QUALITATIVE BARRIERS OF INTEGRATION AND ACCESS TO SETTLEMENT SERVICES: THE CASE OF MUSLIMS IN CANADA AND GERMANY

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Use of quantitative methodology has gained prominence in research on immigrant settlement and access to services. This paper, however, discusses the potential of qualitative methodology in explaining the link between settlement and gender identity construction, which has been overlooked in research on settlement due to lack of qualitative research using a gender lens. We draw on the qualitative findings of our doctoral research projects on Muslim immigrant men in Canada and Muslim immigrant women in Germany, respectively, to show that while previous quantitative research has explained the gendered nature of settlement (e.g., gender differences in terms of income, education, language acquisition, etc.), in-depth accounts of male and female immigrants in our studies reveal that settlement process is significantly limited by one's encounter with host country's gender order.

L'utilisation d'une méthodologie quantitative a gagné en importance dans la recherche sur l'établissement des immigrants et l'accès aux services. Le présent document examine toutefois le potentiel de la méthodologie qualitative pour expliquer le lien entre l'établissement et la construction de l'identité du genre, qui a été négligé dans la recherche sur l'établissement en raison du manque de recherche qualitative utilisant une optique de genre. Nous nous appuyons sur les résultats qualitatifs de nos projets de recherche doctorale sur les hommes immigrés musulmans au Canada et les femmes immigrées musulmanes en Allemagne, respectivement, pour montrer que si des recherches quantitatives antérieures ont expliqué la caractère sexospécifique de l'établissement (par exemple, les différences entre les genres en ce qui concerne le revenu, l'éducation, l'acquisition de la langue, etc.), les comptes rendus approfondis des immigrés masculins et féminins dans nos études révèlent que le processus d'établissement est considérablement limité par la rencontre avec le système patriarcal du pays d'accueil.

The quantitative-qualitative dichotomy in migration research has been an epistemological issue for the past four decades (see Castles 2012; Iosfides 2011; Iosifides and Sporton 2009; Halfacree and Boyle 1993; Cadwallader 1989; White 1980). This is because migration researchers and policy makers are mostly skeptical about the potential of qualitative methods in answering important questions (Gamlen 2012; Philip 1998). The key reason behind the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy is in epistemology. Methodology and epistemology are two interrelated concepts because the latter is a philosophy concerned with the nature of relationship between researchers and research participants in pursuit of truth. Specifically, epistemology answers how researchers should go about acquiring knowledge (Young and Atkinson 2012). Quantitative researchers believe in 'positivism' epistemology, which advocates for objectivity in social research. Proponents of positivism – i.e. positivists – assert that there is a single 'truth' which can be measured using objective statistical techniques (Berg and Lune 2012). For instance, Emile Durkheim, one of the early advocates of objectivity in sociological research,

suggested that in order to improve sociology and sociological inquiry as a distinct discipline, researchers must take 'social facts' as the object of their research. By social facts, Durkheim referred to 'measurable' structural realities that are embedded in social institutions as opposed to human subjectivity and agency. The implication of Durkheim's insistence on social facts was that 'truth' in social phenomena becomes free of multiplicity only if the relationship between the researcher and research participants is based on neutrality (Castles 2012).

In contrast, qualitative researchers are highly critical of objectivity in social research. The constructionist epistemology, for instance, suggests that social phenomena are constructed through human interaction (Berger and Luckmann 1969). Hence, exploring 'truth' must constitute communicative interaction in which researchers draw on their subjectivity to engage with their research participants in the process of meaning making of the phenomenon of interest (Fontana and Frey 1994). As a result, qualitative researchers believe neither in singleness of truth nor in measurability of social phenomena in the scientific sense.

