muslims (regardless of national background) arguably comes closest, though stops short of actually referring to the group as a diasporic organisation.

It could be argued that this simply suggests that a queer diasporic consciousness does not exist for these participants to any large extent. However, I would argue that their emphasis on being around other queer migrants, other queer ethnic and cultural minorities, or simply in 'diverse' queer spaces, suggests a consciousness akin to that of a diaspora: these queer migrants do not feel a full sense of belonging amongst the white, British, non-migrant queer community, and as such look to alternative spaces and groups where they feel more welcome. This suggests an element of boundary maintenance and feeling of alienation from the 'host' population; something which Safran (1991) and Brubaker (2005) consider to be key criteria for diaspora formation.

Unlike in previous studies, however, these 'diasporas' are clearly not defined according to strict national boundaries, as being in a space or friendship group that was generally identified as 'diverse' was valued more highly than being in a space where many people were from the participant's national background. For example, Ben (China) says that the sort of organised queer group that he would feel most comfortable in would be a group for queer people of colour, but he does not suggest that knowing specifically Chinese people within this group would make him feel any more comfortable. Ben is also a member of an online group for queer Asians, which similarly suggests that he values meeting queer people from comparable backgrounds to him, but not necessarily the same national background. This therefore calls for a broadening of the concept of queer diaspora to not only focus on people from the same nationality or even ethnicity, but to also include those who have had broadly similar experiences as migrants or the descendants of migrants.

Multiple scholars have utilised the concept of diaspora to challenge, rather than rigidly uphold, strictly demarcated national boundaries and essentialised national identities. Dwyer (2013) argues that a major contribution of the diaspora framework to migration studies is its focus on how migrants and their descendants can have simultaneous connections to and

identifications with multiple places, including, but not necessarily limited to, the country that they (or their ancestors) migrated from, and the country they currently live in (see also Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Identification furthermore need not be nationally-defined: although most migrants will identify with one or more nationalities, they are also likely to identify with regions, cultures, religions, ethnicities or 'races'[6]. An example of this offered by Safran (1991) is the black community in North America which, whilst sometimes constructed around a geographical 'homeland' (such as in the phrase 'African-American'), is often constructed around skin colour and ethnicity, yet can be considered a diaspora due to the community's historical dislocation and continued feeling of separation from much of North American society. This conception of diaspora, where the 'homeland' is less important than other commonalities, can be utilised here to describe a diasporic consciousness in which queer migrants make connections and feel attachment based on their ethnicity, appearance, religion, culture or 'migrant-ness,' and not only their national background.

It is thus clear that academic analyses of queer diasporas must consider the reality that many queer migrants do not only or predominantly aim to form connections within their own nationality, but rather look to those who have had comparable experiences, whatever their national background. Consequently it is clear that an organised queer diaspora, as it is traditionally understood, does not exist to a large extent for my participants, yet feelings of non-belonging or discomfort in less diverse, predominantly white British spaces suggests a sense of alienation and boundary maintenance amongst queer migrants comparable to a queer diaspora that goes beyond national boundaries.

4.5 Queer Migration and the City

A final topic that influenced many queer migrants' social engagements, including those with the diaspora, relates to London itself, and participants' conceptualisations of it. In particular, almost all participants conceptualised London using terms such as 'open,' 'tolerant,' and 'welcoming' (see also Aldrich, 2004; Ryan-Flood, 2015). Katya (Russia) describes London as 'very accepting and very open and mostly non-judgemental,' and Indira (India) says that London is 'a pretty good place to be if you're queer.'

[6] I have placed 'races' in quotation marks to emphasise the fact that, as a scientific category, 'race' does not exist, yet many people nevertheless identify with a 'race' (Wade, 2004).

Importantly, this impression of London prevented many participants from experiencing feelings of exclusion and isolation after moving to the city, even if they did not feel very welcome within their diasporic community. This differs considerably from the exclusionary emotions experienced, for example, by Sólveigar-Guðmundsdóttir's (2018) interviewees, who are queer migrants in Iceland. She emphasises the importance of Iceland's small population as a reason why queer migrants feel a sense of non-belonging both within their diaspora and within Icelandic queer communities. This is because a small population can mean few formal queer or diasporic networks to participate in, a lack of choice regarding who to engage with, and a largely homogeneous population who may not share the experiences of queer migrants. In contrast, my participants, who are living in a populous and multicultural city deemed 'super-diverse' (Vertovec, 2007), generally noted feeling accepted in London, despite the flaws of specific individuals or communities. They often linked this feeling of acceptance with London's diversity and tolerance of difference: Joey (China – Hong Kong) says that he likes London because 'you feel the diversity […] and people are open-minded,' and Divya (India) says that London's diversity helps her feel 'safe.'

