Building Bridges to Trust: Strengthening Police-Community Relations with the

LGBTQIA+ Community in Canada

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Abstract

Few studies have examined the relationship between police and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual, community (LGBTQIA+) in Canada. This paper analyzes the complex dynamics and tensions between these two groups and explores the effects this relationship has on current mitigating strategies. Furthermore, the primary aim of this paper is to highlight the experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities with police, from an external and internal standpoint. The data for this paper is collected using a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods from secondary sources. Repeating themes identified throughout this essay include workplace challenges, policy improvement, gender identity inequality, and the need for adaptation. Barriers discussed in this paper include the difficulties of building and solidifying trust between the two groups, how inclusivity is promoted between police agencies and LGBTQIA+ groups, and the importance of rectifying cooperation strategies. These findings indicate the need for enhancing diversity and inclusion-oriented recruitment strategies within the police, as well as a need to display a visible intention of fostering a more inclusive and safe environment for LGBTQIA+ people working in police agencies. Furthermore, this study highlights the demand for continued research into this topic to build the foundation for positive changes in police practices and LGBTQIA+ community relations.

Keywords: police, LGBTQIA+, relationships, community, experience, work, strength, trust, build

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Background

The relationship between police and the LGBTQIA+ community has historically been

one full of tense and turbulent moments. This is still pertinent in the current relationship between

police and the LGBTQIA+ community today. Past events such as the 1981 Toronto Bathhouse

Raids which saw over 200 police officers coordinate raids on a Bathouse (brothel), taunting

patrons of the establishment about their sexuality resulted in Toronto's largest single arrest, as

well as the Ottawa Police Services handling of the 2010 Steven Boone HIV non-disclosure press

release, was a turning point for the LGBTQIA+ community in Canada where tensions grew

between the two groups as protests began (Couto, 2018b). A 2022 report by Statistics Canada

reported that close to 30 percent of people who identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+

community are between the ages of 15 and 24 (Statistics Canada, 2022). This age group reflects

a large portion of the next generation of employees to enter the workforce. In efforts to build

allyships and promote recruitment efforts for this age bracket, police officers have embraced the

LGBTQIA+ community by attending Pride Parades and dedicating special personnel for

LGBTQIA+ recruitment (Couto, 2018b). Increased police presence in the community as a show

of solidarity has had a contradictory effect on the LGBTQIA+ community, with perceptions of

police being more in line with past feelings of distrust and not feeling safe. In order for current

mitigating strategies by the police to be successful in reconciling with the LGBTQIA+

community, genuine efforts to repair and rebuild trust in the police must take place by revisiting

policing policies on mitigation, cooperation, and community work (Durbin & Cox, 2020).

Purpose Statement

This study aims to bridge the evident gap that exists in the current literature on the relationship between police and the LGBTQIA+ community in Canada. LGBTQIA+ recruitment levels are low in policing due to perceptions of police indifference and other historical factors (Couto, 2018a). It is evident that there is a need for more LGBTQIA+ identifying people in policing; yet, research suggests that 30 percent of LGBTQIA+ individuals entering the workforce show little interest in pursuing a career in policing (Couto, 2018b). This paper will provide findings from academic literature that will support proposals to update strategies for recruiting more LGBTQIA+ individuals into policing. Additionally, the data collected in this study will highlight the negative and positive experiences LGBTQIA+ individuals have encountered when interacting with police as well as working as part of the policing community.

Research Question

The primary research question considered in this paper is, "How can strengthening relationships between Police and the LGBTQIA+ community be of benefit in Canada?" To gain a deeper insight into the research problem and question, the paper will explore, in detail, the following subquestions:

- "What strategies can be used to build further trust between these two groups?" and;

- "How does this strengthened relationship impact recruitment numbers in policing?"

Scope of the Study

Due to the limited amount of relevant Canadian research available on the niche topic explored in this paper, the scope of this study is limited to the collection and analysis of only

secondary data sources, due in part to a short timeframe and the inability to obtain ethical approval to conduct a primary study. This study's scope will focus on the relationship between police and the LGBTQIA+ community, their efforts to build and maintain trust both ways, and mitigating factors to keep tensions low and grow LGBTQIA+ recruitment numbers. This study aims to positively impact relationships and to not only significantly change the level of trust present, but also make policing a reachable and sustainable career option for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Philosophical Worldview

