

UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Sustainability Program

Student Research Report

UBC Universal Change Rooms

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....2

Purpose..... 3

Literary Review.....4

Methods.....8

Recommendations.....11

Results and Findings.....13

References.....17

Appendix.....18

 Survey.....A

 Consent form.....B

Executive Summary

The older population is not properly educated nor informed about the universal change rooms which is preventing inclusivity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and two spirit (LGBTQ2+) community (OK2bme, 2019). Therefore creating a barrier to their physical activity needs. With the addition of gender-neutral change rooms to the University of British Columbia (UBC) Aquatic Center and around the campus it's important that the population is informed and aware of their purpose. Additionally making people feel more comfortable and willing to use them, with the end goal of encouraging and helping people be more physically active.

The research examined on making campuses more physically active through the introduction of gender neutral change rooms were, the usage of signs to inform people about what change rooms are gender neutral, how other universities have introduced universal change rooms, and making campus more inclusive of transgender students. This information was used to help develop our survey, how to inform people about the gender-neutral change rooms, and the best approach to inform people about the change rooms. Through the survey there were four key findings: (1) Majority of the population is aware about change rooms; (2) Older population prefer gander specific change rooms; (3) The majority of people do not feel well informed about the universal change rooms and their purpose; (4) The signage needs to be more clear and concise. Through these findings we developed a few recommendations to help inform the population and make the change rooms more used and accepted.

The first recommendation is to have more clear and concise signage; secondly we find it important that the staff of the UBC Aquatic Center is educated about the gender-neutral washrooms and the people who use them; thirdly we think it would be a good idea to incorporate bulletin boards around the aquatic center to post educational facts regarding the LGBTQ2+ community. Some limitations to our research is that the majority of people we surveyed were from an older population, we didn't not specifically survey anyone from the LGBTQ2+ community, also we could have surveyed people in other places around the campus and not specifically the aquatic center (OK2bme, 2019).

This research project was completed in partnership with the University of British Columbia's Social Ecological Economical Developmental Studies (SEEDS) program whom create partnerships on campus with students, staff and community partners to further impact change on campus through policy change (SEEDS, 2018). In respect to this project, we partnered with UBC's recreation department to analyse the impact of the universal change room initiative in the aquatic center 2 years post opening.

Purpose:

The purpose of this paper is to critically analyse the literature surrounding LGBTQ+2 physical activity involvement and review the process and effect the universal change room project has had on UBC campus in contrast to other university developments. This project

collected qualitative data from the communities senior and family population to further understand how this initiative is perceived in groups not directly associated with the university (staff, students). The goal from this project is to further the conversation of marginalized groups physical activity barriers within groups that may not be well informed and to expand participation and efforts in all areas of campus activity. We hope to promote the importance of physical education literacy in all populations.

Literature review:

The incorporation of a literature review analysing previously existing research in regard to the LGBTQ+2 community and the incorporation of universal change rooms on campuses is to determine the gap within literature and break the barrier between this marginalized groups access to physical education. This literature review will be used to further the discussion of universal change rooms at the University of British Columbia by analysing research on the experiences of students and staff with universal change rooms on other campuses.

Intersectionality (class, race, gender, sexual orientation) of individuals can create limitations of acceptance within structural organizations such as gyms (Herrick & Duncan, 2018). Herrick & Duncan (2018) identified sport as being a social construct dominated by heterosexual men and historically has not been accepting of those who deviate from this archetype of an athlete society has created. Herrick & Duncan (2017) indicated that most research within physical activity promotion is targeted to the dominant heterosexual groups and

there is little focus on interventions promoting language use, policies and restructuring spaces to enhance activity levels of the LGBTQ+ communities. UBC's development of the universal change rooms within the aquatic center is a form of structural change to provide all individuals with place more comfortable to change (Sutcliffe, 2016). Through community outreach programs the universal change room project asked for input on developing proper and accepting signage to be implemented around the changeroom that got the message across change (Sutcliffe, 2016). In comparison to the Berkeley university universal change room initiative, community outreach and participation in developing the safe areas was not a factor in the creation of the initiative (Kozub, 2018). Further research in this area needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of having collaborative involvement with the community and the university and whether or not it positively impacts the participation rate of LGBTQ+2 groups in physical activity (OK2bme, 2019).