Notably, Sólveigar-Guðmundsdóttir's interviewees who felt unaccepted by their diaspora often found a lack of alternative communities to turn to. In particular, they often found the queer community to be unfriendly towards migrants due to its homogeneity, as well as lacking in established networks. In contrast, my participants, who also tended not to engage much with their diaspora, often found numerous other communities to engage with. Thus, unlike in smaller societies with fewer migrants, participants generally did not feel like they had to rely on the diaspora for a sense of belonging. Huan (China) suggests that being extensively involved with the Chinese diaspora would actually be 'isolating in its own way,' partly because it would limit her opportunity to 'branch out' and 'meet people from different places.' This challenges conceptions of diasporas as tightly-knit communities that feel a strict sense of separation from the rest of society in the 'host' country, suggesting instead that one can identify with a diasporic consciousness without heavily relying on the diasporic community for support.

Many participants who did not find much commonality with their diaspora looked for contacts within the queer community which, as discussed above, contains many diverse and migrant-friendly spaces, as well as spaces that are more homogeneous. Whilst criticism of these more homogeneous spaces, particularly when their homogeneity amounts to exclusion, should not be dismissed, what is important here is that most participants felt that there were

queer spaces that they could be part of. Many participants discussed queer spaces in London that they felt were diverse and inclusive, with the club Dalston Superstore and the pub Royal Vauxhall Tavern both being mentioned by multiple people. Those participants who did not enjoy nightlife, such as Huan (China), also managed to find queer spaces accepting of their various identities, for example a theatre group that contains many queer people and people from 'diverse' national backgrounds. This is important as the size and variety of London means that participants do not only have to join groups and make friends because of shared identities (identities as migrants, or as queer people), but they can also find others with those identities who share their interests. Katya (Russia) in particular discusses how valuable this variety is to her:

> 'I find [London] really wonderful […], there's a lot of choice so you're not stuck with one group of people and I actually find that I probably don't even know a fraction of what's available to me in terms of being queer and in terms of the people I can meet.'

Katya compares this to her feelings when living in another, much smaller British city. She says that there she found it very 'artificial' to be 'forced into' one specific social group 'just because we were all queer.' In London, in contrast, she can meet people who are not only queer but who she can get on with 'on a personal level.' This shows that, for many queer migrants, simply meeting people who accept them is not enough: in order to feel a real sense of belonging in a city, they need to also meet people who share their interests, beliefs and lifestyles. This is hardly a surprising finding, yet it is one that is often overlooked in traditional studies of migration. This brings us back to Mai and King's (2009) 'emotional turn' in migration studies: in order to understand the feelings of queer migrants, it is fundamental to treat them not as purely economically-motivated beings, and not even as people whose identities solely revolve around being queer migrants, but as well-rounded humans who have the same needs and preferences when it comes to forming relationships as non-migrants and non-queer people do.

Moreover, London's conceptualisation as tolerant and accepting helped participants to feel comfortable in spaces that are neither diaspora-specific nor queer-specific. This is important as several participants explicitly stated that they did not want to feel confined to diasporic or queer communities. Many participants noted how they felt comfortable in many – though not necessarily all – environments in London, particularly Central London. Chris

(China – Hong Kong), for instance, says that if he goes to 'a typical pub or a shop [he] wouldn't feel like [he's] not welcome,' and Arjun (India) says: 'because [London] is open I can be myself, I can explore relentlessly what I want to be.'

Notably, the UK's legal infrastructure, which offers protections to the queer community, was mentioned by a few participants as conducive to these feelings of comfort, as they knew that, if an issue arose, they would be able to seek help from the authorities. Faruk (Turkey) says that in the UK 'you have rights […], and you can run after your rights as soon as something happens.' This is important particularly as the common factor uniting all countries of origin in this study is that queer people are offered no legal protection by the state, beyond the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships, and it shows how legal infrastructure, tolerance, and feelings of acceptance amongst queer migrants are linked.

Whilst I do not presume that these feelings of acceptance in much of London's wider society makes the role of the diaspora redundant for these participants, finding alternative communities to participate in means that participants do not necessarily have to rely on the diaspora for a sense of belonging or community in the city. This is a topic that should be noted in further research: whilst most analyses of queer migrants' social engagements rightly focus on engagements with diasporic or queer communities, it is critical not to neglect queer migrants' feelings when they engage with wider society. This is because their feelings of comfort, acceptance and belonging in the wider 'host' society have a significant impact firstly on their engagement with the diaspora, and secondly on their overall feelings of happiness.

5. Conclusions

This dissertation has explored the social engagements of queer migrants from four countries, looking at how these migrants engage with their diaspora, and the extent to which engagement is influenced by their sexual and gender identities. It considered the role that other queer members of the diaspora play in providing a space where queer migrants can feel comfortable, and examined the impact that participants' predominant impressions of London as a diverse and tolerant city had on their desire and ability to form connections both within the diaspora and with other communities. Underpinning these themes was the argument that many queer migrants experience 'double discrimination' (Petzen, 2004; Kuntsman, 2009), and that belonging in a community can help mitigate feelings of marginalisation (Gorman-Murray et al., 2008), thus contributing to migrants' sense of comfort and belonging in London.