This study approaches research from a transformative worldview as this method of research focuses on philosophical theories that exist to aid in understanding why the problems of inequality, suppression, and power imbalances in relationships exist. Through a transformative worldview, this study concentrates on exploring and examining political change and confronting social oppression to further explore police and LGBTQIA+ relations and trust. Transformativists are focused on the transformation of relationships through empowerment and recognition. As such, this paper uses a transformative worldview approach to better understand the experiences of marginalized communities and issues of social justice (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Plan for Literature Search and Review

The plan for a literature search and review is to continue to explore accessible databases such as Canada Commons, Google Scholar, and the Criminal Justice Abstract. Databases such as these are easily accessible and reliable tools. Further elements of this search and review will include a variety of resource types such as peer-reviewed scholarly articles, journals, and statistical reports that ensure broad coverage of all project facets to achieve success. Through the planning and search process, it is important to include project management strategies to follow a

structure and avoid accessing overwhelming amounts of information at once. While exploring databases, three significant resources that stood out were Joe Couto's 2018 article on LGBTQIA+ police officer safety, Roddrick Colvin's 2015 study on shared workplace experiences of LGBTQIA+ police officers, and the Statistics Canada report on LGBTQIA+ Canadians (2022). The ability to read about the positive stories that come from LGBTQIA+ members in the line of duty and compare that with physical numbers from Statistics Canada will increasingly support this article's plan to positively impact further trust between police and the LGBTQIA+ community, with the subsequent aim of leading to more of these folks joining law enforcement.

Literature Review

The research study focuses on 15 articles chosen based on their relevance to the research question.

Issues of Gender Identity Inequalities in Policing

A common theme reflected in the reviewed literature was characterized as gender identity inequalities in policing and their causes (Bikos, 2016; Colvin, 2015; Hoskin, 2019; Silvestri, 2017). To fully grasp the scope of the problem, Silvestri (2017) determined that the organizational structure of policing is not gender-neutral and that police culture prioritizes toughness and masculinity over many other things. These are characteristics that arguably hold little value in the LGBTQIA+ community. Colvin (2015), also stated that the causes of gender identity disparities in policing are due to reports of lesbian members facing barriers in mentoring, finding patrol partners, and receiving promotions. This correlates with the idea that a masculine subculture in policing often creates conflicts for women, and also appears to encourage women to devalue femininity and belittle their female colleagues (Bikos, 2016). This is further

substantiated by Hoskin's (2019) review of gender hegemony. According to the studies, society

often views femininity and masculinity as working together; however, masculinity is typically

valued more highly or given more power and authority than femininity. This hierarchical

structure only strengthens traditional gender roles and expectations of masculinity that are

associated with strength, dominance, and leadership; in turn 'complimenting' this idea that

femininity is only associated with nurturing, submissiveness, and domesticity (Hoskin, 2019).

These issues provide critical insight into the issues of gender identity inequalities in policing and

provide valuable information on the scope of the research study.

A Need to Adapt

A need to adapt to the changes in society for both police and LGBTQIA+ communities

was also a recurring theme that prevailed in the reviewed literature (Bikos, 2016; Bjørkelo et al.,

2015; Colvin, 2015; Dwyer, 2019). It is well established in Dwyer's (2019) study that there are

inconsistencies and ineffective definitions of best practices toward LGBTQIA+ communities;

subsequently, emphasizing a more productive future that entails the need to embrace discomforts.

This reflection on future improvement programs from Dwyer (2019) supports why Colvin (2015)

recognized the opportunities for organizational improvement. Society is shifting into an

open-minded generation and there is a need for police and LGBTQIA+ communities to adapt to

the future. Due to the swiftly changing climate in law enforcement environments, 'out' or

'questioning' queer police officers face challenges navigating their own identities within the

rigid structures of police culture. Research by Colvin (2015) suggests that there is a growing

recognition of the need for change within policing to accommodate LGBTQIA+ officers.

However, according to Bjørkelo et al. (2015), 'invisibility' is a coping strategy that is used by

many new officers to adapt as much as possible, indicating the intense pressure to conform to

traditional norms within police student culture, especially for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

In essence, the literature highlights the many barriers for LGBTQIA+ and women

involved in policing and there seems to be a hidden message in the literature that to succeed in

policing, female officers must adapt to, and adopt the masculine policing culture (Bikos, 2016).

Intrinsically, these pieces of literature are continuing to identify the crucial gap in research that is

necessary to further this study.