Universal change rooms on university campuses have the potential to promote policy changes in other areas of campus such as residence, health care, and bathrooms on campus (Beemyn, 2005). Campus culture has been viewed as promoting heteronormative ideals through gender exclusive policies that have been in place for many years (Beemyn, 2005). Herrick & Duncan (2018) acknowledged the inadequacy policy promotion to fill the needs of homosexual and transgender communities and that greater advocacy needs to happen to create change. Policy change is further mentioned in the Beemyn et al, 2005 study where it is indicated that sex segregated dormitories are not accepting to those who don't identify with the binary classification of sex. Universal change rooms can be viewed as not only structural change but policy change for future development on campuses.

Not only does the UBC change rooms make the change room space accessible and safe space for transgender students, but the new accessible change rooms also make it possible for individuals with mobility disabilities and visual impairments to easily access the space (Rimmer et al, 2015) The study assessed 35 health clubs to determine the extent of accessibility through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Rimmer (2015), the research looked at 6 sub scales of ADA requirements for accessibility: built environment, equipment, swimming pools, information, facility policies, and professional behaviour and ranked each section on a percentage of accessibility. The scale was set and developed by the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) .Rimmer (2015). concluded that out of the 35 health clubs that access to both built environment , equipment, and policies had average ADAAG score of 58.5%, this shows that only 58 percent of facilities met the guidelines for accessible ramps, change room sizes, family change-rooms, sink heights, anti-slip floors, water fountains, folding shower benches, and grip railings (Rimmer et al. 2015). Rimmer (2015) also found that most of the facilities lacked the proper resources for accessibility for individuals with mobility disabilities and visual impairments. The greatest limiting factor for accessibility was the initial cost of installation for change-room modifications.

It is evident that policy change needs to occur to make subgroups feel more comfortable and accepted within large institutions such as universities and it is unfair to assume the equitability is fair and just (Beemyn, 2005). In many instances transgender students feel uncomfortable and even threatened in single sex locker rooms where their appearance and

feeling of self-differ from the dominant group within the locker room (Beemyn, 2005). The findings from (Gill, Morrow, Collins, Lucey & Schultz, 2010), are based around the notion that the physical inactivity epidemic is not only due to increased sedentary lifestyle but is paralleled with social and physical hostile environment that is physical activity facilities. It can be inferred that these environments perpetuate themes of homophobia and transphobia which creates barriers to participation by making individuals conform to a standard masculinity (Gill et al, 2010).

Historically, students within this marginalized groups have felt that they have had little to no voice in the development of campus strategies (Beemyn, 2005). Ultimately, their voice is unheard, and it is typically the greater population that has determined what is best for this sub group. UBCs incorporation of community discussions is aimed to break this barrier and have a collective agreement between both populations on what initiatives will be beneficial (Sutcliffe, 2016). Not only was the aquatic center built to be structurally accepting to the LGBTQ+2 population, but employees have worked closely with Equity and Inclusion to promote proper language, actions and conversation regarding the universal change rooms (Sutcliffe, 2016).

The literature findings have been used to shape and outline our study to further positively promote LGBTQ+2 physical activity literacy on university campuses. The study will focus on both the LGBTQ+2 community, student population and community members residing on campus.

Methods:

The population we chose to analyze in this study were the senior and family swim population that frequently use the aquatic center. This population was chosen due to their close proximity and use of the university's facilities. We chose to gather information on our sample population through a qualitative analysis, in particular we conducted an in-person survey (Appendix A) comprised of open-ended questions that require limited knowledge-based answers. We chose to study this population qualitatively because we are interested in the lived experience of each participant and the thoughts and questions they had about the universal change rooms in the aquatic center. Since UBC is a community with varying demographics and a large community/family community we chose to steer away from surveying the student population who potentially has access to more information regarding the universal change rooms. We have chosen to include surveying families to see how they use the universal change room and whether they utilize it as a 'family change room' or view it as an exclusive universal change room to only be used by those who don't identify binarily. By looking at these two populations we are hoping to identify whether there are any negative connotations associated with the universal change rooms, and if so, hoping to further educate people on the use of these change rooms and to reinforce the fact that they serve the purpose of making everyone welcome.

Consent from the aquatic centre manager on duty to conduct the study will be gained before our group commences. Collection of data will take place just before or just after the swimmer has checked into the front desk; or immediately after the swimmers finished their session. We hope to approach the participants while they are checking in, in a friendly manner

and state that we do want to be an inconvenience to their daily activities and hope to get a minute of their time to participate in our study.