It became clear that queer migrants' engagement with the diaspora is ultimately characterised by non-belonging. Most participants had limited engagement with their diaspora, and where engagement did occur, it was primarily through informal connections rather than organised groups. This disengagement often resulted from migrants' experiences of intolerance and incompatibility with the diaspora, due in part to their queer identities. This parallels the findings of Petzen (2004), Mole (2018), and Sólveigar-Guðmundsdóttir (2018). Building on this, I questioned whether queer migrants could even be considered as members of a diaspora, arguing that the concept of 'diasporic consciousness' (Vertovec, 1997) is an appropriate way of understanding their identification with a diasporic identity, but predominant disengagement from a diasporic community.

Migrants' disengagement from and discomfort around the diaspora comes despite most participants viewing the diaspora as more tolerant towards queerness than the overall population of their country of origin, thus challenging Gopinath's (2005) conceptualisation of diasporas as bastions of tradition, and providing weight to Mole et al.'s (2017) argument that (re)socialisation in a more tolerant country tends to make people more tolerant. Gopinath's understanding may, however, still apply to many organised groups within the diaspora, which participants engaged with less frequently. Comparing queer migrants' experiences in informal and (semi-)formal diasporic settings could therefore be a promising topic for further research.

Despite these feelings of non-belonging, most queer migrants' experiences in London cannot ultimately be characterised as isolating. Although many participants had experienced discomfort in certain diasporic as well as queer spaces, they were mostly also able to find

spaces in which they felt accepted. For some, this was due to having found queer contacts within their diaspora, however for many, what was important was that they could find queer contacts who shared their experiences as migrants and as people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Based on this, academic research into 'queer diasporas' (Fortier, 2002) needs to better encapsulate the lived reality of many queer migrants, who often look less to forming connections based on a common nationality, and more to joining communities that are largely comprised of queer people who do not fit the white, British, non-migrant, mould. These communities can be likened to queer diasporas as they feel a sense of separation from the 'mainstream' queer community, however require an understanding of diaspora that transgresses nationally-defined boundaries.

London's conceptualisation as a diverse and tolerant city moreover enabled participants to 'branch out' (Huan, China) from their diasporas and build connections beyond their ethnic or national identities, as most participants were able to find communities in which their identities as queer people and as migrants were shared and respected. Queer migrants' engagement with their 'host' country's wider society is thus a topic that needs exploring in more detail, as previous studies have centred predominantly on queer migrants' engagement with diasporic and queer communities. Yet my initial findings indicate that queer migrants' sense of acceptance in wider society can influence their need to engage with the diaspora, as well as their feelings of overall belonging.

Ultimately, this dissertation has contributed to foregrounding the experiences of queer migrants in migration studies, focusing in particular on where their experiences may differ from those of their heterosexual and cisgender peers as a result of their queer identities. It thus challenges narratives that see migration in exclusively 'rational' terms, demonstrating that queerness, diasporic engagement, and emotions such as comfort and acceptance are often inextricably linked.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Original Dissertation Proposal

Dissertation Proposal: MSc Global Migration 2018/19

Working Title of Dissertation
Practices of Home-Making amongst Recent LGBTQ+ Migrants in London

Aims and Objectives of the Research

This dissertation aims to critically engage with the concept of 'home,' both as a material space and as an emotive concept, amongst recent LGBTQ+ migrants in London. Recent literature sees 'home' as unstable and continuously negotiated (Ahmed et al. 2003; Blunt 2005), and often refers to the process of 'home-making' to demonstrate this. This has led to studies being conducted on the practices and material cultures used by migrant and ethnic minority communities to make home (see, for example, Botticello 2007). However, much literature on home and home-making in the LGBTQ+ migrant community has neglected to examine processes of home-making from a practice-based perspective, and has instead focused predominantly on discourses regarding home. This dissertation therefore aims to bring these two branches of work together.

Conceptualisations of home amongst LGBTQ+ migrants can differ from those of other migrants in a number of ways. As Fortier (2003) notes, home is not always a space of safety or belonging for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Thus, migration can be as much about finding a new home as it is about departing from the childhood home. Additionally, attachments to a traditional 'home country' and its culture may be complicated if LGBTQ+ individuals are not made to feel welcome within that culture. It is therefore reasonable to expect that practices of home-making for LGBTQ+ migrants in a new place of residence may be considerably different from practices found amongst straight, cisgender migrants: relationships with the diasporic community and the culture of the country of origin may be different, and migrants may seek attachments to the LGBTQ+ community in their new place of residence over seeking out co-ethnics. However, the possibility of double discrimination (Petzen 2004) based on both sexuality and national/ethnic background could leave LGBTQ+ migrants with a sense of non-belonging.

