What Queer Youth Taught Me About The Current State of Acceptance in Community Systems

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Happy to be gathered
here today in Mi'kma'ki,
the ancestral and unceded
territory of the Mi'kmaq People

Who I am

Our Journey The Next 15-20 Minutes

- Exploring youth's experiences accessing services in various systems

- Learning what makes a positive and negative experience for LGBTQ2+ youth when accessing service

- Understanding how queer youth change from participating in gender affirming programming

- Identifying ways in which stakeholders changed from participating in this evaluation

- Thinking about building bridges through relationships

- Take your homework back and reflect

So, what is the current state of systems for LGBTQ2+ youth?

It's not great!

Parental Rejection

Neg. Exp.
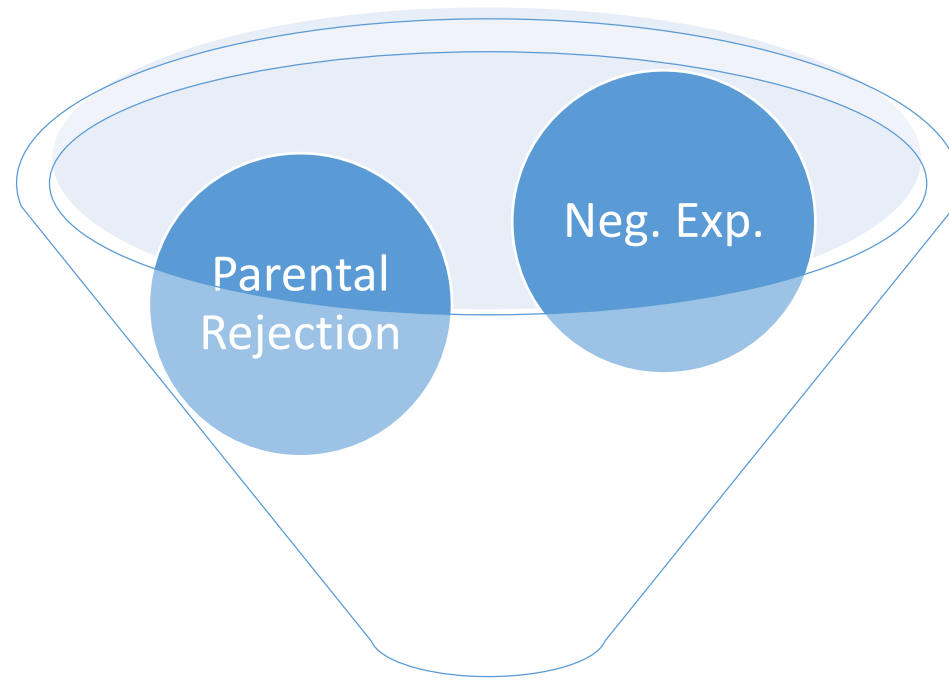
No Place To Go

What are youth's experiences accessing services?

Additional Struggles

- **LBGTQ2+ Identities** – experience of prejudice, discrimination and stigma – occurring in education, health care, supporting living
- **Survival Mode** – Instability [e.g., couching surfing, negative living environments, dropping out of high school, unable to gain employment]
- **Safety** – Daily social interactions, bathrooms, family attitudes, accessing supports, work places [e.g. being misgendered but afraid to speak up in fear of losing employment]
  - *Because the alternative was to go to [Service organization name] and they [the youth] were just targeted any time they went to [Service organization name]. And so not a safe place, so they chose to live [Unsafe living space] then to have a bed to sleep in and that is just like punch you in the gut terrible.* (OUTSaskatoon Staff Member)
  - Negative interactions such as misgendering can deter youth from accessing needed services, *"some of the youth that I've had had terrible experiences and they're like I'm never going back, I'm never doing this again."* (OUTSaskatoon Staff Member)

What makes a bad experience?

Any form of gender-based violence [e.g., misgendering, enforcing birth sex for bathroom usage]

Spaces operating within a gendered binary [e.g., gender non-binary folks]

Oppressive and rigid policies that only aid those with privilege [e.g., preferred names]

Not being seen or heard as human

What makes a good experience?

Pronouns are respected – if they can't trust you to respect their pronouns how can they trust you with their life?

Acceptance to be who they are [e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression]

Trust that the service providers are reliable, understanding, and trauma informed

Staff who advocate and are LGBTQ2+ affirming [e.g., breaking policies/procedures around preferred names and gender identities]

PRIDE HOME

A place for LGBTQ youth to find housing, support, and community

So what is Pride Home?