The recruiting process was voluntary consent acquired from participants entering/ exiting the aquatic center whom partake in “senior fit swim” and “family swim” classes. It is important to note that those who participated in the survey differ from those who chose not to. Patrons who chose to participate in the questionnaires were asked and required to complete a one page ‘Participant Consent Form for Class-based Projects’. Those who chose not to sign the participant consent form but met the inclusion criteria were not measured in this study. The data was collected on a one sided sheet of paper with brief short questions because participants were headed into a scheduled class time and were potentially short on time. The length of the survey allowed us to give a quick overview of the questions to each participant. 11 participants were studied on Tuesday March 12th between 9-10:30 am and their responses are recorded in Appendix. A.

Problems that we encountered with data collection was getting the interest of the aquatic center users, understandably many of them preferred to go swim without stopping for a survey. We understand that an issue of emotional vulnerability could be at play with our topic, individuals might not be willing to disclose information or a truthful opinion in the study. We can account for this by ensuring confidentiality by not including the participants name on the survey so the sample will remain anonymous. To further strengthen the opinions of the public

we have chosen questions for the survey that will not target certain individuals or groups as we seek to keep personal opinion out of the study.

One unique finding was out of the 11 sampled, non identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two spirited. Out of the 11 sampled, 3 identified as female and identified as male. The mean age for men was 44.28 and for women, it was 48. Orientation identification was essential in our study to understand the demographic that was being studied. We hypothesized that the older demographic would be less aware of the discussion surrounding universal change rooms and what it entails.

Our findings were (1) the majority of the sampled population was aware about the universal change rooms in the aquatic center. (2) older populations preferred gender specific change rooms. (3) the majority of the people do not feel well informed about the universal change rooms and most importantly, their intended purpose. (4) signage needs to be clear and concise when labelling universal change rooms. The findings from the study have been used to formulate recommendations for the SEEDS program in future endeavours, this information is found in the *recommendations* section (Seeds, 2018).

We also hope that by informing people about the change rooms it will encourage the participants to inform others and seek more information. By spreading knowledge about the universal change rooms people will be more informed and understanding towards the change

rooms and people who identify anything other than their cis-gender. The overarching goal is to promote inclusivity and understanding by all in the community (OK2bme,2019) .

Important note: All members have all completed our online *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2)* which allows us to properly conduct research involving interviews and surveys to gain the knowledge needed to educate and inform the UBC Aquatic Center users (Thomas, 2015).

Recommendations for Clients

We chose to examine the older population who attends *Senior Fit Swim* and population that attend *Open Public Swim* because we hypothesized that the more senior population would not be educated properly on the usage of universal change rooms. Due to our hypothesis being correct we would like to offer a few suggestions to improve the usage and education surrounding the universal change rooms. These suggestions will be directed to the population who are 60+ years of age to promote a better understanding and usage of the change rooms. We would like to offer the recommendations that involve the installation of straightforward and simple signage which contribute to a greater understanding and awareness within the community of what it means to be a part of the LGBTQ2+ community and how this presents as a physical barrier to physical education and what can be done to help decrease the stigma surrounding an all inclusive community.

Another recommendation that we have would be to ensure that all staff working at the Aquatic Center are knowledgeable in the practices of diversity and inclusion, specifically surrounding the LGBTQ2+ community. By ensuring that the staff are educated enough of the subject matter is key in terms of language used and inclusive behaviours and a general presence that exudes inclusivity. To ensure that all staff are up to standards with those qualities we suggest that the management staff offer a mandatory inclusivity workshop put on by Qmunity called Queer Competency Training (2019). The Queer Competency Trainings are experimental workshops to help one understand diversity and make your workplace or organization more inclusive for queer, trans, and Two-Spirit clients and staff (OK2bme, 2019). As a public aquatic center we need to ensure that everyone apart of the LGBTQ2+ community feels welcome and safe to participate in physical activity.

Another recommendation that the Aquatic Center should look into would be having educational facts that are bulleted at the entrance of the Aquatic Center to inform the public on the stigmas and issues that are faced by the LGBTQ2+ community in regards to physical activity and inclusivity.

To ensure that there is always further improvement and acceptance with the LGBTQ2+ community, we recommend that additional research is needed and collected from a more diverse sample. Due to lack of time and resources we were only able to collect data from a small and rather specific sample of people who are using the Aquatic Center, by collecting data from a larger and more diverse group of people we are able to eliminate any flawed or biased data.

Results/Findings and Discussion

Our original hypothesis anticipated that the older population would be less aware of the installation and purpose of the universal change rooms. This survey resides in the form of a qualitative analysis wherein our aim was to better understand people's underlying reasons for their attitudes toward the universal change rooms. To do so, the focus was on a more open ended questioning style of survey, which would allow respondents to effectively convey their thoughts and feelings related to the change rooms.