The Need for Improved Policies When Interacting With the LGBTQIA+ Community

Another emerging theme identified in the literature search was focused on the

improvement of policies when interacting with people in the LGBTQIA+ community (Dwyer,

2019; Hodge & Sexton, 2020; Israel et al., 2017; Ng & Rumens, 2017). Dwyer (2019) explained

that old rigid policies in policing are slowly being bent into what is referred to as "queering

policing policies." Subsequently, this is a step towards the correct application of policies and

training for officers to perform best practices when interacting with the LGBTQIA+ community

(Dwyer, 2019). Likewise, in the study by Ng and Rumens (2017), their research revealed how

the use of such policies is linked to an increased willingness to "come out" in the workplace, and

improve LGBTQIA+ worker wellbeing. However, active resistance to LGBTQIA-affirming

policies still occurs and may include behaviours such as open criticism, bullying, harassment,

and even violence (Israel et al., 2017). While diversity training is commonly associated with

diversity management programs aimed at enhancing workplace relationships and performance,

its efficacy within policing contexts remains uncertain. For example, police officers'

receptiveness to LGBTQIA+ police training showed hesitation and lack of basic knowledge due

to not being part of the community. Furthermore, questions often arise such as "are we allowed

to say queer," "are there special resources for LGBTQIA+ people," "I saw a man in a dress, does that mean he is gay?" or "I don't want to offend anyone, so let's not interfere" (Israel et al., 2017, p. 212). These offhanded comments are commonly due to a lack of knowledge and personal experience with the LGBTQIA+ community.

To avoid problematic encounters, or inaccurate comments, Hodge and Sexton (2020) have explained that police departments in urban areas have established LGBTQIA+ liaison positions to improve communication and community engagement with local LGBTQIA+ communities. These officers serve as points of contact for hesitant LGBTQIA+ members and participate in local events to show solidarity (Hodge & Sexton, 2020). It is important to note, however, that relying solely on these liaisons can lead to negative perceptions and complacency. To improve relations, police departments should appoint multiple officers and implement policy changes. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police in 2013 recommended establishing LGBTQIA+ committees within police departments to assist with this (Hodge & Sexton, 2020). These committees would collaborate with local LGBTQIA+ community organizations and possess the authority to implement tangible policy and procedural modifications within the organization (Hodge & Sexton, 2020). These studies together support the scope of the problem and explain the need for policy implementation to improve the relationship between police and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Challenges in LGBTQIA+ Workplace Experiences

One of the most common themes found in the literature consisted of challenges experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals within the workplace (Beatriz & Pereira, 2023; Colvin, 2015; Couto, 2018b; Ng & Rumens, 2017). According to Ng and Rumens (2017), despite many formal and informal anti-discrimination policies, there are consistent circumstances involving

LGBTQIA+ workers experiencing harassment and mistreatment, as well as microaggressions starting as early as the job interview stages. In concurrence, Couto (2018b) discusses the spectrum of negative workplace experiences for LGBTQIA+ individuals and how they range drastically depending on the type of job, sometimes as serious safety concerns. Similar differences were noted by Colvin (2015) when it comes to police officer expressions of workplace discrimination. However, like Couto's (2018b) spectrum of workplace experiences based on job type, there is also a spectrum when it comes to LGBTQIA+ visibility, leaving some individuals to go unnoticed in the workplace, subsequently, expressing lower levels of discrimination (Colvin, 2015). Similarly, Beatriz and Pereira (2023) identified themes regarding overt discrimination such as homophobic or transphobic comments; and harassment, occupational exclusion, and job loss. Participants described many comments as blatant verbal aggression and bullying (Beatriz & Pereira, 2023). Even more concerning, some participants described these comments being said to their faces with no shame and zero regard for feelings, while others reported only hearing these comments second-hand (Beatriz & Pereira, 2023). This statement highlights the fact that while visibility is an important step towards making LGBTQIA+ workers feel safer, visibility alone is not enough to truly support LGBTQIA+ individuals in the workplace. A need for more legal, institutional, and social support is necessary to feel safer and more welcome at work (Beatriz & Pereira, 2023). Therefore, to strengthen police-LGBTQIA+ relations, an acknowledgment of negative workplace experiences is important and is required to provide insight into how best to strengthen this relationship.