This study therefore aims to investigate the attachments to 'home' and engagement with the 'home culture' amongst LGBTQ+ migrants in London and, crucially, the practices and processes they use in order to achieve a sense of home. It will thus draw upon concepts from Queer Migration Studies as well as from Cultural Geography and Anthropology. It will go further than works by scholars like Fortier (2003) by investigating not only the meanings attached to the concept of home, but also the practices that create home, both in the domestic space and in the public space.

A note on terminology

- Throughout this proposal I have used the term 'LGBTQ+' to refer to people who identify with non-straight sexual orientations and non-cisgender genders. However, many academics use the term 'queer' to demonstrate resistance to state-led, legalistic interpretations of sexual orientation and gender (Fortier 2003). I wish to conduct further reading into the various possible terms before deciding on which I feel is the most appropriate to use.
- I am putting 'home culture' and 'British culture' in quotation marks to demonstrate that cultures are continuously constructed, negotiated and contested. The very concept of *a* national culture can, furthermore, be contested, due to the diversity of lifestyles they are comprised of.

Research Questions

- Discourses of 'home' and belonging
  - How do recent LGBTQ+ migrants relate to the notion of home?
  - Where do LGBTQ+ migrants identify their home, or homes, to be?

- Home-making practices
  - How do recent LGBTQ+ migrants make home in London?
  - How do LGBTQ+ migrants relate to their 'home culture,' and (how) do they engage with it in everyday life?
  - Is the notion of 'cultural hybridity' an appropriate frame for analysing the ways in which LGBTQ+ migrants engage with 'home culture' and 'British culture'?

- Diaspora
  - What role, if any, does diaspora play in practices of home-making for LGBTQ+ migrants?
  - What is the relationship of LGBTQ+ migrants to diasporic groups associated with their 'home country'?
  - Is there such thing as a 'queer diaspora' (Fortier 2002)?

- Home-making and cultural engagement in public space
  - What is the role of public/semi-public space in processes of home-making?
  - (How) do LGBTQ+ migrants engage with traditional migrant spaces such as markets and shops?
  - What are the politics of home and home-making in a society that displays anti-immigrant and homophobic sentiments?

Relevant Literature

Fortier, A.-M. (2003) 'Making home: queer migrations and motions of attachment.' In: Ahmed, S. et al. (eds.) *Uprootings/Regroundings. Questions of Home and Migration*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 115-135

- Fortier's chapter is a theoretical overview of the ways in which home is conceptualised in Queer Migration scholarship. Her work examines how notions of the childhood home can be understood quite differently by the LGBTQ+ community, due to the fact that home is, for many in the community, not always a space of belonging. Moreover, she examines the notion that home can be a destination rather than an origin for many LGBTQ+ migrants, exemplified by the fact that many LGBTQ+ migrants move to a more LGBTQ+-friendly place than where they grew up. This theoretical overview is highly relevant for the questions I wish to ask in my dissertation, however it does not include empirical research and, moreover, only really considers conceptualisations of home rather than practices and processes of home-making.

Hitchings, R. (2012) 'People Can Talk about Their Practices.' *Area*, 44:1, pp.61-67.

- Hitchings provides a justification for conducting interviews about people's practices, actions and habits, as opposed to uncovering this using participant observation. Whilst he notes the usefulness of participant observation, he argues that practice-based discussions can elicit more information, by helping a researcher understand not only what a person does, but also how they think about and interpret their actions – if they think about them at all. This is highly useful for my project, as an aspect of my interviews will include a discussion of migrants' practices of home-making and cultural engagement.

Proposed Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The primary method of data collection will be semi-structured interviews with migrants who self-define as non-straight and/or non-cisgender (LGBTQ+). I wish to focus on relatively recent migrants, therefore I plan to select participants who have been living in London for a maximum of five years. Five years is, however, a relatively arbitrary time frame, and as such may be adapted according to the participants available.

I will select participants using the snowballing method as well as by emailing organisations, such as community groups, that engage with the LGBTQ+ community. Importantly, I wish to engage with migrants from a variety of national backgrounds, as well as with multiple groups within the LGBTQ+ community. Existing research often focuses predominantly on gay men rather than focusing on men, women and non-binary individuals in one paper (see, for example, Sólveigar-Guðmundsdóttir 2018). Significantly, other sexual orientations such as bisexual or pansexual are also often largely neglected: the aim to proactively recruit participants from these groups is, therefore, part of a politically-motivated aim to amplify the voices of these other communities and avoid issues such as 'bi-erasure.'

My aim is for the interviews to take a relatively informal tone, and for them to be a dialogue between two people who are interested in collaborative knowledge gathering. Nevertheless, my positionality as a researcher and as a white British citizen means that hierarchy cannot be avoided entirely. I will transcribe the interviews immediately after they take place and subsequently code them in order to identify common themes.

