

Assessing Queer Needs in Peterborough-Nogojiwanong

Romy Hansen

2022

Faculty Advisor: Lisa Boucher

OPIRG Representative: Nicola Koyanagi

Contents

Introduction - - - - -	2
Methods - - - - -	3
Summary of the Literature Review - - - - -	7
Survey Findings - - - - -	11
Limitations - - - - -	14
Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations - - - - -	15
Reference List - - - - -	17

Introduction

This project was developed for the Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Queer (2SLGTBQ+) community in Peterborough-Nogojwanong to better understand community needs and expectations so organizations like the Trent Queer Collective and OPIRG Peterborough can better provide for them. This project centred the conversation around the collective, the research aimed to answer questions initially proposed by the collective. It sought to understand the current practices to ensure the Queer communities of Peterborough-Nogojwanong can continue working towards an inclusive and safe environment. This project explored the following questions:

1. What current practices are used by community services to ensure they have an inclusive/safe environment for members of the Queer community?
2. Are these practices effective? How safe/comfortable do Queer folk feel when accessing these organizations?

This research project is important to Queer communities as a historically marginalized community because they need safe and functioning community services to access. The Peterborough-Nogojwanong area has many community organizations that provide services to the Queer communities, and this project sought to understand how individuals within the Queer communities felt when accessing these services. This research sought to share information about individual experiences at community organisations. Through this research, community organisations may use the findings to alter existing programs or create additional programs to address any identified gaps. Queer community members may directly benefit from this research as its findings may encourage change within the community and improve services. This research was important for me to do because I felt a personal aspiration to ensure equal quality of services

for all peoples in the Peterborough-Nogojwanong area. I felt connected to this research project and knew it was important for me to do this research. I grew up in a small town where there were no Queer support available. However, since moving to the Peterborough-Nogojwanong area I have noticed the larger Queer communities and the available community supports. I wanted to become aware of the experience within these organisations. I am very interested in community-based research and felt this project could teach me valuable skills. This research is within my academic interests as a gender and social justice student and I knew I could use my personal experiences and knowledge to bring passion to this research.

Methods

This qualitative research project used a community-based research approach. It therefore aims to produce knowledge that is of interest and relevant to the community. This research was done in collaboration with the Trent Queer Collective and OPIRG Peterborough, community organizations in the Peterborough-Nogojwanong area. This research was initially proposed by the Trent Queer Collective and OPIRG Peterborough. A representative of OPIRG Peterborough has been working closely on this project throughout. Reciprocity was a central value in this research project as the results will hopefully directly benefit the Queer communities of Peterborough-Nogojwanong. I worked with the community through OPIRG Peterborough and aimed for my research process to benefit all parties involved. I conducted a literature review as well as a survey for this project.

I gathered 19 sources for the literature review. I searched for literature published between the years 2001 and 2021. I used keywords including Queer communities, law enforcement, community organizations, community supports, and Queer experiences. The literature review

collected many resources that allowed me to better understand the inclusions and exclusions experienced by Queer communities, Queer communities' relationship with law enforcement, Queer battle fatigue, and existing community supports and services. This review highlighted important aspects of Queer identities. It taught me about relationships, experiences, and ways of doing research. This review is summarised below.

The survey was created in collaboration with the OPIRG Peterborough and consisted of 15 questions. The survey aimed to assess the services and organizations providing services to the Queer communities of Peterborough-Nogojwanong. The questions focused on the services accessed, the helpfulness of these services, the accessibility of these services, the sense of belonging, as well as individual experiences regarding these services.

An online survey method was chosen for this research project because it is inexpensive and can reach a large audience. The survey was accessible on any device and could be completed at any time. The anonymity and privacy of this online format may allow respondents to provide more honest answers. I included four demographic questions regarding sexual identity, gender identity, and racial identity. I chose these demographic questions because my research concerned intersectional identities accessing community services. The demographic questions provide background information and context for the collected survey data. Sexual identity, gender identity, and racial identity are crucial intersecting identities relevant to the organizations and services being evaluated in this research. These demographic questions ask about fundamental characteristics that organisations must be aware of for this type of community service. All listed organisations work with gender, sexuality, or race in some capacity or interact with marginalised individuals.