Divided Community Perceptions

LGBTQIA+ officers may face challenges in gaining acceptance and trust from the communities they serve, particularly in areas where LGBTQIA+ individuals have historically

experienced discrimination or mistreatment by law enforcement (Bjørkelo et al., 2015; Bolton, 2003; Colvin, 2009; Colvin, 2015; Couto, 2018a; Dwyer, 2014; Hodge & Sexton 2020). In the study conducted by Bjørkelo et al. (2015), it was noted that applicants from immigrant backgrounds saw their own cultural background as a strength they could bring to the police force. Unfortunately, societal stigma and discrimination towards the LGBTQIA+ community often compels individuals to conceal their LGBTQIA+ identity, rather than viewing it as a strength. As such, it is important to acknowledge that LGBTQIA+ identity represents another dimension of diversity. This highlights a significant contrast between how different forms of diversity are perceived and valued within certain contexts; with immigrant backgrounds being more embraced while LGBTQIA+ identities may face challenges in terms of acceptance and recognition as strengths (Bjørkelo et al., 2015). This is supported by Hodge and Sexton (2020) where it was reported that many people believed that being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community would complicate how they were treated by law enforcement. This implies that negative stereotypes and biases surrounding LGBTQIA+ individuals within the broader community further impact how LGBTQIA+ officers are perceived and treated. Subsequently, certain ideas often arise surrounding oversimplified approaches that always focus on the same fundamental objectives of education, communication, and advocacy to build relationships that improve these opinions (Dwyer, 2014).

However, the general consensus is that queer individuals in law enforcement are under immense pressure to conform to current gender stereotypes, ultimately forcing individuals to 'weigh up' and determine the costs and benefits of 'coming out' at work (Colvin, 2015). Individuals want to be seen by their colleagues in a positive light and will adapt their behaviours to reflect this and minimize negative perceptions held by individuals. In addition, perceptions of

a workplace can have important implications for an organization. These perceptions can be viewed as becoming barriers or access points, creating negative or positive disparities among employees (Bolton, 2003). This directly correlates with Colvin's previous article (2009), where it is indicated that both perceptions and experiences are also shaped and influenced by their specific group membership. Therefore, positive experiences and perceptions of law enforcement agencies are key when it comes to considering diverse groups (Colvin, 2009). This can also improve the LGBTQIA+ community's own biases and perceptions of police officer involvement as well. When it comes to certain barriers faced by LGBTQIA+ officers, studies have revealed many live 'dual lives," where their work and their sexuality are largely separated; specifically with female LGBTQIA+ officers often emphasizing a "shared perception" that incorporates both their gender challenges as well as sexual orientation into how they negotiate their workplace and career experiences (Couto, 2018a). As a result of this, the LGBTQIA+ community and police should work towards fostering greater understanding, collaboration, and positive relationships among one another, ultimately contributing to safer and more inclusive communities for everyone.

Design and Methodology

Research Design

For this study, a convergent (or concurrent) mixed-methods research design approach is used in conjunction with the limited time frame that is more rational for secondary research. This research design provides a comprehensive analysis from the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time. This, in turn, delivers a more informed interpretation and understanding of the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By providing data validation, further explanation, and responding to queries through cross-referencing, whether

qualitative or quantitative, the gaps in understanding are revealed by avoiding the limitations of one type of research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The selection of a mixed methods approach for this study stemmed from a critical analysis based on information provided in the search for existing literature. The existing literature is analyzed for any relevant police and LGBTQIA+ community relations to help in answering the immediate research questions of how strengthening relationships between police and the LGBTQIA+ community can be of benefit in Canada.

Search Methodology

The methodology used in this study focuses on the review of secondary data sets for the most relevant, useful, and reliable sources. To cover the wide range of demographics in this study, the search was not limited to any age, gender, race, or sexual orientation brackets. Tools such as Google Scholar, Canada Commons, and the Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA) were used as the primary search engines to ensure the best literature could be selected. In this process, multiple searched terms were used which resulted in numerous hits returned. All results being used are secondary sources due to the inability to receive ethical approval to conduct any primary research studies and to eliminate the potential for bias. The collection procedure required the use of outside tools for organizing references, literature, and any other useful information (See Table 1).

Table 1

Results from Initial Search

Searched Database	Searched Terms	# of Hit Returned
Canada Commons	LGBTQ+ AND Police	Canada Commons: 2,221
Google Scholar		Google Scholar: 20,430

Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)		CJA: 96
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	LGBTQ+ AND Law Enforcement	Canada Commons: 1,354 Google Scholar: 18,800 CJA: 37
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	LGBTQ+ Police Officers	Canada Commons: 1,616 Google Scholar: 17,800 CJA: 12
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	LGBTQ+ in Law Enforcement	Canada Commons: 1,356 Google Scholar: 18,900 CJA: 14
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	Relationships Between Police AND LGBTQ	Canada Commons: 1,479 Google Scholar: 19,100 CJA: 11
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	Relationships Between Law Enforcement AND LGBTQ+	Canada Commons: 1,076 Google Scholar: 18,300 CJA: 3