Timetable

February – April	Meet with supervisor Finalise research aims and questions Finalise methods and which organisations to contact Background reading
May	Continue background reading Look for participants – email organisations and get in touch with current contacts Write literature review
June	Conduct majority of interviews Transcribe interviews as I conduct them Write up methodology
July	Conduct final interviews Code all interviews Interview analysis Begin writing first draft
August	Finish first draft (early August) and discuss with supervisor Write up final version; edit
September	Finalise and submit dissertation

Potential outcomes, rationale and value of the research

I expect that LGBTQ+ migrants' engagement with home-making practices will be highly complex and dependent on the relationship they have with their country of origin and 'home culture.' The practice-oriented approach means that this study will go further than much existing work in Queer Migration Studies, which only focuses on abstract notions of home. Having a practice-based approach can elicit a better understanding of the actual ways in which LGBTQ+ migrants engage with home, and related concepts, such as 'home culture,' in their everyday lives. Understanding processes of home-making necessarily also requires understanding those who do not feel like they are at home. Importantly, this is essential for individuals and organisations, for example diasporic groups, who wish to better integrate LGBTQ+ migrants in their communities. By not focusing solely on one ethnic/national group, this study additionally aims to identify commonalities as well as differences between migrants who may be coming from vastly different backgrounds. Furthermore, by committing to represent often neglected voices within the LGBTQ+ community, such as the voices of bisexual people, this study aims to contribute to the current lack of academic research about these communities.

Bibliography and Other Relevant Readings

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Appendix 2: Research Diary

Date of Entry	Discussion of Task	Task Completed
11/02-16/02/19	Develop concrete idea for dissertation; background reading to substantiate this idea	Done
18/02/19	Submit dissertation proposal	Done
27/03/19	First meeting with supervisor to discuss topic and methods of dissertation	Done
27/03-14/04/19	Background reading on Queer Migration academic literature and some policy literature	Done
24/04/19	Second meeting with supervisor to discuss presentation	Done
29/04-06/05/19	Plan and prepare for dissertation presentation	Done
07/05/19	Dissertation presentation	Done
09/05/19	Look for ways to narrow down participants to certain countries (based on verbal feedback from presentation)	Done
13/05/19	Collect info about migrant groups in London; find out about LGBT laws worldwide to work out which countries of origin to include	Done
14/05/19	Fill out risk assessment and send to supervisor	Done
14/05-15/05/19	Plan interview topics and suggested questions	Done
16/05/19	Conduct pilot interview with friend	Done
18/05/19	Begin looking for participants by sending cover letter to queer charities, community groups and online groups. Difficult to make progress as initial lack of responses from most organisations, and those that did respond did not elicit any prospective participants	Done
25/05/19	Submit risk assessment on Moodle	Done
26/05/19	Conduct interview #1	Done
27/05/19	Conduct interview #2	Done
03/06/19	Meet supervisor to discuss how to find more participants and any concerns that arose from first interviews. Difficult to find people to participate so ask supervisor if he has any contacts he could put me in touch with. Supervisor puts me in touch with two people who may be able to help	Done
06/06/19	Conduct interview #3	Done

07/06/19	Conduct interview #4	Done
14/06/19	Conduct interview #5	Done
17/06/19	Conduct interview #6	Done
18/06/19	Start drafting methodology section	Done
18/06/19	Conduct interview #7	Done
19/06/19	Conduct interview #8	Done
20/06/19	Look at gaps in my reading list; look for readings to help fill these gaps	Done
25/06/19	Conduct interview #9	Done
30/06/19	Finish transcribing interviews #1-#8	Done
01/06/19	Look for more participants via personal contacts and queer Facebook groups, as still short on numbers, and some prospective participants did not get back to me after initial communication	Done
02/07-06/07/19	Coding all interviews that have been conducted so far in Atlas.ti	Done
07/07/19	Begin drafting intro and literature review, and continue drafting methods section	Done
08/07/19	Conduct interview #10	Done
12/07/19	Submit first draft of as much of dissertation as is written (introduction, literature review, and methods sections)	Done
13/07/19	Conduct interview #11	Done
15/07/19	Finish transcribing interviews #10 and #11	Done
16/07/19	Coding interviews #10 and #11 in Atlas.ti	Done
17/07/19	Begin drafting analysis section	Done
28/07/19	Receive feedback from supervisor on first draft; begin to incorporate edits into text	Done
09/08-20/08/19	Redrafting and editing of all sections	Done
14/08/19	Meet supervisor to discuss progress with write-up and any final questions or concerns	Done
21/08/19	Write conclusion	Done
22/08-30/08/19	Finish all redrafting and editing of all sections	Done
30/08-31/08/19	Formatting – add in appendices, abstract, etc.	Done
01/09/19	Final read through and edit; printing and binding; submit to Turnitin	Done
02/09/19	Dissertation submission, 11:00-12:00	Done

Appendix 3: Cover Letter Sent to Organisations and Prospective Participants

UCL DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in a Masters dissertation study on the experiences of queer/LGBT+ migrants in London. The dissertation is conducted as part of the MSc Global Migration course at University College London (UCL), and has received ethical approval from the Department of Geography.