The survey asked respondents to indicate which organisations they have accessed, if any (Figure 1). It also asked them to list the services they accessed from these organisations (Figure 2). The next four questions asked about the general helpfulness of the services, the accessibility of the administrative processes related to the services, experience with the service providers at the organisation, and the participants' sense of belonging. These questions were developed in collaboration with OPIRG Peterborough, specifically the question regarding the participants' sense of belonging at the organisation. This is an important question to the survey as being accepted, welcomed, and feeling a sense of belonging are central to human existence. An article by Malone et al. (2012), "The General Belongingness Scale (GBS): Assessing achieved belongingness," speaks to the importance of belonging. Individuals are motivated to be accepted and avoid rejection as an essential tool of survival (Malone et al., 2012). Malone et al. (2012) state that a sense of belonging can often be the missing link in understanding mental health and wellbeing. The collaborative process was important to the development of the survey. The inclusion of this question improved the quality of the survey and added additional space for the respondents to give valuable information about their experiences.

Participants were also asked to share a positive experience with a community service and a less positive or negative experience they had with a community service. These open-ended questions allowed participants to offer an experience in their own words. The information gathered was extremely valuable to the research project because it provided an in-depth understanding of specific experiences. The next question addressed how the services and organisation could improve to support the participants better. It also asked if there are any services that are missing from the available organisations. This is a critical question because the Queer communities accessing the organizations know what they need and want. This question

gave space for expressing what participants believe could be changed to better serve them. Lastly, the final question is open-ended, leaving room for additional comments or thoughts.

The survey was distributed online and remained open for responses for two weeks. Once closed, the survey rendered 14 responses. The data was collected and viewed on the Qualtrics website, where the survey was made public. Next, I analysed the data for themes, subthemes, and patterns. Averages were found by calculating the mean number of responses per organisation. The findings from this survey informed the recommendations made in this report.

Summary of the literature review

This literature review laid a foundation for the research project on local Peterborough community services. I reviewed the literature to explore themes relevant to my research questions. These themes included: inclusions and exclusions of the Queer community, law enforcement, emotional labour, and other community supports and services. The following are the most relevant of the extensive literature I have reviewed. These sources contributed to my research by highlighting the unique barriers and experiences people within the Queer community may face.

Oaks et al. (2019) and Gates et al. (2016) discuss questions of inclusion and exclusion within a community (Oaks et al., 2019). Oaks et al. (2019) summarize a 3.5-year community-based participatory research study with the Queer community of the Central Coast region of California. Community organizations and services can support Queer folk even if this community is not tied to a geographical area. Oaks et al. (2019) discuss potential exclusions within the Queer community. The term Queer refers to various individual identities, and the label 'Queer' may cause a generalizing effect (Oaks et al., 2019). Although Queer folk most often

share experiences of marginalization, there are many differences within these communities. Understanding possible generalisations and exclusions are critical to assessing community organisations.

Law enforcement was a focus of my literature review because the Peterborough Police Service is one of the community organizations available to the Queer communities of Peterborough-Nogojiwanong. The interactions between law enforcement and the Queer community are important to understand because police provide public services and may be called to interact with Queer communities. Hodge et al. (2020), Nevius (2018), Russell (2020), and Miller (2019) have insights into this topic. 'Examining the Blue Line in the Rainbow' by Hodge et al. (2020) thoroughly explores Queer communities' relationship with law enforcement. This study uses a mixed-method approach to understand the interactions and perceptions of the police within the Queer community of an unspecified Midwestern city in the United States. According to the study, 42.6% of the Queer people surveyed said they had been harassed by a police officer once or more in their life (Hodge et al., 2020). Approximately 16% of the respondents said that a police officer had made sexual advances toward them (Hodge et al., 2020).