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Through all the databases used, the results returned or "hits", found numerous pieces of literature to possibly be used (See Table 1). Therefore, simple, yet specific inclusion criteria were used to filter through the returned hits (See Table 2). The results were those of a revised search

that included scholarly, books, journals, peer-reviewed articles, and reports that offered full-text in English from 2011 to 2024. Data collected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 to 2022) should be relied on lightly due to frequent inconsistencies and otherwise uncommon information given the change in social norms over this time period. Canada-based studies and literature from outside of Canada were used in conjunction because of a lack of available relevant literature in Canada alone. These studies can be used in part to determine what methods should or should not be considered in response to the research question. The exclusion criteria consisted of any literature that was not scholarly, peer-reviewed, or in English, as well as those before 2011. Also, the slight differentiation of word usage made the difference in results (See Table 1) for hits from either excluding or including the use of 'police' and replacing it with 'law enforcement,' or removing the 'IA+' from 'LGBTQIA+.' The use of inclusion and exclusion criteria was important for the credibility and impact of this study when selecting articles.

Table 2

Results from revised search. (Revised search and number of hits with inclusion and exclusion criteria.)

Searched Database	Searched Terms	# of Hit Returned
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	LGBTQ+ AND Police	Canada Commons: 98 Google Scholar: 5,083 CJA: 37
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	LGBTQ+ AND Law Enforcement	Canada Commons: 73 Google Scholar: 4,781 CJA: 23

Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	LGBTQ+ Police Officers	Canada Commons: 70 Google Scholar: 4,908 CJA: 12
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	LGBTQ+ in Law Enforcement	Canada Commons: 78 Google Scholar: 5,003 CJA: 14
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	Relationships Between Police AND LGBTQ	Canada Commons: 62 Google Scholar: 4,851 CJA:11
Canada Commons Google Scholar Criminal Justice Abstract (CJA)	Relationships Between Law Enforcement AND LGBTQ+	Canada Commons: 59 Google Scholar: 4,607 CJA: 3

Note. The search database, search terms, and quantity of hits returned with the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied are displayed in the table above.

Article Selection

The articles selected all met specific criteria separating them from others. With most initial hits not yielding many specific or obvious results, there were limited options to choose from. However, by utilizing the "Ctrl + F" tool (Control Find or Command 'F' on MacBook), it was easier and faster to find sources that made references to specific keywords such as police, law enforcement, LGBTQ(IA+), queer, and relationship. With results offering numerous pages of hits, only the search results from the first three pages were used. Once a Source was deemed

relevant or not relevant based on the keywords mentioned above, a thorough analysis of the abstract was performed to determine whether or not the full article should be read and considered for this study. Finding sources relevant to the scope of the study, the research question, and the purpose of the study combined, proved to be difficult; however, when separated and reviewed individually, the research results became clearer and more concise.

Results

The literature review presented five themes that directly relate to the research questions concerning strategies to build trust, the impact on recruitment efforts in policing, and the possible benefits of improving relationships between police and the LGBTQIA+ community in Canada. To further these findings, the hypothesis drawn suggests that gender identity inequalities are a common issue within policing and LGBTQIA+ individuals face more mistreatment and microaggressions than their heterosexual co-workers (Colvin, 2015).

The first theme identified was issues of gender identity inequalities in policing. This idea highlights the many fundamental challenges and inequalities faced by the LGBTQIA+ community with law enforcement agencies, subsequently, addressing the requirement for an inclusive and fair environment (Colvin, 2015). In order to build a stronger relationship between police and the LGBTQIA+ community, injustices within policing structure, culture, and practices need to be acknowledged and addressed to promote further trust and collaboration (Bikos, 2016). By recognizing and communicating these issues, police can show their commitment to inclusivity and equality, in turn creating a trusting relationship with LGBTQIA+ individuals (Colvin, 2015). Common strategies can implement critical diversity training programs that align with current issues surrounding gender identity, and foster open communication between police and the LGBTQIA+ community (Colvin, 2015). Additionally, many studies have analyzed the

supposedly challenging relationship and the effectiveness of current mitigating strategies, which

consider both community differences and the recruitment efforts of LGBTQIA+ officers to

reiterate community diversity (Durbin & Cox, 2020). These essential strides toward building

trust and inclusivity have come from directly acknowledging gender identity inequalities within

policing in Canada, and as a result, strengthened relationships with the LGBTQIA+ community

(Dwyer, 2019). Through a foundation of trust, police, and LGBTQIA+ community relations

continue to grow. As such, recruitment numbers should be expected to increase in diverse and

qualified candidates, hopefully improving the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies (Durbin

& Cox, 2020).