- Safe and supportive housing for queer youth between the ages of 16 and 21

- A 5-bedroom, voluntary, long-term LGBTQ2+ group home, and one of the first of its kind in Canada

- A home with wrap around support from the Live in Mentor, Pride Home Coordinator, and OUTSaskatoon's Support Services Manager

- Grounded in a youth centered model, recognizing youth as agents of their own lives and celebrating LGBTQ2+ identities

- Ultimately, equipping LGBTQ2+ youth for adulthood, assisting their transition out of teenage-hood so LGBTQ2+ youth can continue to grow and live independently
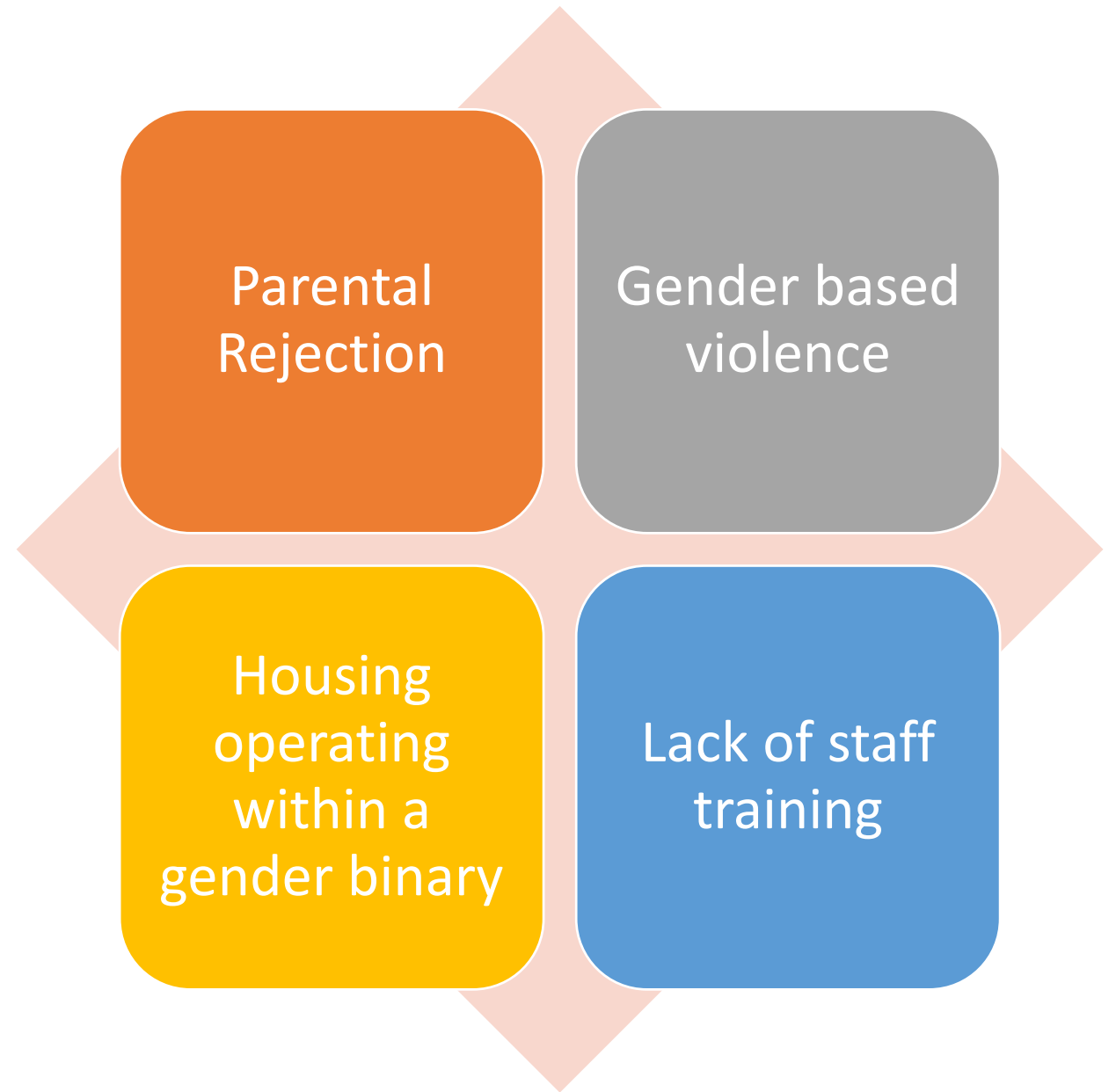
The Project

What were the goals for the evaluation?

- Design a Program Logic Model
- Conduct a Final Evaluation Report
- Provide Recommendations for Pride Home's programming and future evaluations

How did we do it?