Hodge et al. (2020) also explored the perception of law enforcement within the Queer community. The survey asked the participants, "Do you think the fact that you identify as LGBTQ affects how you are or would be treated by your local law enforcement agency?", 64.1% of the participants said yes (Hodge et al., 2020, p. 253). The survey also asked, "Do you think the fact that a victim identifies as a member of the LGBTQ community affects how they are treated or how the crime is handled by local law enforcement?", 74.8% of the participants answered yes (Hodge et al., 2020, p. 253). Another question examined how Queer folk would rate short-term interactions and long-term interactions. In short-term interactions, the participants rated between

‘neutral’ and ‘good’ (Hodge et al., 2020). For larger interactions, the participant rated between ‘neutral’ and ‘poor’ (Hodge et al., 2020). This concluded that for interactions that require more time and effort, Queer individuals are being treated more poorly. Another portion of the survey displayed that the participants generally believe that law enforcement officers would not understand their sexual orientation or respect their sexual orientation (Hodge et al., 2020). Lastly, this survey found that trans folks are the most likely group to have a strained relationship with law enforcement (Hodge et al., 2020).

Hodge et al. (2020) also made suggestions for improving the relationship between the Queer community and law enforcement. The study participants responded to a qualitative question about how they think law enforcement would improve the relations these two groups have. There were four central answers to this question; “more training and education... increase outreach efforts... better and more open communication... [and] increase the number of ‘out’ officers” (Hodge et al., 2020, p. 256). More training and education for law enforcement officers was the most frequent answer among the respondents (Hodge et al., 2020). One common theme in these answers was a focus on LGTBQ+ specific training for law enforcement officers. The research team also interviewed three officers after a town meeting, and two of them agreed they should have more training on LGTBQ+ issues (Hodge et al., 2020). The article highlights a need for specific training with attainable goals and purposes (Hodge et al., 2020).

Others argue against proposals to reform police services. For example, Russell (2020) discusses the history of violence against Queer people and considers the role of state institutions. The history of violence against queer people can be seen through state institutions continuing today (Russell, 2020). Russell (2020) argues that this is done in order to sustain the national space as heterosexual. Law enforcement has a significant role in this system of oppression as

they wield the power to enforce sexual norms and behaviours (Russell, 2020). By applying, “various mechanisms of surveillance, violent intervention, and coercive containment to govern ‘appropriate’ expressions of gender and sexuality, police have contributed not only to the erasure and exclusion of LGBT people, but also to the reproduction of ideas of queer deviancy, criminality, and threat” (Russell, 2020, p. 20). The vast negative experience between queer communities and law enforcement may call for abolishing the police force altogether. Defunding or abolishing the police and reinvesting in communities that are most affected by structural inequality is an approach that has been advocated by some (Russell, 2020).

The emotional labour associated with providing services to marginalised communities also emerged as a theme in the literature. The concept of Queer battle fatigue offers an interesting contribution to my research on Queer community supports. Queer Battle Fatigue “is one way to express the daily exhaustion that LGBTQ+ people and groups experience in the face of ongoing normalization of homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of antiqueness” (Wozolek, 2020, p. 215). This article provided a critical perspective to my research. Queer communities face extreme hate and oppression; their perseverance and determination combat this, but in some cases, Queer individuals may succumb to the negativity they face (Wozolek, 2020). Gershon (2020) shares an interesting perspective as an ally to the Queer community facing Queer Battle Fatigue and explores a possible term for this feeling, Queer Ally Fatigue. Gershon (2020) summarizes their thoughts by stating that Queer Battle Fatigue can affect anyone connected to Queer people. Queer Ally Fatigue refers to the fatigue felt by a non-Queer person in the Queer movement due to prolonged exhaustion of constantly combating homophobia or other forms of discrimination. Queer Battle Fatigue may affect service providers of Queer

communities. This may be a factor in the effectiveness of community supports for Queer communities.