The next theme explained the need to adapt to a changing society. The literature

emphasizes the essential need for both police agencies and LGBTQIA+ communities to evolve

by strengthening relationships, which is significantly relevant for understanding the possible

benefits this relationship can hold in Canada (Dwyer, 2019). The theme further highlights how

necessary it is to identify and rectify outdated policies, practices, and points of view that hinder

an inclusive and accepting environment (Colvin, 2015). Establishing trust and collaboration can

be attained through police and LGBTQIA+ communities by modifying attitudes along with the

shift in societal norms and values (Bikos, 2016). In light of this, an adjustment is crucial for

answering both sub-questions about strategies for fostering trust and the effect on police

recruitment numbers (Durbin & Cox, 2020).

The following theme establishes the need for improved policies when interacting with the

LGBTQIA+ Community. By highlighting how crucial it is for law enforcement to create training

programs and policies that foster open-mindedness, a mutual understanding creates sensitivity

toward LGBTQIA+ individuals (Dwyer, 2019). To guarantee fair and equal treatment, policies

and practices must be drastically improved to strengthen the connection between the LGBTQIA+ community and the police (Ng & Rumens, 2017). Additionally, to decrease the chance of offending others based on a simple lack of understanding or education (Israel et al., 2017), the literature review in this study has emphasized the need for improved policies to protect against issues of negative LGBTQIA+ workers' well-being (Ng & Rumens, 2017). Subsequently, this can promote better communication between law enforcement agencies and LGBTQIA+ (Colvin, 2015). This topic is closely related to understanding the potential benefits of strengthening ties between the LGBTQIA+ community and Canadian police forces, particularly about the sub-questions concerning ways to foster trust and the impact on police recruitment rates. Establishing trust and promoting a supportive environment in the workplace requires an understanding of the obstacles LGBTQIA+ people face, such as harassment, discrimination, and various microaggressions (Ng & Rumens, 2017). To address these issues, police organizations must proactively establish safe and welcoming environments (Israel et al., 2017). These actions can strengthen their bonds with the LGBTQIA+ community.

The literature review goes on further by explaining challenges in LGBTQIA+ workplace experiences. This theme is closely related to comprehending how improving the relationship between the LGBTQIA+ community and the police can be advantageous for Canadian society. This is especially true when it comes to addressing the sub-questions concerning methods of fostering trust and the effect on police-LGBTQIA+ recruitment. Building stronger bonds between police agencies and the LGBTQIA+ community requires acknowledging the trouble that queer individuals face in the workplace (Ng & Rumens, 2017). Law enforcement in Canada can promote a more comprehensive and encouraging atmosphere for LGBTQIA+ people by

incorporating strategies that increase recruitment and foster trust. This will ultimately lead to safer and more inclusive communities (Beatriz & Pereira, 2023).

Divided community perceptions were another recurring theme in the literature review. The results presented closely correlate to the benefits of strengthening relationships between police and the LGBTQIA+ community in Canada, while also addressing the sub-questions concerning strategies for building trust and improving the impact on LGBTQIA+ recruitment numbers in policing. First impressions have a huge influence on the foundations of relationships and therefore, the negative stereotypes, biases, and historical instances of discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals at the hands of the police have impacted how other members of the LGBTQIA+ community perceive law enforcement (Hodge & Sexton 2020). Due to this, strengthening relationships between police agencies and the LGBTQIA+ community should not only include addressing various perceptions, but also training for improved knowledge on the subject through education, communication, and further advocacy aimed at promoting common understanding, acceptance, and mutual respect (Dwyer, 2014). By challenging these stereotypes and achieving common ground amongst both groups, law enforcement agencies can open the floor for a more comprehensive and supportive environment. With the goal of ultimately contributing to a safer and more inclusive community.

Discoveries from the literature reviewed displayed the unique importance of transforming organizational awareness. This can be done through improved policies, and cross-cultural sensitivity within law enforcement entities to emphasize trust with the LGBTQIA+ community. Key initiatives can include implementing diversity training strategies, hiring specific and trusted LGBTQIA+ liaison officers, and encouraging open communication and cooperation between police agencies and LGBTQIA+ communities. Subsequently, the commitment to a more

inclusive and supportive environment with law enforcement can improve recruitment efforts, and attract a wider spectrum of candidates, including LGBTQIA+ individuals who may have been previously discouraged because of historical discrimination or other factors. By protecting relationships with the LGBTQIA+ community, police can also improve their overall perception, in turn, providing a more enticing workplace for individuals from all backgrounds.