Instead, critics of objectivity uphold conceptualization of 'truth' as a relative notion that varies from one context to another. One example of relativism in migration context is the relative meaning of 'friendship'. While friendship may constitute 'more or less stable relations of reciprocity and solidarity' to native-born members of immigrant-receiving societies, 'friendship with natives' means 'superficial friendship contact' to immigrants (Iosifides and Sporton 2009, 103). Considering the concept of relativism, only in-depth qualitative exchanges between researchers and research participants help understand the cultural and contextual motivation and consequences of attaching this meaning to 'friendship with natives' among immigrants (Iosifides and Sporton 2009).

Contrary to the premises of positivism epistemology, qualitative researchers believe that the core strengths of qualitative research lie in its ability to explain micro-level subjectivity and multiplicity of truth. In a research on asylum seekers in the United States, for instance, Oxford (2012) found that female asylum seekers faced higher rate of asylum denial because American immigration officials were 'differently situated' and, hence, had different interpretations of 'gender-based persecution'. The challenges asylum seekers faced in convincing immigrant officials had more to do with how immigration officials interpreted and responded to what constituted a gender-based asylum claim as opposed to the legitimacy of their gender-based asylum claims. As argued by Oxford, quantitative data would have not been as helpful to reveal the various layers of this important immigration-related issue throughout the course of data collection and analysis.

Another widely held criticism of quantitative methodology is that statistical models cannot capture the complexity of 'all possible factors' that produce and reproduce social phenomena because they are built based on a limited number of variables (Castles 2012, 12). Such models face the risk of providing a 'reductionist' picture of social reality because once the model is prepared and tested based upon a pre-existing theoretical framework and series of variables that may be incomplete or irrelevant, the researcher cannot change the theoretical framework and add or remove variables (Castles 2012). Qualitative approach, however, offers researchers the freedom to refine their conceptual framework and interview schedule through collecting and analyzing data simultaneously. This dynamic nature of qualitative methodology, for instance, helped Shih (2012) realize that their research on migrant workers in California lacked validity. As a result, Shih (2012) revised their study's theoretical framework and interview schedule, and argues that "making, recognizing, and correcting errors is at the heart of sound qualitative analysis" (571). Understanding the role of all possible factors is an empirical process, which requires simultaneous collection and analysis of data.

Despite the limitations of quantitative methodology, positivist epistemology in various literatures in general and in migration literature, in particular, is arguably still viewed as a superior paradigm. Some researchers lean towards quantitative methodology due to the availability of secondary quantitative data as well as the rapid growth of statistical software packages contributing to the efficiency and convenience of data analysis (Castles 2012) and because of the proliferation of available administrative data. While use of qualitative software packages has also grown in recent years, qualitative researchers do not enjoy the luxury of any publicly available secondary qualitative data. More importantly, qualitative researchers do not benefit from as much support from policy makers who commission academic research for wider non-academic audience. As a result, quantitative research is viewed as a 'standard' and 'acceptable' research approach in policy circles (Philip 1998, 273). For instance, Alan Gamlen (2012), a migration researcher, writes:

> Policy makers had indirectly funded the project [PhD dissertation] via a scholarship, and were therefore a key intended audience of the research from the start – and they have indeed seemed more receptive to the quantitative aspects of the research (and, I infer, to the research as a whole by virtue of its including such an aspect). (323)

However, this is not to suggest that there is a lack of interest in qualitative methodology in migration scholarship and beyond. Use of various qualitative methods have disturbed this supremacy to some extent. This development has taken place in recent years, according to Iosfides (2011), as "there has been a growing interest in a series of aspects related to the migration phenomenon, which are better highlighted and investigated with qualitative methods" (1). Qualitative data has potential to supplement, or be supplemented by, quanti-

tative methodology to help researchers get at the heart of the challenges and processes of integration among immigrants.

In this short paper, we use data from our doctoral research projects on Muslim men and women in Canada and Germany, respectively, which together illuminate that integration and access to settlement services in both countries have certain empirical challenges that can be unearthed only through in-depth qualitative accounts of immigrants. We will highlight that while existing quantitative researchers have argued that Canada and Germany are significantly distinct in terms of settlement policy and programs (see, for instance, Banting et al 2006), the qualitative barriers discussed in this paper are similar in these two countries.