Lastly, I would like to highlight a study done in Edmonton, Alberta, by the Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC). Their findings offer some suggestions for improvement on community services (Sharifi, 2016). The ESPC asked three main questions, “1) What are the specific needs of the LGBTQ community that are not being met? 2) Are there gaps in programs and services within the larger Edmonton community, and if so, what are they? 3) How can existing community support services be more responsive to the needs of the LGBTQ community?” (Sharifi, 2016, p.3). These questions were answered in semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The answers to these questions were summarised into seven main concerns expressed by the participants. These concerns included LGBTQ-inclusive policies, training of staff and professionals, meeting diverse needs, increase in safe program access, specialized services for LGBTQ people (health care, housing, sports, networking, etc.), and continuation of Queer specific research (Sharifi, 2016). The seven main concerns highlighted by this study provide good insights into possible areas needing improvement for Queer community organizations.

This literature review summarises many barriers Queer communities face when accessing services and examples of successful community services in other regions. This research allowed me to understand possible gaps in supports that could be excluding Queer people. It also informed me of other aspects relevant to queer communities like law enforcement, Queer battle fatigue, and other community services. Each community is different and complex; the Queer communities of Peterborough-Nogojiwanong have different perspectives and needs than those studied above, but this previous knowledge guided my research.

Survey findings

The survey found that the local Queer communities are accessing a wide range of services, including; the Peterborough Police Service, Elizabeth Fry Society, Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre, Peterborough AIDS Resource Network, Canadian Mental Health Association, Trans Peer Outreach, and Trent Queer Collective. The open-ended questions revealed possible recommendations and next steps for organisations.