Furthermore, the literature review offers critical insights into the challenges, opportunities, and strategies necessary to the improvement of relations between police and the LGBTQIA+ community in Canada. This directly correlates to the research inquiries and contributing factors for a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Yet, there are still a few limitations throughout this analysis, such as a potential for bias in the data selection process, constraints to the scope of the study, and a strict dependence on secondary data sources. These restrictions might have impacted the study's validity and diversity of knowledge. Going into more depth on current data selection methods on this topic could improve future studies, allowing for a more thorough and comparative analysis of police agencies and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Discussion

This study indicates that there are complex issues unfolding between the LGBTQIA+ community and the police that need to be addressed in order for anything to improve. Through careful consideration of the importance of strengthening relationships between these two groups, as well as analyzing the strategies used to build trust and increase recruitment numbers. This paper's purpose is to highlight the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals with police and the lack of literature currently available examining these issues, especially from a Canadian perspective.

Understanding Historical Tension and Discrimination

One must understand the tension and discrimination that has existed in the past to understand why there are current tensions between these two groups. Police have a historical record of abusing their power when dealing with LGBTQIA+ individuals which was evidently displayed in the 1969 Stonewall riots, which erupted following police raids in a gay bar in New York City and served as a catalyst for modern LGBTQIA+ rights movements (Comfort, 2021). The data collected from this paper's research indicates that by having a general understanding of the history between LGBTQIA+ individuals and law enforcement, it is much easier to build trust and cultivate relationships because reconciliation efforts are perceived as coming from a place of understanding (Comfort, 2021). The findings of this study are supported by other pieces of literature of a similar nature, specifically Couto's (2018b) paper on this topic. The hardships experienced in the past by LGBTQIA+ people at the hands of the police lay the groundwork for highlighting the discriminatory procedures and practices that still exist within the police (Couto, 2018b). This paper addresses the need to promote more inclusive and diverse methods of policing to show LGBTQIA+ members that active steps are being taken to foster a safer environment around and within policing agencies. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the negative impact of existing police cultures surrounding the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ sworn police officers, which is typically viewed as hypermasculine, and the effects these impacts have on fostering the aforementioned environment.

Building Trust and Cultivating Relationships

The current literature details the significance of emphasizing the need for transparency and accountability when it comes to law enforcement, specifically when it comes to identifying and acting on instances of misconduct and discrimination (Colvin, 2015). Furthermore, to

establish grounds for trust, practical efforts need to be made to enhance collaboration between these two groups. Dwyer (2019) highlighted that police liaison programs have been taken for granted in the past and continue to not be utilized to their full potential. Contrary to this, studies have supported the findings in this paper which suggest that police liaison programs are one of the most important strategies implemented to cater towards strengthening and building better relationships between LGBTQIA+ individuals and police (Dwyer, 2019). This further indicates that there is room for improvement in LGBTQIA-police relationships in a conventional way. More importantly, for these programs to be successful, there needs to be an acknowledgment that the level of trust LGBTQIA+ communities have in the police is remarkably fragile, and the LGBTQIA+ community may never be able to forget history and past relations, leading to a conclusion that trust in the present may be linked with the mistrust of the past (Dwyer, 2019).

Enhancing Collaboration Between Police and LGBTQIA+ Communities

Community engagement and dialogue are essential for creating spaces for open communication to address common concerns and develop strategies for ensuring the safety and well-being of LGBTQIA+ individuals (Colvin, 2015). This paper builds on existing research of key findings that directly correlate with the theme of needing improved police policies for interactions with the LGBTQIA+ community (Beatriz & Pereira, 2023). Enhanced collaboration requires renewed mitigating strategies to reduce discrimination, bias, hate crimes, and violence toward LGBTQIA+ individuals (Colvin, 2015; Israel et al., 2017). While previous literature primarily focused specifically on police interactions and perceptions of LGBTQIA+ groups in the community, this paper also analyzes the effects this tension has on active police officers who identify as LGBTQIA+. In addition to this, workplace challenges and identity inequality issues have been highlighted, and it is evident that there is a need for better protections in place as well

as enhanced access to supportive services to promote a more ethical workplace (Beatriz & Pereira, 2023). The incorporation of more inclusive policies will improve the statistics on recruitment and retention of LGBTQIA+ officers (Durbin & Cox, 2020). These findings suggest that major adjustments need to occur from within police agencies in order for the wider LGBTQIA+ community to witness these changes on a broader scale.