For this research, I am looking for participants who meet the following criteria:

- You identify as queer, or as LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or similar).
- You migrated to the UK from one of the following countries: **India**, **China (including Hong Kong)**, **Russia** or **Turkey**. These countries have been chosen because they do not officially criminalise homosexuality, but also offer no legal protection to the queer community (source: ILGA 2019).

I would like to conduct a semi-structured discussion with you lasting approximately 45 minutes. The discussion will be recorded, and all your data will be anonymised and treated confidentially. It is up to you exactly what direction you would like to take the discussion in, however the sorts of topics I would like to talk about include:

- Your experiences, as a queer migrant, engaging with other migrants from the country you migrated from.
- The ways in which you engage with organised groups and events from your ethnic or national background.
- Your engagement with other queer people and spaces in London.
- How you present your sexual or gender identity as a migrant in London.

I would like to emphasise that you are free to steer the conversation in whichever direction you like. If you do not wish to discuss a topic, I will be happy to move on to a new topic without judgement. The most important thing is that **you feel comfortable discussing your experiences.** This is a collaborative process in which I hope we can gain a greater understanding of the experiences of queer migrants in London, so your insights and stories are incredibly valuable.

The interviews can take place on the UCL campus in Bloomsbury, or at a public location of your choice (for example, a café). I am looking to conduct the interviews at a date and time that is convenient for you, ideally before the 12th July.

If you are interested in participating, or if you have any questions about the project, please email me at j.mizen@ucl.ac.uk. Thank you for contributing – I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Josephine Mizen
MSc candidate, Global Migration 2018-19
University College London

Appendix 4: Consent Form for Interview

UCL DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Consent Form for Interview Participants

Title of Study: The diasporic engagements of first generation queer migrants in London

Name of Researcher: Josephine Mizen (j.mizen@ucl.ac.uk)

If you agree to take part, please confirm by ticking the relevant box below. Alternatively, you may indicate your consent verbally at the start of a recorded interview.

	Tick
I have read and understood the Information Sheet and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	
I consent to participate in an individual interview.	
I understand that my personal information (name, age, country of origin) will be used as indicated in the Information Sheet, unless I withdraw my consent within five weeks of the interview in which I participated.	
I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified. Limits to confidentiality: I understand that the researcher has a duty to report to the relevant authorities possible harm/danger to participants or others.	
I understand the potential risks of participating.	
I confirm that no promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage me to participate.	
I consent to my interview being audio-recorded and transcribed and that the recordings and transcriptions will be stored securely on a password-protected computer.	
I am aware of who I should contact if I wish to lodge a complaint.	
I understand that the information gathered will be used in a report (postgraduate dissertation) in which it will not be possible to identify me. I wish to receive a copy of the dissertation. (Yes/No)	
I understand that audio recordings will be destroyed as soon as the final examination for the postgraduate degree has been completed. I understand that transcripts will be archived, securely, for possible use in future publications in which it will not be possible to identify me.	

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep, if you wish.

Appendix 5: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, not all interviews proceeded exactly according to this schedule, and in most cases additional follow-up questions were asked or new topics were brought up.

Before Interview Starts:

Provide participant with information sheet.

Explain what the interview is about: looking to have a discussion with participant about their experiences living in London as a queer migrant; main topics that I intend to cover.

Nature of interview: semi-structured, audio recorded, free to deviate from topics according to what's interesting to participant, free not to answer certain questions, can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Should take about 45 minutes.

Confidentiality, anonymity.

Consent form and any questions.

Demographic info

- How old are you?
- Where did you migrate from?
- Describe gender you identify with
- Describe sexual orientation

Migration history

- Tell me about your migration to London
  - Follow up questions, including:
    where from,
    how old were you,
    have you lived elsewhere,
    what was your main reason for moving (e.g. work, study),
    did you move with anyone?

Could you start by telling me a bit about your experiences living in London as a queer migrant?

- Gives an idea of topics participant may be interested in/wish to cover.
- Follow up questions as appropriate.

Diasporic groups, spaces, events

- Engagement with other people from your ethnic background
  - What relationships, how you met them, what you do with them
- Engagement with organised groups or events that relate to your country of origin
  - Do you engage, how, why/why not, why those particular events/groups

    - Any groups/events that you would avoid; know about but don't attend
    - Frequency of engagement – why?
- Engagement with diasporic spaces, e.g. public spaces
    - Which, if any, why/why not
    - Feelings when in these spaces
- Engagement with cultural practices and/or traditions from country of origin
    - On a regular basis
    - On specific occasions, e.g. national holidays
    - Do you avoid any, do you particularly dislike any?
- Do you consider yourself part of a [country] diaspora?

