Researching Poverty and 2SLGBTQ+ People Towards Change

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"This is the system we live in": The role of social assistance in producing and sustaining 2SLGBTQ+ poverty in Ontario, Canada

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Focus and Agenda

- Canadian Coalition Against 2SLGBTQ+ Poverty

- Understanding 2SLGBTQ+ peoples' experiences
- of accessing SocA in Ontario

- Findings from the qualitative arm of a mix-methods study

- Acknowledgements

- Background

- Theoretical Frameworks

- Methods

- Key Themes

- Implications

Acknowledgements

Background

- Socioeconomic factors contribute to poor health outcomes for diverse sexual & gender minority people as well (Ross et al., 2016; Robinson 2017; Robinson et al., 2016);

- Experiences with social assistance (SocA) a possible link between poverty & poor health in marginalized populations (Lightman et al., 2009; Smith-Carrier, 2017);

- SocA recipients significantly more likely than non-SocA recipients in all income categories to report high stress, along with 37 out of 39 poor health outcomes (Lightman et al., 2009);

- SocA is a form of violence that causes adverse impacts on mental health (Thomas et al., 2020).

Relational Poverty through an Intersectional Lens

Relational Poverty Theory (Feldman, 2019)

- Extensive network of relationships that "produces poverty and makes it persist for particular groups" (Feldman, 2019, p. 1706);

- Poverty is situated in social relations;

- Material & discursive inequities are actively produced & sustained in relationships between those who experience oppression at intersections of class, race, Indigeneity, gender, & other dimensions of difference & those in relative positions of power & influence (Feldman, 2019).

Relational Poverty through an Intersectional Lens

Intersectionality (Clark, 2016; Collins, 2009; Combahee River Collective, 1977; Crenshaw, 1989)

- Transgender men and women more likely to experience poverty than their cisgender counterparts, non-binary people are twice as likely to live in poverty, and Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer communities experience higher rates of poverty compared to the national rate (Statistics Canada, 2022);

- Distinct expressions of poverty and SocA encounters across 2SLGBTQ+ groups marginalized at intersections of race, Indigeneity, age, and ability, among other dimensions of social location (Kia et al., 2021).

Methods

- **Community-based participatory research**
  - Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, Queer Ontario, and the Senior Pride Network
  - 2SLGBTQ+ people with lived experiences of poverty
  - 2SLGBTQ+-identified academic researchers

- **11** participants who self-identified as having lived experience of poverty and/or accessing social assistance
  - **8** focus group participants via Zoom (two focus groups of n=6 and n=2 for a total of eight participants)
  - **3** individual interviews via telephone

- Principles of theoretically driven thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), adapted for a participatory approach.

3 key themes

1) Navigating a precarious and nebulous system;

2) Encountering the construction of 2SLGBTQ+ identities as "irrelevant" in normative systems;

3) Intersecting systemic, interpersonal, and micro violences.

"On, a monthly basis [I] would be approved for getting like $700 and my rent is over $800. So, **it [OW] doesn't even cover my rent, let alone covering the cost of living and all that stuff.**" (*FG 1, Speaker 3, white bisexual cisgender woman*)

"ODSP provides an income support that will at least cover rent for most people. So, **it's not necessarily providing a full enough amount to live on**, but at least it's more livable than OW for sure." *(FG 2, Speaker 3, white bisexual cisgender woman)*

Navigating:
Precarious & Nebulous System

- SocA staff withhold SocA policy information
- Confusion among SocA staff about SocA policies
- Lack of information about poverty mitigating resources

"I applied to social assistance in the past, a couple of times, and **I was made ineligible twice. So, I had to appeal the decision several times by also doing research on what's required to be eligible.** And then, also, it was mentioned the other benefits that are provided are not always disclosed to you. And so, you kind of have to do your own research on it." *(FG, 1 Speaker 4, mixed race gay man)*

"**If the worker doesn't like my tone or my body language, they'll punish me by withholding certain resources, not inform [me] of certain benefits [I am] entitled to, as well as just being pretty abrasive and hostile** due to maybe my race or my sexual orientation, it's really hard to pinpoint it exactly." *(FG 1, Speaker 2, Black gay cisgender man)*

Normative Systems: 2SLGBTQ+ Identities "Irrelevant"

- Neoliberalism, white supremacy, coloniality, and cisheteronormativity;
- Lack of attention to social identities and social locations;
- Failure to recognize the relationship between marginalized identities and poverty.

"… especially now that **I'm reclaiming like my Two Spiritedness, which is about my Indigenous culture as where I'm learning more, and it just seems to encompass more of who I am**. Then they get to know a little more of who I am." *(Participant 105, Ojibwe Two-Spirit female)*

"**I definitely wrote a piece about how gender dysphoria and being non-binary and stuff affected my ability to work. I have no idea how much they took that into account** or whether it was more just about the numbers I ticked off, but it ended up getting accepted. So, that's all I know in the end." *(FG 2, Speaker 2, non-binary queer person of colour)*

Intersecting systemic, interpersonal & micro violences

Consequences of systemic violence live at the interpersonal and micro levels

"... there's times where **I have to tone down my queerness, which is an exercise that I've been doing with my ethnicity as well to tone down your Blackness** or something like that just to come across as a good impression and not as easily judged." *(FG 1, Speaker 4)*

"**She's like, 'oh, you went to [the bank], and you signed over the cheque to somebody else', which was a lie**. And I said, 'well, you know, let's go down to [the bank] together with the police and review the footage.' She wouldn't respond and she was like, 'for the record, I didn't believe you whatsoever. And **I've heard from other workers that you're a difficult client**,' right?" *(FG 1, Speaker 2, Black gay cisgender man)*

2SLGBTQ+
POVERTY IN CANADA
PAUVRETÉ DES PERSONNES
2SLGBTQ+ AU CANADA

Implications

- Harmful SocA encounters that were described as benignly neglectful at best and (re)traumatizing at worst;

- Cisheteronormativity, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are activated during SocA encounters; colonialism, white supremacy, ableism, and neuronormativity;

- Lived knowledges of how 2SLGBTQ+ identities are inherently connected to poverty are subverted by neoliberal and normative ideologies and related SocA practices; and

- Lived experiences and knowledges of poverty based on racism, anti-Indigenous racism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination are deemed irrelevant to the normalizing priorities of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and ableism.

