



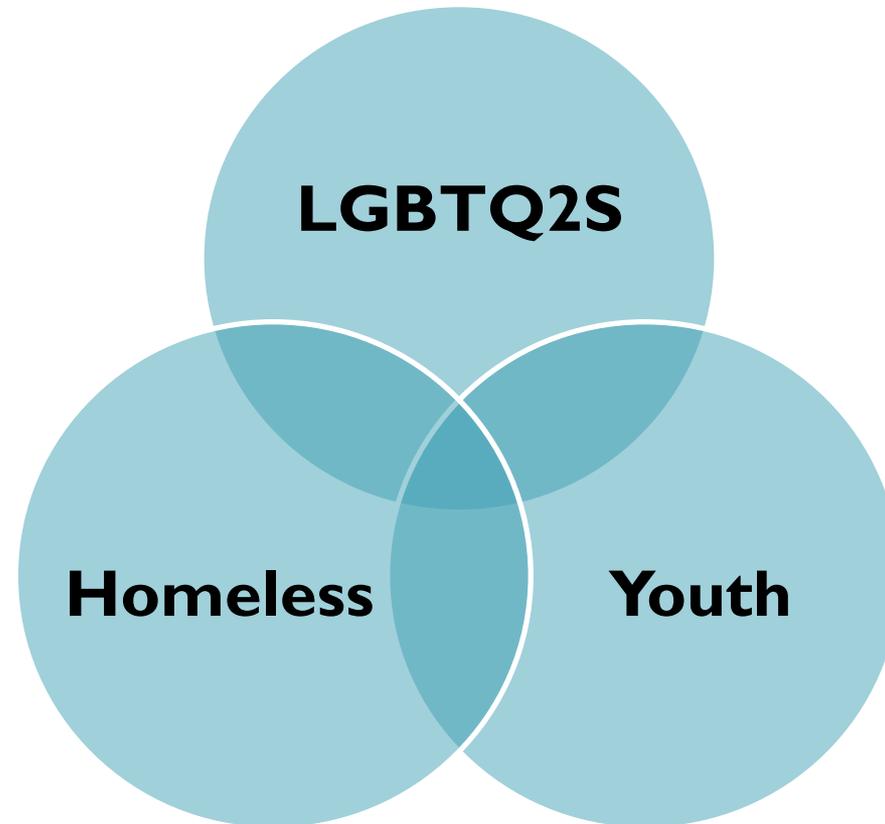
A Glimpse into LGBTQ2S Homeless Youth, Queer Community, and Labour in Toronto

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Definitions





Case Study

Identities Represented:

- Two-spirit (P2)
- gay (P4)
- pansexual (P3)
- queer (P1 and P5)



Case Study

Housing Status:

- Actively sleeping on streets (P2)
- Living in a shelter (P4)
- Apartment w/ roommates (P1)
- Coach-surfing when possible (P3)
- Housing provided by Social Welfare (P5)
 - Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

Limitations



25 - 40%
of youth experiencing
homelessness self-identified
as LGBTQ

Source: Gaetz, 2014, p.7



Updated Research

- First time in 2013, Toronto Street Needs Assessment included LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness
- Large sample: over 1,900 homeless people interviewed
- Found 1 in 5 shelter youth, which is 21% of all youth surveyed, identify as LGBTQ2S (“2013 Street Needs Assessment”).