It must be borne in mind that the purpose of this paper is to not advocate for the sole use of qualitative methodology in migration research at the expense of ignoring quantitative methods. Our thesis parallels the widely held statement that "different types of methods can answer different types of questions" (Castles 2012, 15). We argue that understanding such complex migration-related topics as ours, among others, requires a qualitative lens to understand the qualitative barriers and consequences of settlement efforts. Hence, use of quantitative methodology must not be prioritized at the expense of neglecting micro-level qualitative research that can unearth the complexity of various migration-related aspects (Iosifides 2011).

QUALITATIVE BARRIERS OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Economic mobility is a crucial aspect of immigrant settlement. Understanding the determining factors of income inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims in particular has drawn the attention of many quantitative researchers (Cadwallader 1989). In Canada, Kazemipur's (2014) quantitative analysis shows that Muslim men are significantly behind non-Muslim men in terms of earnings. However, the surprising aspect of this inequality is that higher education is not as rewarding for Muslim immigrant men as it is for non-Muslim immigrant men. Significantly fewer Muslim immigrant men who have a bachelor's degree or more than bachelor's degree, earn as much as non-Muslim immigrant men with same academic degrees. In other words, most of Muslim immigrant men earn significantly lower income than non-Muslim immigrant men despite having the same level of education. The implication of these findings is that education cannot explain the reason behind income inequality among Muslim and non-Muslim immigrant men in Canada.

What can, then, explain the reason behind this inequality if not education? Some may argue that Muslim immigrants struggle to find employment in their field of expertise because education credentials from Muslim-majority countries are not recognized in Western countries.

While 'place of education' may be a plausible explanation as well as statistically possible to measure its association with income, the qualitative accounts of Muslim immigrant men from Akbary's doctoral research reveal that the reason is much more complex. Muslim immigrants, at least immigrant men from Afghanistan, who migrate after having obtained academic degrees in their countries of origin, do understand this particular risk of migration. However, their post-migration solution, as one of our participants said, is to "to start over or complete certain certifications to take advantage of the high-quality education in here [Canada]." Before doing so, for example, older Afghan immigrant men who lack the necessary English language skills for this purpose enroll in English courses offered by settlement service providing agencies. However, the following excerpt from Naser (50, from Afghanistan, living in Canada since 2000), a research participant in Akbary's doctoral project, indicates that he stopped attending the classes after some time due to an unpleasant relationship with his instructor:

> Naser: Originally, I wanted to work instead of taking English courses due to financial difficulties, but it was nice that my wife started a job at that time. I started the course, but I felt discouraged day by day by my instructor's attitude. For some reason, she treated me differently from others in class. [...] For example, she would have other students engaged in class and provide them with more feedback and have a friendly conversation with them after class... you know stuff like that... but she was cold and somehow less engaging with me. [...] Now I think she was probably a bigot because I have now spent so much time here that I can recognize attitudes like that. But, I didn't think it was bigotry back then because I struggled with learning English, and she wasn't openly racist and never said anything anti-Islamic. [...] Listen, I was in charge of thousands of students and supervised tens of instructors back home. I would simply fire instructors like her from my school. [...] I thought it was a good idea to rather get a job and make money to support my children, so they receive proper ta'leem wa tarbeeya [discipline and education]... I got a job as a cleaner. I mopped offices after closing hours.

This exchange reveals that while Naser has a bachelor's degree from Kabul, Afghanistan, 'place of education' is not the only reason why he ended up earning little income as a cleaner. The nature of his relationship with his instructor influenced his decision to quit because not earning an income like his wife and feeling detached from the economic sphere of life coupled with an uncertainty about his future threatened his masculine identity. He planned to eventually restore his masculine status through learning English and securing a relatively high-status job in the education sector, but he did not feel comfortable in the intergroup context with his instructor. While he had a decent job and income in Afghanistan, his eco-

nomic reality did not meet his expectations in Canada until he reconciled this difference and started a job as a cleaner to fulfill his gendered responsibilities as a husband and father. While racism or Islamophobia may have been the reason behind the instructor's attitude, Naser did not interpret it as a form of discrimination initially. Therefore, we do not see how Naser's intention to eventually switch from being an English student to accepting to work as a cleaner can be measured and explained in statistical terms. This process and its link with his pre-migration status as an educator and post-migration financial difficulties and masculinity crisis was revealed because the researcher and the research participant engaged in an in-depth conversation that provided an accurate guide for inviting the researcher to invite the research participant to open up about his feelings and motivations.