This section of the paper will exhibit the findings of the survey. Furthermore, this section will act as a discussion of our findings, subsequently leading to our recommendations. We surveyed a total of 11 patrons at the UBC Aquatic Centre on Tuesday March 12th, between 9am and 10.30am during the senior fit time slot. The surveys prompted for participant identification - our respondents provided us with 3 varieties of identification; male, female and man. Out of the 11 surveyed, 1 was the identified man, 3 were female identifying and 9 identified as male. The age of the identified man was 65, while the mean age of the males was 44.28 and the mean age of the females was 48 years of age.

The idea behind making the participants identify their orientation was to be aware who exactly in the population we were surveying. Because this survey is looking at the overall attitude toward the universal change room, we wanted to know what demographic that was. Age was also a factor that we aimed to consider, as it directly related to our hypothesis. As stated

above, we hypothesized that the older demographic would be slightly more unaware of the purpose and overall idea of the universal change rooms. Also we endeavoured to measure the attitude toward installation of these rooms, whether those attitudes were positive or generally ambivalent. This would be made possible in the qualitative format where open ended responses were promoted and encouraged. The age of survey respondents was definitely more mature than that of a student body, as was overall reflective of a more senior, professional cohort. Both male and female identifying respondents reflected this almost equally, with just under 4 years separating the mean groups.

Following the identification we asked respondents for their opinions of the universal change rooms and how they perceived them. Question 2 stated: 'Do you prefer gender specific change rooms or universal change rooms? Why?' The overall consensus was that patrons preferred the gender specific changing rooms. The majority of responses in question 2 reflected the idea that people were set in their ways in terms of gender specific change rooms. 2 responses were reflective of showing a willingness to accept the use and purpose of the rooms and an overall decreased sense of animosity.

Half the survey respondents surveyed exhibited a knowledge and understanding as to why the change rooms are installed. This is represented in Question 3 of the survey 'Do you feel well informed about the universal change rooms and what its purpose is?' This response somewhat aligns to our hypothesis that the older population may not be as well informed.

Our understanding, or anticipated results of this survey related to an older population being less open to the idea of the universal change room, or less educated or even aware. This question on the survey allowed us to gain an understanding of what exactly that attitude was within the group. The mean age group reflected an older age group, potentially parents, and an age demographic that most likely did not reflect that of a student body age group. Therefore it was fortunate that the mean age was close to the demographic we wanted to analyse. In half the respondents answering that they were aware, prompts us to further question how more people can become aware and open to the idea of these change rooms, and thus provides us feedback to implement in our recommendations section.

Question 4 of the survey respondents were prompted to discuss the University's efforts in developing these change rooms and how they promote and contribute to inclusivity on campus. Respondents provided more positive reflections here, with most stating 'Yes'. One response 'No', two responses stating 'No comment' or 'Unsure'.

Somewhat contrary to the above (Question 3) majority of the respondents acknowledged the inclusivity that the change rooms promoted. Yet the overall understanding can still be developed, to promote further inclusivity on campus, and thus decreasing the gap of LGBTQ2+ participation in physical activity overall.

The signage was another question the respondents were promoted to elaborate on. Whether or not the signage was deemed effective in promoting the presence of the universal change rooms. 'Do you think the signage and advertisement of the changerooms is appropriate?

Why?’ Responses varied from ‘Yes’ to ‘N/a’. The most common response related to the idea that more signage was needed and is not yet effective enough to convey or even alert people to the actual location of the change room. The variation in responses and attitudes toward signage paves way for an overall revamp of the current signage which will potentially aid in better publicity of the change rooms. If the change rooms are more visible, it will invariably create more awareness that they are there, and potentially lead to more understanding as to the reasons why.

Lastly in the survey the respondents were able to circle what signage best represented inclusivity. The most common answer circled was the ‘all gender’ signage. Unisex circled 2.5 times, gender specific circled 1 time, Inclusive one time, gender neutral 0.5 times and one survey was left uncircled. The variation in results regarding the signage signifies a prompt to potentially work toward better and more visible signage, highlighted in the above paragraph.

Overall the results were somewhat consistent with our hypothesis and that these results provide us with the understanding that more can be done to visibly promote further inclusivity in campus to break down barriers of physical activity for all.