Lacking Nuance



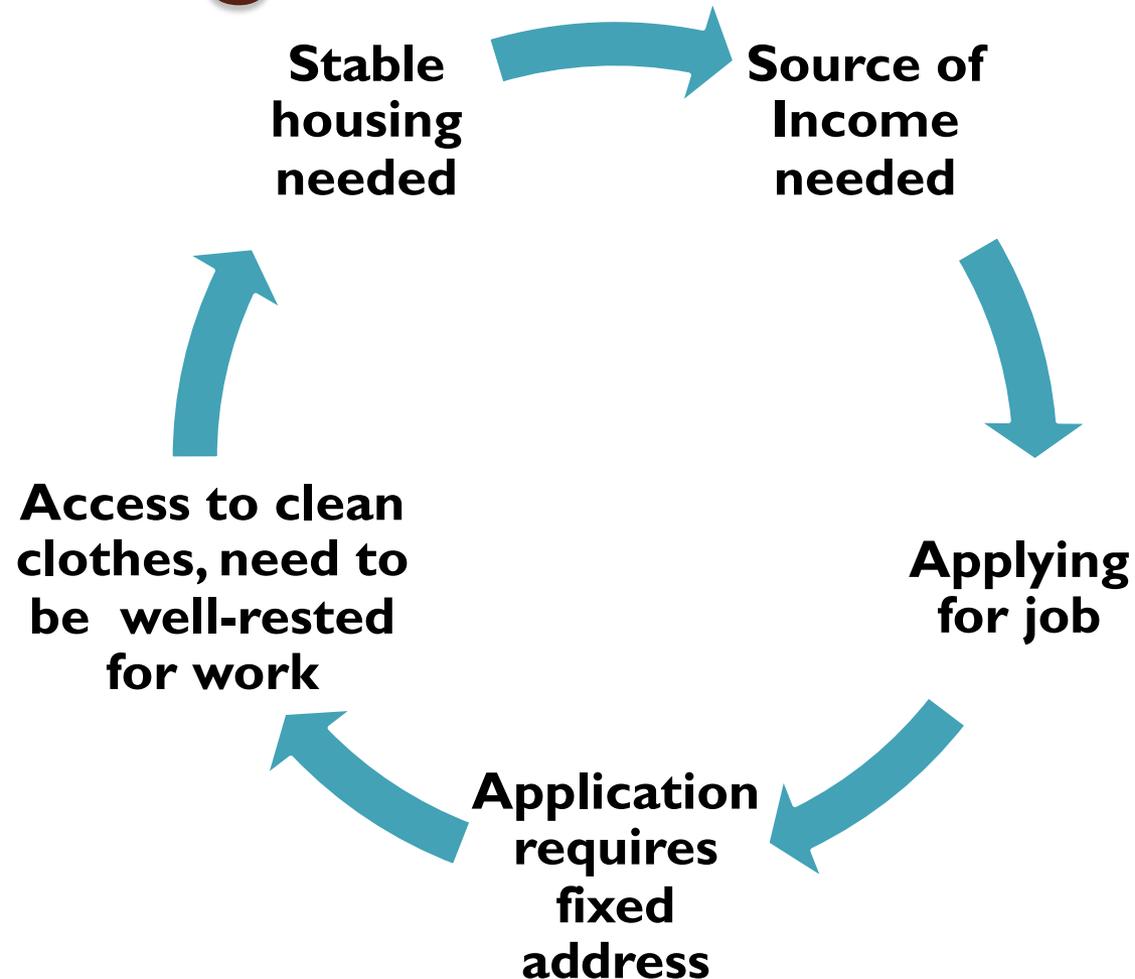
Google Images: "Nuance Queer"

Context



Google Image: Toronto

Vicious Cycle: Income and Housing





Vicious Cycle: Income and Housing

“Not having stable housing came with lots of stress ... [It makes it] hard looking for jobs and applying for jobs and working at one job” (P1).

“Without a proper address you can't sign up to things” (P3)

“I've had a lot of job offers [...] I don't feel like I was prepared to give it my all because of my housing situation ... I'm a little bit disappointed, that like, it's not my fault I live on the street, you know?” (P2).



Goal of Study

- Collect qualitative data regarding the barriers faced by LGBTQ2S homeless youth in Toronto, specifically focusing on labour issues and housing



Outcome

- Queerness not cited as primary or sole reason for initial homelessness
- Importance of queer community



Kicked Out?