Queer identity and diaspora

- Do you ever feel that your engagement with people from your home country, or groups/events associated with your home country, is influenced by your sexuality?
- Have you ever modified behaviour in diasporic contexts?
    - How, which contexts
- Contexts in which you emphasise/de-emphasise queer identity
- Feelings of comfort within these diasporic groups/spaces/events

Migrant in queer spaces

- Do you engage with queer groups/spaces/events/groups in London?
    - Which ones, how often, what kinds of groups
    - Why/why not
    - Why those particular groups/spaces/events?
- Queer activism?
- Feelings whilst in these spaces
- Events/spaces you know about but don't engage with; spaces that you dislike – why?
- Engagement with other queer people
    - What relationships, how you met, what you do together
    - Migrants/non-migrants

Queer diaspora

- Queer people from country of origin
    - Do you know any, are you close to them, how you met
- Queer people who are also migrants
- Queer diasporic groups/spaces/events
- Importance/lack of importance of queer diasporic/migrant contacts

Queerness and country of origin

- Connections with queer people in country of origin
    - Engagement when in London, engagement when visiting country of origin
- Visits to country of origin – frequency, alone/with family
- Awareness of/engagement with events relating to the queer community in country of origin – e.g. activism, politics, news, communication
    - Engagement when in London, engagement when previously living in country of origin

London

- As a queer person and as a migrant, what do you like/dislike about London?
  - Why do you like/dislike these things
- Emotions in London – sense of (dis)comfort, (non-)belonging – which parts of London?
- London compared with place you migrated from; compared with other places you've lived in
- Parts of London that you enjoy being in, visit often
- Parts of London you avoid?
- Impact of living in London on your identity as a queer person from (country name)? Has it impacted? How?
  - Impact on self-expression?

Conclusions

- Any other things you wish to discuss? E.g. stories you want to tell, topics we didn't quite cover

End of Interview

- Answering any questions from participants
- Thanking participant for their time
- Checking whether participant wishes to receive a copy of the final dissertation
- Any of participant's contacts who might be interested in also doing the study

Appendix 6: Excerpt from an Interview Transcript

Interview with Katya (Russia, Woman, 40-49)
Conducted 07/06/19

Transcript Key:

I:	Interviewer
R:	Respondent
…:	Hesitation/pause
//:	Overlapping speech
[Name of action]:	Unspoken action, e.g. laughing
[Information]:	Information that has been cut/censored to maintain confidentiality
[?]:	Unclear on recording

I: Okay, so just to start with a very sort of broad question, could you start by telling me a bit about your experiences living in London as a queer migrant, you can take it in whatever direction you like?

R: Er okay, so I find it really wonderful, it's a big city, it can be quite anonymous, there's a lot of choice so you're not stuck with one group of people, and uh I actually find that I probably don't even know a fraction of what's available to me in terms of being queer and in terms of the people I can meet, um I have met a group of people who identify as both queer and polyamorous, sometime ago when I met my partner through that group, so my current partner is male, we're pretty settled we have a child together, but I've, because we have an open relationship I've had, I've dated women and he has a boyfriend, who we live with. So and yeah I just find it very accepting and very open and mostly non-judgemental although it can be a bit dramapheliac[?] I suppose, but also if you find there's too much drama you can always move on to slightly different circles and.

I: Yeah, what do you mean by like too much drama?

R: Oh it's just that people can get really wrapped up in sort of like talking about their poly experiences and how they interact in the poly circles, uh and they end up dating each other and it can be a bit incestuous [both chuckle], which personally I mean I don't mind if somebody else does it but I've never felt the need, just because there is so much choice. I think for me moving from, so [city in Siberia] is a big city but I actually am from a town which is next door and it's a university town and it's actually quite small, so you end up, there you end up knowing everybody, so everything you do is exposed and people like to gossip a lot, so whereas in London in some circles people do gossip a lot you can always step back, and I have done actually, partly for that reason.

I: Okay, so the anonymity is quite a big difference for you?

R: Yeah, it's, yeah it is, plus I think being able to just express yourself, for who you are and what you believe in, not being sort of scared of being followed or being abused is really big.

I: Mm, okay, so I'd like to talk a bit about your engagement with other Russian people in London, so do you, do you know many Russians in London, or in the UK?

R: Um, not compared to probably a lot of other people because I've never, because I've been here for so long I think most of my identity's sort of here and I've never purposefully sought out Russian people just for the sake of a shared language, so I think that even though I do know some queer Russian people most of my social circles are not. I know a lot of Russian people through my mother and she's working in [small city in UK], but they're not queer, I'm actually not out to my parents, for various reasons.

I: So most of the Russians that you know sort of as friends or acquaintances are also queer?