Concluding Thoughts

SocA encounters described by 2SLGBTQ+ participants reflect existing literature that posits accessing SocA as a determinant of poor mental and physical health

SocA policy makers must recognize and attend to the specific SocA-related harms experienced by 2SLGBTQ+ people.

- Transform relations of power that shape 2SLGBTQ+ SocA encounters through 2SLGBTQ+ education and training opportunities for SocA staff – e.g., relationship between queer and trans identities and poverty;

- Organizational initiatives to address the ways in which normative ideologically driven practices function to shame and stigmatize poor 2SLGBTQ+ people and serve to obscure the specific poverty producing forces they experience during encounters with inter-related systems – e.g., collection of SocA recipient demographics.

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2SLGBTQ+ Poverty in Canada: Improving Livelihood and Social Wellbeing

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2SLGBTQ+ Poverty in Canada: Improving Livelihood and Social Wellbeing

- First national study to examine the prevalence and effects of poverty on 2SLGBTQ+ populations in Canada

- Awarded $2.5 million by the SSHRC-funded Partnership Grant

- Study Length: 6 years (2022 – 2028)

- Extension Year: 1 year (2022 – 2029)

- Project Membership: 68

- Full Team Membership:
  - Academics – 23
  - Community Partners – 20
  - RAs – 8
  - CAB – 13
  - PDFs – 2
  - Staff – 2

Project Methods & Knowledge Mobilization

Methods:

- Quantitative – Survey

- Qualitative – Interviews, Focus Groups

- Mixed Methods – Combining the Stats and Narratives

Knowledge Mobilization:

- Sharing findings in meaningful ways (community, academia, politicians, policy makers)

Project Goal & Objectives

Goal:

To create evidence-based knowledge on how and why poverty affects 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Canada to inform policy and community-based action to address existing inequities.

Objectives:

1. Documenting the lived experiences of poverty among 2SLGBTQ+ communities and creating a unique nationally representative dataset allowing for an intersectional examination of 2SLGBTQ+ poverty rates, poverty risk, and associated causes and consequences.

2. Meaningful collaboration between community and scholarly partners by including 2SLGBTQ+ people with lived experience of poverty across the research process, for continuous knowledge transfer.

3. Mobilizing knowledge on poverty through a 2SLGBTQ+ lens to inform innovative responses in research, policy, funding, and programming within academia, government, and the community.

4. Developing an informed Action Plan, usable by governmental agencies, NPOs, and private organizations, to address 2SLGBTQ+ poverty in Canada.

Governance Structure

Project Structure

Host Institution
York University

Project Co-Directors
Nick Mulé, Project Director, York University
Maryam Dilmaghani, Project Co-Director, Saint Mary's University

Steering Committee
Project Co-Directors
Teams & CAB Co-Chairs

Management Committee
Project Co-Directors
Project Manager, Teams & CAB Co-Chairs

Quantitative Research Team
Academic Co-Chair: Todd Coleman
Community Co-Chair:

Qualitative Research Team
Academic Co-Chair: Andrea Daley
Community Co-Chair: Randi Sears

Mixed Methods Research Team
Academic Co-Chair: Lori Ross
Community Co-Chair: Dwayne Shaw

Knowledge Mobilization Team
Academic Co-Chair:

Community Co-Chair:

Community Advisory Board
Co-Chairs: TBD in Year One

The Significance of Community-Based And Lived Knowledge of Poverty In 2SLGBTQ+ Communities

Community-Based Participatory Action Research

- Working with community organizations with anti-poverty mandates and/or advocate for 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

- Community Advisory Board with geographical representation of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals currently living in or with a history of poverty.

- Peer researchers to assist us with the data gathering stage of the study.

Relevance For Partner Organizations

This partnership brings together key players to focus on a group (2SLGBTQ+ people) that has been overlooked in national consultations to improve income security.

Partner Organizations

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
BC Poverty Reduction Coalition	Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project	Canadian Virtual Hospice
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives	Ontario Digital Literacy and Access Network	Community Based Research Centre
Canadian Observatory on Homelessness	The 519	Hamilton Community Legal Clinic
Canada Without Poverty		Native Women's Association of Canada
Coalition Des Familles LGBT+/LGBT+ Family Coalition		Queer Yukon
Conseil Québécois LGBT		YMCA of Greater Toronto
Family Service Toronto		
Make Poverty History Manitoba		
Ontario Coalition Against Poverty		
Queer Ontario		
United Way Centraide Canada		

Decolonization & Intersectionality

- Reproduction of colonial structures

- Erosion of energy

Critical Reflexive Processes

Ethical Considerations

- Throughout the ethics process, the team made many considerations regarding how we would conduct research, considering aspects such as language, region, and accessibility

Peer Interviewers

- To strengthen the interview process, the team decided to have peer interviewers who reflect the many intersections of individuals who we aim to connect with throughout the interview process

Consultation

- Consultation from an Indigenous Two-Spirit Elder
- Ongoing consultation from the Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Communities

- Multiple 2SLGBTQ+ Communities

- Differential life circumstances

- Intersectional factors for poverty

For more information

Visit us at https://www.yorku.ca/laps/research/lgbtq2s-poverty/