- Common image of LGBTQ2S Homeless Youth is that of a runaway and/or kicked out youth (Abramovich 30).
- The narrative put forth is that of family rejection upon discovering that a youth is LGBTQ2S
- Results when participants asked if their sexual and/or gender identity was the direct sole influence of their homelessness that this is not that simple



Question

Has your gender or sexual identity ever had any bearing on your housing situation? If so, how?

Kicked Out?

no. (P3).

not that I'm aware of. (P2).

indirectly I think ... (P1).

it did in the sense that I moved to Toronto when I was like sixteen. (P5).

I have had to move because of a landlord not being comfortable with my obvious orientation. And yeah that's pretty much it. (P4).



Kicked Out?

- Sexual and/or identity not cited as a sole determining factor that made participants initially homeless



Family Rejection Narrative

- From article on LGBTQ homelessness in NYC:

““I got kicked out because I was gay’ was a frequent refrain ... Inevitably, though, their stories were more complicated, involving an intersection of sexual identity with abuse, neglect, or family poverty” (Aviv 62)



Risks of Simplifying

- Not recognizing the importance of the systemic discrimination due to citizenship status, race, class, and so on and so forth which can adversely effect one's housing status
- Erases the idiosyncrasies of every person's individual lived experiences and positionalities



Family Rejection Narrative

- A lived reality for many youth none the less (Abromovich 30).

Importance of Queer Community



Google Image: "Queer Community"



Primary Sources of Labour



Sex work



Sex Work

“it wasn’t necessarily what it was about – an exchange of sex for money – it was more about ‘ok I’m going to let you stay at my place’, you know ... The police cracked down on some people who would offer an opportunity to sleep indoors for some people” (P2).



Sex Work

- It's important to address that it's not all positive experiences



Sex Work

- Asked: What was the worst job you ever had?

well I don't want to say sex work, but yes. I think if I was doing it now it would be completely different. You know, I'm not against sex work, but I guess my state of mind going into that made it the worst job, yeah... I went in there with a lot of you know like self-worth issues, and you know, and a drug addiction and I didn't know how to look after myself before and so, you know, I don't know. I think you need to take care of yourself. (P5).



Sex Work

When asked about Sex Work, said she experienced discomfort:

“it’s not my thing to do” (P3).



Sex Work

- Can be detrimental to those already marginalized
- Also seen as a legitimate source of income and employment (i.e. not all sex workers are vulnerable)



Other Service Industry Jobs

- Many participants employed in low paying service industry jobs
- The instability created by lack of job security and low wages is detrimental to securing permanent housing



Other Service Industry Jobs

“[It was] not that different from any old dishwashing job, but it was less job security, like a lot ... I was paid five bucks an hour for the training wage and I was like, I need money to go buy food. So fuck, I’ll take it” (P1)

“[I worked] 5:30pm to about 6:30am on the weekends and I was getting paid three to five dollars depending” (P3).



Other Service Industry Jobs

Service Industry Job gotten through queer community:

“I was asked to be a personal assistant to this individual. She worked me to the bone and basically stopped paying me for two-three months, which actually led me to being homeless again. Because it was like you didn't pay me anything so I can't pay my rent” (P4)

Queer Community and Jobs

- P1 claimed that individuals doing workshops for community organizations “are exploited in the way in that they hardly get paid sometimes, but the job is much more enjoyable and safer”
- P4, who also did workshops through the community and elsewhere, says that workshops pay well based on the number of hours actually worked, but they do not provide regular work.



Queer Community and Jobs

Positives:

- Participants noted how working in jobs found through the queer community made it easier to express their identity while earning an income



Queer Community and Jobs

While working in a restaurant near Toronto's Gay Village "there were some occasions where I could go in full drag and go into work as a server. Yeah, it was a really good experience" (P2).

"I had a photo-shoot yesterday...a friend that I know through working on Church St. and working in the village for so long, asked me to do a runway show as a favor to him because he wanted to see me do runway" (P4).

Conclusion



Google Image: "Queer and Homeless"

References

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