A similar reality exists in the lives of Muslim immigrants in Germany. Women from Muslim-majority countries, in particular, are vulnerable to unemployment more than non-Muslim immigrant women in Germany (Worbs et al 2016). Some recent reports show that refugee women are not as well-integrated as others in all sectors (see Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2015; OECD 2017). These reports attempt to attribute this issue to low(er) level of education, insufficient work experience, or to traditional lifestyle and culture of immigrants (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2015, 19; OECD 2017, 23).

These explanations are not based on qualitative data but are attributed to certain social constructions of refugees who presumably represent the face of culturized Islam. Contrary to these reports, Palenberg's doctoral research showed that refugee women's integration, including that of Muslim women, is not associated with their academic and professional qualifications or gender relations, but that all resettled women have similar struggles in terms of access to settlement services and joining the labour market in the first three years after resettlement regardless of their academic and professional qualifications. Among the participants are resettled women with low school education to some with high academic degrees, women with 'housewife' background and no employment, and women who have employment experiences in high positions. Despite the variations in terms of academic and professional qualifications, these resettled women share the same situation of unemployment now. Hence, the existing body of quantitative research runs short of explaining why settlement services fail to help integrate refugee women in general and Muslim women in particular.

Based on the qualitative data from Palenberg's doctoral research, we argue that Muslim refugee women are less integrated in the labour market not because they necessarily lack human capital or because they are perhaps not allowed to do so by their male family members. Muslim refugee women, in the contrary, find the attitude of host members in general and service providers, in particular, unsatisfactory and problematic, pushing them to the margins of German labour market and long-term unemployment. Specifically, Palenberg's research explores how integration is interpreted among service providers in their everyday working relationship with Muslim refugee women and how this relationship is perceived by Muslim women to impact the effectiveness of settlement services. Let us observe a situation in which Maya (40, from Syria, living in Germany since 2015) goes to see an officer at an employment center to ask for resettlement services for employment support.

> Maya is visiting the "Jobcenter" today and I (Palenberg) am accompanying her. She tells the officer: "I want to work to earn money for me and my children. I am open to jobs in gastronomy or in caring jobs. I also already got the driving license. Please help me find something".
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> The officer answers: "Caring jobs, yes that might work. We also offer trainings for that. But are you sure that gastronomy is right for you? I see that you have children. We don't want to overwhelm you with that. I thought maybe you visit our officer who is in charge of women and equality". Maya never got the invitation to see this woman.
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> After the meeting she is angry: "Yes, I have children, but am I supposed to stay home? Why? In Syria I was free; I worked; and I had a life. But here, in Germany, I feel dependent on the government and controlled."

Here we can see the mechanisms leading to the fact that Maya remains unemployed. The expectations of Maya and settlement service provider are totally different, working in opposite directions. In her case, lack of education or work experience is not an issue because Maya seeks employment in the sectors in which she used to work. However, she did not receive enough support in Germany. Maya was left with the feeling that her desire to work outside home in Germany is in conflict with a Muslim woman's role as a mother and housewife.

We argue that the religious and gender identities (i.e. male/female Muslim identity) of our participants have played a significant role not only in the attitude of settlement service providers, but also in how Muslim immigrant clients respond to these processes in renegotiating their gender identities after migration. A quantitative analysis would have never captured the terms of interaction between the settlement service providers and our research participants in a way that our qualitative observations were able to do. Identifying the working of such relations and powerful hierarchies is not possible without a qualitative lens.

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