R: Uh not really no, I think my close friends are not actually, and they're unrelated and then lots of, yeah, and a lot of the people are back in [small city where she grew up] are not because I'm not out, so yeah I haven't purposefully gone out of my way to meet queer Russian people just for that reason, so.

I: Yeah, okay, and do you engage at all with like organised groups or events that are associated with Russia or with Russian culture or?

R: Sometimes, um yeah so somebody I know from school actually ended up in London from completely unrelated circles, she hangs around with a lot of Russian gay men because she really likes them, [unintelligible] close friends so I end up hanging around with them every now and then, I guess that's probably my closest connection to specifically Russian queer circles.

I: Okay, and what about any sort of like cultural events or anything, do you participate in those or?

R: I used to go sometimes, yeah, I used to go to sometimes Russian cinema, film, not specifically queer events[?], um, yeah.

I: Okay, and what about like do you engage much with kind of Russian culture in general, like whatever you think of Russian culture to be?

R: Yeah, every now and then, yeah, I'm actually taking my mum to a dance, a Russian dance event, there's a Russian ballerina

I: // Aww nice, okay, yeah

R: She's going to perform on Saturday, music, particularly classical music, er because it's something that I grew up with, I really love.

I: Okay, and what about like any kind of traditions or like for example holidays that are celebrated in Russia?

R: Yeah so my parents celebrate Easter, it's really big for them, so I tend to go and visit them and we go to church, there is a church in [small UK city where parents live] which they go to.

I: A Russian church?

R: Er yeah, yeah, so the Russian Christmas as well which is on the 7th as you probably know, not on the 25th, and it's big for my family so I tend to celebrate that with them.

I: Okay, so you tend to go to [small UK city where parents live]?

R: // Yeah, yeah

I: Or to Russia or? Okay, so you say obviously that you haven't really like sought out Russian people specifically, do you have any particular reasons for that?

R: Um, good question [both chuckle], yeah it's funny because now I'm bringing up a boy and my partner is really keen that he learns Russian and I'm actually finding it a bit hard because I've sort of switched to English [both chuckle], so I speak Russian with my family and when we visit but it's just that I feel that it would be a little bit forced for me to try and seek out Russian things just for that reason, there needs to be more kind of, I'm also very picky so it needs to be just the right people, and just because they speak Russian that's not enough for me, there has to be more that connects us, which you would have thought that queerness would be, but in a way because I've found my queer circles here already, there's not this extra need to find somebody who speaks Russian too, even though there's some people on the scene who I've seen.

I: Okay so your queer circles are they quite international or are they mostly British or?

R: Pretty international actually to be honest yeah, there's a lot of Eastern Europeans, um there's quite a few, there's some Americans, there's quite a few Brits, but it's nicely mixed.

I: Aw nice, okay, and so have you ever felt that your sexual identity plays a role in your decision to engage or to not engage with Russian groups or Russian people?

R: Um…if I engage with them and I'm not sure if they're queer or not I tend not to be out just in case, although to be honest it's probably fairly safe here because it's a very different society.

I: Yeah, do you think most of the Russians in London would be quite accepting?

R: I think so yeah, I mean with my parents' group of people it's a separate story, my dad is actually quite homophobic and that is the main reason why I'm not out, my mum not so much, and they tend to know older generation and they don't, they haven't accepted alternative ways of life necessarily although they might be more, they might be less kind of right wing I suppose, because they live in this country so, but you're just never sure, so just in case I tend to…but also it's for me my current circumstances are that I am straight-presenting, to pretty much everyone, so, which is interesting because I still very strongly identify as queer, it's important for me but in a way there's no need for me to come out all the time unless I want people to accept me as a person on a closer, more personal level, so.

I: Okay, and do you think it's quite a big generational difference amongst Russians?

R: // Yeah definitely, yeah, so I'm also in touch with a lot of my old friends from back in my hometown and we talk a lot on Google Hangout actually, it's a good place[?] and it's a mixture between them, they're all about my age, some of them are very very pro-LGBT, others not really, so we've had some really bad arguments with them actually, which at the moment I've just decided not to engage, when somebody said something I just disassociate, because I feel it's not worth it, but.

I: Is this a topic that kind of comes up just sort of based on something that someone's read in the news or?

R: Yeah sometimes, I mean for example we were talking about Pride, so one of my old school friends now lives in Israel, she's part of the Russian-Jewish community there, she's really pro-Pride so she drags her entire family out there, they all stand[?] with a rainbow flag and everything, and she mentioned something and I got really excited and I'm like, oh yeah we're gonna do Pride, you know in July in London, and then one of my friends who I know is not so good at this just made a snarky comment, and neither of us, because we both made a pact with each other, we're not going to engage, so neither of us said anything we just moved the subject because it's not worth it, in the past they had some long arguments, there's him and then there's another guy.