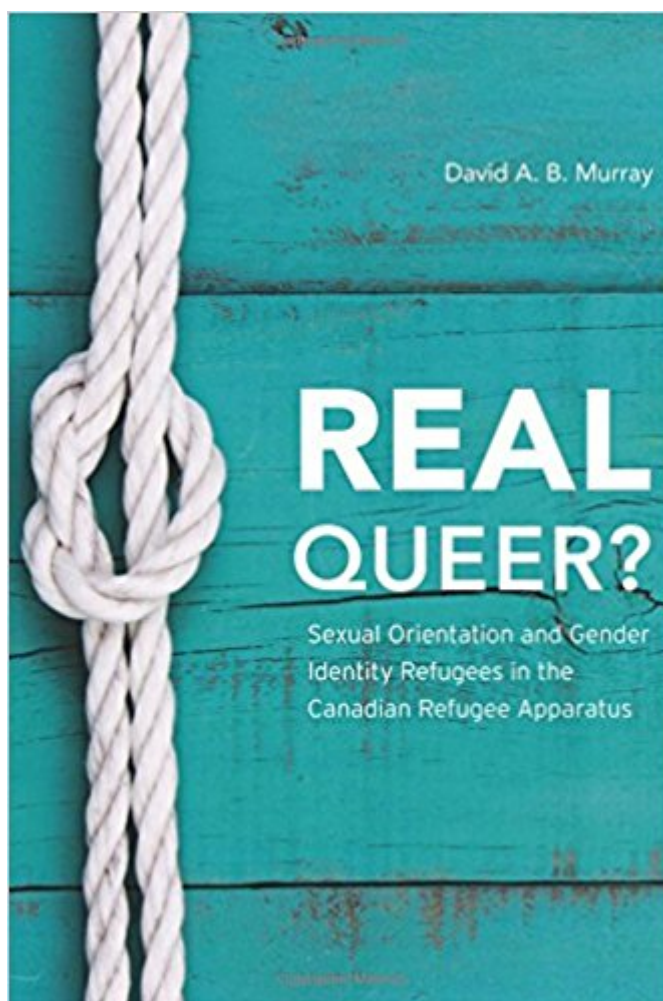


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Real Queer?: Sexual Orientation And Gender Identity Refugees In The Canadian Refugee Apparatus



Synopsis

“How do I prove I’m gay?” This is the central question for many refugee claimants who are claiming asylum on the basis of sexual orientation persecution. But what are the inherent challenges in obtaining this proof? How is the system that assesses this predicated upon homonormative frameworks and nervous borders? What is the impact of gender, race and class? What is an “authentic” sexual or gender identity and how can it be performed? *Real Queer?* is an ethnographic examination of the Canadian refugee apparatus analysing the social, cultural, political and affective dimensions of a legal and bureaucratic process predicated on separating the “authentic” from the “bogus” LGBT refugee. Through interviews, conversations and participant observation with various participants ranging from refugee claimants to their lawyers, Refugee Protection Division staff and local support group workers, it reveals the ways in which sexuality simultaneously disrupts and is folded into the nation-state’s dynamic modes of gate-keeping, citizenship and identity-making, and the uneven effects of these discourses and practices on this category of transnational migrants.

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Customer Reviews

Real Queer? weaves together ethnographic detail, reflexive observations, and salient theoretical concepts to reveal the complex negotiations of identity and performance, law and emotions, and competing discourses of sexuality and gender among differently situated actors in the high-stakes refugee determination process. . . . Murray’s work engages, informs, and challenges

readers. . . . In conclusion, *Real Queer?* will serve as an excellent text for upper undergraduate and graduate courses in anthropology and queer, migration, and gender studies but will also be valuable reading for immigrant-serving and LGBT organizations who support SOGI refugee claimants as well as for those who adjudicate their claims. (*American Anthropologist*)

In the proliferation of public attention on the sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) refugee in Canada, David AB Murray's *Real Queer? Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Refugees in the Canadian Refugee Apparatus* is a compelling and significant critical examination of how this category is (re)produced and its relationship to a larger discourse of Canadian homonationalism.... The greatest strength of *Real Queer?* is its integration of ethnographic work into a broader framework that examines how homonationalist discourses are constructed. Murray's ability to work with multiple scales and sites is one of the great achievements of this book.... Murray's *Real Queer? Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Refugees in the Canadian Refugee Apparatus* has set itself up as a critical volume for both queer and refugee theorists, and has admirably bridged these two areas of research through the contestation of parallel, and intertwined, hegemonic narratives. Even as the construction of the hegemonic "queer migration to liberation nation" narrative is persuasively set up, the agency of individual actors in resisting such discourses also remains centre stage. (*International Journal of Refugee Law*)

Real Queer? is a welcome addition to the growing field of queer migration studies, offering a detailed case study of how lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) asylum seekers are viewed and assessed by actors working within and around the Canadian "refugee apparatus."

Murray's term aptly frames the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) as functioning, primarily, to solidify the ideology of the liberal nation-state.... His book offers important theoretical and methodological contributions to the interdisciplinary study of migration and sexuality, revealing the power of nation-states to regulate and discipline the queer immigrants attempting to settle within their borders. (*Association for Feminist Anthropology*)

The product of an intensive ethnographic study of SOGI [sexual orientation and gender identity] refugee claimants (primarily from Africa and the Caribbean), refugee support groups, and the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) in Toronto, the study provides detailed and critical insights into the politics of the refugee claims-making and adjudication process. [T]he book makes a solid contribution to the interrelated fields of queer migration and SOGI refugee studies in the Canadian context (*Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*)

The state is deeply invested in the regulation of migrant/refugee sexuality, but conventional discussions usually ignore these investments and their consequences for border-crossing. *Real Queer* does not, asking instead how some refugees succeed in gaining entry

as queer subjects, how some gain entry with queerness disguised, and why some are denied entry altogether. Real Queer displays the human dimensions of the queer refugee experience, even as it shows that refugee queerness is as much about obedience and privilege as transgressive sexuality.

(William L. Leap, Professor of Anthropology, American University, Washington) Real Queer is a sensitive and trenchant examination of the challenges, triumphs and failures of LGBT asylum seekers in Canada. Murray offers a sharply observed and elegantly rendered rendition of the ambivalences and shifting contours of the refugee system as laws, lives, and material realities shape attachments to and distancing from home, nation, and an ideal queer world. An important work in transnational queer studies that will set the terms of future research and debates. (Martin F. Manalansan IV, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

David A.B. Murray is Professor of Anthropology at York University, Canada.

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