- Conducted a preliminary combined needs, process and outcome formative-focused evaluation (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004)
- Guided by utilization-focused (Patton, 2008) and culturally responsive evaluation (Hood, 1998) approaches
- Collected data through six individual, semi-structured interviews [2/5 youth and four staff] and org. documents
- Conducted a thematic analysis on interview transcript and a documents review on intake forms to collect demographic data (Braun and Clark, 2006)

So why Pride Home?

Parental Rejection

Gender based violence

Housing operating within a gender binary

Lack of staff training

How do youth change from participating in a queer affirming housing program?

- LGBTQ2 identities are normalized, celebrated, and affirmed
  - *'Yeah, it's a safe space for queers in general to be whoever they want to be... to explore sexually... to be exploring gender diversity community. You can just be you and that's really cool because there's no expectations really, other than to be who you want to be is basically an expectation.* (Pride Home Youth)

- Increased sense of belonging, familia relationships, and LGBTQ2+ community
  - *It's something that a lot of us have never experienced before and to be able to call them a family is a really unique and awesome experience.* (Pride Home Youth)

- They grow and develop!
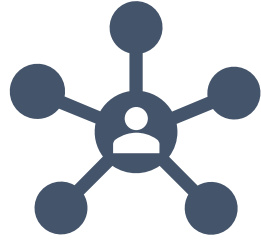
With the community organization

- Staff informed the creation and language use of the interview protocol
- Staff helped bridge rapport and trust between the youth and the evaluator
- Staff are the experts, we are the guests

With Pride Home Youth

- Several site visits [or hangs] were done with the youth before and after interviews
- The evaluator participated in their celebrations when invited
- These relationship helped develop trust that allowed for youth to share difficult experiences with the evaluators

Building Relations

Maintaining Relationships

- Ethically, I maintain relationships with the youth and I continue to meet with them

- Current youth have develop new relationships between me and new youth that live within the home

- The community organization and us have continued our relationships on grants and other evaluation projects
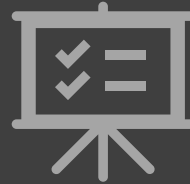 - Allowing us to build their capacity and assist in data collection and analysis

How different stakeholders changed from participating in the evaluation

Youth were able to:

Activate their agency and use the power in their stories to create positive change

Share their gratitude and create better programming for LGBTQ2+ folks

Staff were able to:

Have the amazing work they do captured and validated

Inform the evaluation strategies and develop their own evaluation skills
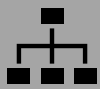
Evaluators were able to:

Develop impactful relationships and walk alongside those in our community

Conduct meaningful evaluation and learn from the wisdom in our community

Why do we think the bridge creation was successful?

The organization already started creating an action plan based on the recommendations provided

Through the evaluation report and the creation of the program logic model the organization was successful in receiving funding to conduct further evaluations

Our team maintains relationships with youth previously involved in the project

Our team was approached to continue our work with the organization for future projects, which resulted in national funding to address gender-based violence LGBTQ2+ folks face

Your Homework

- Reflect on your assumptions of LGBTQ2+ and ways you perpetuate heteronormativity?
  - Do you ask about boyfriend/girlfriend instead of partner?
  - Do you ship young boys and girls towards hetero relationships?
  - Do you assume a baby's sex at birth is their gender?
  - Do you ask folks what pronouns they want used in reporting?
- Ask yourself are your evaluation spaces inclusive?
  - Do you use your cisgender and/or heterosexual privlidge to aid those who the system isn't designed for?
  - Are your spaces only sexual orientation inclusive, but not gender inclusive?
  - Are there gender neutral washrooms? (Not just a male/female single stall bathroom)
- Volunteer with an LGBTQ2+ population and listen

CE Competencies	How They Looked
Situational Practice: focus on the application of evaluative thinking in analyzing and attending to the unique interests, issues, and contextual circumstances in which evaluation skills are being applied.	
3.2 Identifies stakeholders' needs and their capacity to participate while recognizing, respecting, and responding to aspects of diversity.	• Provided agency for astranged LGBTQ2+ youth to participate in the research project • Ensured proper supports were in place
3.3 Respects all stakeholders and strives to build and maintain trusting relationships	• Slowly built relationships before starting the evaluation and maintained the relationships post evaluation
Interpersonal Practice: focuses on people skills, such as communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, collaboration, and diversity.	
5.1. Uses communication strategies appropriate to the cultural, linguistic, social, and political context.	• Embracing the fluidity in gender identities and sexual orientations when engaging with youth and reporting
5.4 Uses a variety of processes that result in mutually negotiated agreements, shared understandings and consensus building	• Worked with community organization in developing interview protocols • Worked with community organization in developing the evaluation

Reflecting on the CE Competencies

Questions?

References

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