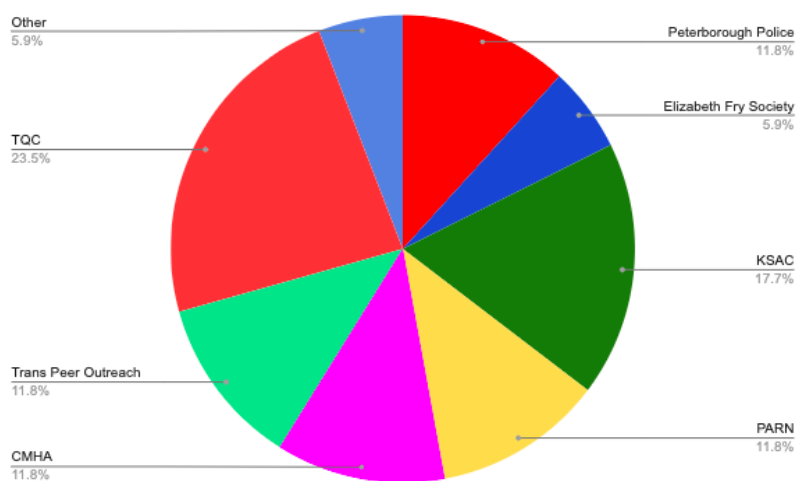


Figure 1: Organisations Accessed

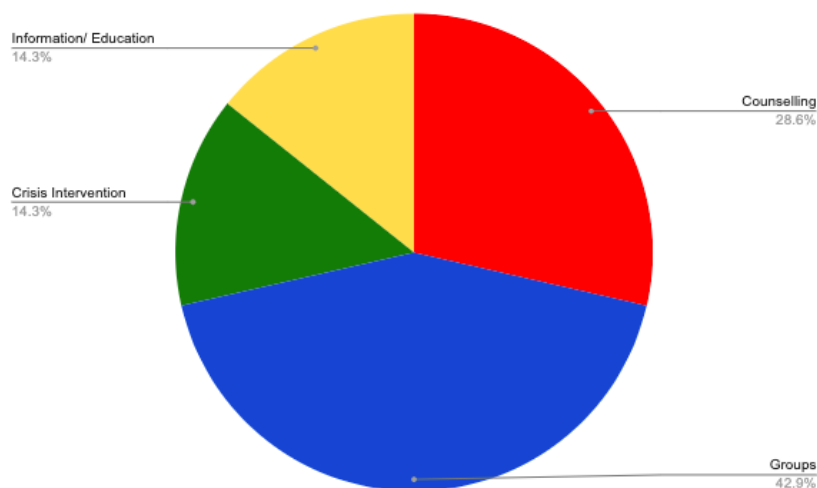


Figure 2: Services accessed

All of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25. The respondents' sexual identities varied and included a diverse range of identities, including Queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and heterosexual. The question regarding gender identity also yielded various answers, with most respondents identifying as women (50% of respondents identified as 'woman', 'female', or 'cisgender woman'). The last demographic question regarding race was an open question and revealed 73% of the respondents identified as 'white' or 'Caucasian'. Other responses demonstrated some diversity in this category, including 'mixed race', 'Jamaican Chinese', and 'Black'.

The respondents accessed services including counselling, group meetups, crisis response, and information/education. These services were rated on their helpfulness in the survey. Many services rated above average. Peterborough Police Service was an outlier and had a higher than average rating in this category. They rated 3.8/5 based on five respondents (1= very unhelpful, 5= very helpful). The Trent Queer Collective had an average score of 2.6/5 based on five respondents (1= very unhelpful, 5= very helpful). The next category that was rated was the accessibility of the administrative processes related to the service. There were no outliers in this category, and all organisations rated between adequate and good. The Trent Queer Collective had an average score of 3.25/5 based on four respondents (1= very bad, 5= very good). Next, the service providers were rated. These results were more spread out, and each organisation had a wide range of answers. This may be because of the individualised experiences service providers provide. The Trent Queer Collective had an average score of 3/5 based on four respondents (1= very bad, 5= very good). Lastly, the respondents rated the sense of belonging and safety of the organisations. Peterborough Police Service was an outlier in this category; they rated 3.6/5 based

[1] The Trent Queer Collective's data will be highlighted given their role in the research

on 5 respondents (1= extremely unsafe, 5= extremely safe). The Trent Queer Collective had an average score of 3.17/5 in this category based on 5 respondents (1= extremely unsafe, 5= extremely safe).

These results demonstrate that each individual experience at an organisation can be different, but trends can be seen in successful organisations. The highest-rated organisations were the Peterborough Police Service, Elizabeth Fry Society, Peterborough AIDS Resource Network, and Trans Peer Outreach. A further review may be needed to fully understand the reasons for these ratings.

In response to the open-ended question which asked about a positive and negative experience, several participants communicated a need for more intersectional supports or resources. This was also seen in the open-ended question regarding how the organisations may improve. One respondent stated there is “nothing for Black people. No salon in Peterborough can do my natural hair.” Another respondent mentioned that “[Their] identity and lack of affiliation with university makes it difficult to find resources.” Comments from the survey demonstrated that some people felt they were “gaslit” and denied support. Gaslighting can be defined as making someone question their own truth or reality (Agabigum, 2016). It can also refer to a person who suggests a false narrative to another person which leads them to doubt their perceptions (Agabigum, 2016). One respondent shared that they felt that the local Queer communities, in general, had been dismissive of those who are ‘not Queer enough’. This respondent additionally stated that members of an organisation had said offensive things “and have not been held accountable.” While it is important to keep in mind that we do not know the full context behind these experiences, the responses highlighted here reveal that some individuals

have not felt well supported and would like to see change. Thus, these responses fuelled the recommendations I have made below.

There were also positive experiences reported. One respondent spoke to the accessibility of the services and the consideration of all individuals in the organisation. Services were reported to have “many activities to lighten the mood.” There were other comments from participants

“ This service was very accessible and considerate of all individuals in the group and had many activities to lighten the mood ”

stating the service providers were “very helpful and supportive in helping with the process [of] name change and trying to access gender affirming surgeries.” These responses are examples of positive

interactions and supports that some local services are providing.