Improving Outreach and Engagement Efforts

The research data collected in this study suggests that continuous efforts to improve outreach and engagement strategies by the police will enhance community policing efforts (Hodge & Sexton, 2020). LGBTQIA+ officers are becoming a growing presence in policing agencies, at a civilian level, and within the police agency (Couto, 2018b), so academic research specific to the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals needs to match this statistic. Additionally, this study highlights the need for increased transparency and accountability for the actions of police in an attempt to de-escalate existing tensions and reduce any foreseeable issues (Colvin, 2015). Findings indicate the most promising way of improving outreach and engagement efforts is through law enforcement agencies' participation in Pride events and cultural awareness workshops, in addition to LGBTQIA+ individuals engaging with their local law enforcement agency (Couto, 2018b). Ample research indicates that LGBTQIA+ individuals are more inclined to be targeted by law enforcement and face more harassment at the hands of the police, which is continuously displayed in the literature reviewed throughout this study. As such, all police agencies should place more emphasis on equipping their members with community-focused skill sets which can be achieved through providing training and education on diversity and inclusion, as well as the best practices to eliminate bias or discrimination in order to provide support to the community (Beatriz & Pereira, 2023).

Recommendations

There were restrictions and possible moral dilemmas with this research. Due to time constraints, this study was only able to collect and analyze secondary data; the study was not able to collect and analyze primary data using methods that could have directly addressed the research question more precisely. Primary research methods would have created more opportunities to address the knowledge gap in literature more directly, providing more objective and in-depth answers to the research questions proposed. A suggestion for future research would be to incorporate more Canadian-specific research into upcoming literature, focused on policing agencies at federal and municipal levels and covering a variety of jurisdictions throughout Canadian provinces. This is suggested due to current literature relying heavily on major cities while excluding rural areas and smaller towns.

To further support the research questions addressed in this paper on strengthening relationships between the police and the LGBTQIA+ community in Canada, it is important to look at the necessary required actions to solve them. These actions include reviewing current existing policies and literature, coordinating more partnerships and collaboration between law enforcement and the LGBQIA+ community, frequent communication that fosters positive feedback, and more training and education for both groups. Further recommendations for future research include drawing more comparisons between current literature, especially from outside North America which will highlight the contrasting differences in literature from different parts of the world. Lastly, for a more comprehensive understanding of different perspectives, a thorough analysis of different areas of law enforcement and legal practices should be explored, to further build on the effectiveness of current strategies and implement new ideas for change going forward.

Conclusion

With greater diversity in police services reflecting the communities they serve, understanding and supporting the lived experiences and values of LGBTQIA+ individuals who may not fit as readily into "traditional" policing "norms" will present a continuing and urgent challenge for police agencies and the communities they serve. In an era where police legitimacy and even their relevance are consistently called into question, LGBTQIA+ members of police organizations must also find legitimacy and respect as police professionals, and play an active role in the future of policing in Canada (Couto, 2018b). This study explores and analyzes the history and complex issues surrounding the relationship between police and the LGBTQIA+ community. Through the use of a mixed-methods research approach supported by a transformative worldview, this study explains and identifies recurring themes and factors between these two relationships; in particular, gender identity in policing, the need to adapt to changing environments, the need for improved policies when interacting with the LGBTQIA+ community, and the challenges faced in LGBTQIA+ workplace experiences. More importantly, the supporting literature reviewed throughout this paper ultimately aligns with the general direction of the scope of this study. This study not only aims to positively affect police-community relations with LGBTQIA+ individuals in Canada but also improve efforts and strategies for recruitment in an attempt to diversify police agencies. The large number of individuals aged 15 to 24 years old who identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ further proves the necessary practicalities surrounding the need for diverse hiring, especially in a country as multicultural as Canada (Couto, 2018). Implementing the aforementioned recommendations and engaging in ongoing dialogue to keep up with societal changes can help law enforcement agencies create a more inclusive environment that is safer for the LGBTQIA+ community. This

study has provided conclusive research that displays the current issues associated with

LGBTQIA-police relations and strongly encourages police agencies to consider these

recommendations for repairing and rebuilding their relationship with the LGBTQIA+

community.

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