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Appendix A: Data Collection Survey**Survey****Age:****How do you identify:****1. Do you know what the Universal Change rooms are? (circle one)****Yes****No (if no, stop survey here)**

- (3 - No) (8- Yes) = 11 total
- No - Female 69, Male 23 , man 65

2. Do you prefer gender specific change rooms or universal change rooms? Why?

- Male - 46. -- “Used to traditional setups”
- Female - 22 -- “ gender specific”
- Sir - 66 -- “ gender specific”
- Male - 71 -- “ gender specific, because I have always used it”
- Male - 55 -- “ No, gender specific rooms”
- Male - 22 -- “ I don't have a preference because everyone has their own decisions”
- Female - 53 “Im used to gender specific, but universal is very accessible”
- Male - 27 --Im a creature of habit. It's a good thing though”

3. Do you feel well informed about the universal change rooms and what its purpose is?

- Male - 46.-- “ No”
- Female - 22 -- “ No”
- Sir - 66 -- “No”
- Male - 71 -- fairly informed
- Male - 55 -- “no”
- Male - 22 -- “yes, i believe the universal change rooms are used to provide a sense of security for individuals within the community
- Female - 53 - Yes
- Male - 27 - yes

4. Do you feel that the University's efforts to develop these change rooms on campus promotes inclusivity in sport and recreation?

- Male - 46. -- “no comment’
- Female - 22 -- “ No”
- Sir - 66 -- “Unsure”
- Male - 71 -- “yes, everyone playing is good”
- Male - 55 -- “ somewhat”

- Female - 53 - Yes
- Male - 22 -- I believe so because inclusiveness starts from a person's sense of security and safety
- Male - 27 -- Yes

5. **Do you think the signage and advertisement of the changerooms is appropriate? Why?**

- Male - 46. -- "Haven't noticed"
- Female -- 22 -- "yes"
- Sir - 66 -- "It is adequate"
- Male - 71 -- "sometimes I have to ask when I see new signs"
- Male - 55 -- "N/a"
- Male - 22 -- "Yes, because it promotes the accessibility of the facility and helps those feel motivated to exercise."
- Female - 53 -- needs more signage
- Male - 27-- Not sure, haven't noticed

6. **Please circle the signage that best represents inclusivity**

- Unisex - 0.5, 1, 1
- All gender - 1, 1, 1
- Inclusive - 1
- Gender neutral - 0.5
- (one unanswered)



Participant Consent Form for Class-based Projects

Principal Investigator:

Ty Holtan (School of Kinesiology), Nicklas Patterson (School of Kinesiology), Ty Barbieri (School of Kinesiology)
Cheyenne Ryan (School of Kinesiology), Maddison Penn (School of Kinesiology)

The purpose of the class project

To gather knowledge and expertise from community members on topics related to physical activity, recreation, and health promotion.

Study Procedures:

With your permission, we are asking you to participate in an interview. Students will take notes during the interview. With the information gathered, students will critically examine how different individuals understand or engage in health promoting activities or health promotion initiatives.

Project outcomes:

The information gathered from interview questions will be part of a written report for the class project. The written report will be shared with the community partners involved with the project. Summaries of findings will also be posted on the following websites. ***No personal information/information that could identify participants will be included in these reports.***

UBC SEEDS Program Library:

<https://sustain.ubc.ca/courses-degrees/alternative-credit-options/seeds-sustainability-program/seeds-sustainability-library>

Potential benefits of class project:

There are no explicit benefits to you by taking part in this class project. However, the interview will provide you with the opportunity to voice your opinion on your experiences with health promoting activities or initiatives in a broad sense and will provide the students with an opportunity to learn from your experiences.

Confidentiality:

Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants involved in an interview is paramount, and no names will be asked for.

At the completion of the course, all data (i.e. notes) and signed consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Negin Riazi's office in the Population Physical Activity Lab (2259 Lower Mall) at the University of British Columbia. All data and consent forms will be destroyed 1 year after completion of the course.

Risks:

The risks associated with participating in this research are minimal. There are no known physical, economic, or social risks associated with participation in this study. Although there is a schedule of questions, the person you are interviewing is free to share what they would like, including refusing to answer specific questions. You should know that your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to **withdraw from the interview** and there will not be negative impacts related to your withdrawal. If you withdraw from the study, all of the information you have shared up until that point will be destroyed.

Contact for information about the study:

If you have any questions about this class project, you can contact Negin Riazi by phone at 604-822-5288 or by email at negin.riazi@ubc.ca

Research ethics complaints:

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Subject signature _____

Date: _____