Limitations

There were some limitations in this study. I only had access to limited data for this research project. The survey yielded 14 responses, allowing only a small window into the experiences of Queer folk at the assessed organizations. This is a relatively small data set and can not assume any experiences as universal. The respondents were also all from the same age category (18-25), which may have impacted the results. The survey was only open for two weeks and only advertised on social media; this may have excluded some folks from being able to respond. Future research might consider advertising the survey in different places or having the survey open for a longer period of time to reach a larger audience.

Concluding thoughts and Recommendations

The survey yielded informative responses and suggestions informed the recommendations made in this report. There are three recommendations I have developed from the collected data. The first recommendation is increased accountability and awareness. Increased accountability and awareness are important to the Queer community. Based on the survey responses which reported dismissive experiences, increased accountability and awareness increased accountability and awareness could potentially allow for organisations to address these concerns. Organisations should consider how to build in stronger accountability to allow them to address these types of concerns and experiences.

The next recommendation is to increase the focus on safety and sense of belonging. The question regarding sense of belonging and safety in the survey was crucial to understanding how the Queer communities of Peterborough feel when accessing services. The responses from the survey signified that some folks “felt extremely unsafe” or “somewhat unsafe” when accessing services from these organisations. This sense of insecurity is concerning and demonstrates the need for greater attention to safety and belonging in community services. Because of the vulnerable population accessing these organisations, there needs to be a focus on sense of belonging and safety. As each organisation is unique, I do not have specific proposals for community organisations at this time. However, further assessment may be needed or internal investigations into the sense of belonging for each organisation's clients.

The last recommendation is to create an accessible community centre with intersectional supports. One respondent suggested this accessible community centre. The survey results mentioned gaps in services for folks at particular intersections of identities like sexuality or race. Intersectionality is an essential part of closing these gaps and should be integrated into

community services. Other comments about improvements included non-university students and race. One participant had issues accessing a service because they were not affiliated with the university; this creates barriers to services. Comments about race included lack of recognition of Black people and lack of services for Black people (ex. inclusive hair salons).

The findings of my research suggest that further research could be completed to gather information on each organisation. Respondents ratings and suggestions allow local organizations to see how some folks in the Queer communities of Peterborough-Nogojiwanong perceive them. The recommendations here could help to improve the services for the Queer communities of Peterborough-Nogojiwanong.

References:

- Agabigum, M. (2016). Gaslight (Order No. 10129140). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1800272198).
- Gershon. (2020). Allies, Accomplices, and Aggressions: The Pernicious Nature of Queer Battle Fatigue. *GLQ*, 26(2), 226–229. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-8141760>
- Hodge, J. P., & Sexton, L. (2020). Examining the blue line in the rainbow: the interactions and perceptions of law enforcement among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities. *Police Practice & Research*, 21(3), 246–263.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2018.1526686>
- Malone, Pillow, D. R., & Osman, A. (2012). The General Belongingness Scale (GBS): Assessing achieved belongingness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(3), 311–316.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.10.027>
- Miller. (2019). Crime and Sexuality: A Life-Story Analysis of Queer Individuals' Experiences with Law Enforcement and the Criminal Justice System. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Nevius. (2018). THE FIRST PRIDE WAS A RIOT: How Queer Activism Has Partnered with Police to Hurt the Community's Most Vulnerable. *Hastings Women's Law Journal*, 29(1), 125–.
- Oaks, L., Israel, T., Conover, K. J., Cogger, A., & Avellar, T. R. (2019). Community-Based Participatory Research with Invisible, Geographically-Dispersed Communities: Partnering with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Communities on the California Central Coast. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology*, 11(1), 14–32. <https://doi.org/10.33043/JSACP.11.1.14-32>

Russell. (2020). *Queer Histories and the Politics of Policing* (1st ed.). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351131636>

Sharifi, J. (2016). *Needs and Gaps in Services of Edmonton's LGBTQ Population: Final Report to the Edmonton Community Foundation*. Edmonton Social Planning Council ESPC.

Wozolek, B. (2020). Glq forum / queer battle fatigue in classrooms and communities. *GLQ*, 26(2), 215-218. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-8141704>.