UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Sustainability Program Student Research Report

The UBC Change Room Project

Christopher Ly, Emily Speidel, Gurleen Minhas, Jordan Hum, Lauren Ensworth, and Rachel Simpson

University of British Columbia

KIN 465

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KIN 465 Interculturalism, Health & Physical Activity

Instructor: Janna Taylor

University of British Columbia

Christopher Ly

Emily Speidel

Gurleen Minhas

Jordan Hum

Lauren Ensworth

Rachel Simpson

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to specifically review the success and implementation of the 'Change Room Project' at other campuses and communities, and then to use the information gathered to develop recommendations and design a communications plan, and to collect testimonials for the launch of the UBC Change Room Project in January 2018. The research conducted focused on the Change Room Projects that have been launched at the University of Toronto, a similar past KIN 465 project, and other literature that focused on LGBTQ+ members' experiences, opinions, and recommendations in regards to change rooms at recreational facilities. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the LGBTQ+ community to gather testimonials of their own personal experiences in change rooms at recreation facilities, both personal challenges and personal resilience, and their opinions on the role of allies. From the interviews, three general findings were identified: (1) almost all participants expressed a feeling of vulnerability due to the binary and exclusionary nature of a change room environment, and this has at times discouraged their use of recreational facilities; (2) participants discussed the need to overcome mental barriers and internalized feelings; (3) most participants believed that their allies on campus and in change rooms were supportive, but stressed the importance of knowing when to let the LGBTQ+ community to speak for themselves, and when to intervene. Based on these findings, we developed four recommendations for the launching of the UBC Change Room Project: conduct additional interviews from a more diverse sample, highlight the personal experiences of the LGBTQ+ community and the importance of allyship, use education as a tool for change, and to use intentional branding. The most significant limitation of this paper was the lack of diversity of our sample size as most interviewees were cisgendered, gay, white

males. Further research needs to be conducted to accurately represent the views of the LGBTQ+ community's diverse population.

Introduction

Partnerships:

This project was completed in partnership with three individuals. Faustina Cheung is the Facility and Operations Coordinator for the Department of Athletics and Recreation, which aims to inspire school spirit and personal well-being through physical activity, involvement and fun. Kathleen Simpson is the Project Coordinator of UBC Social Ecological Economic Developmental Studies (SEEDS) Program, which focuses on advancing campus sustainability. Adeline Huynh is an Equity Facilitator at UBC Equity and Inclusion Office. The Equity and Inclusion office aims to promote excellence, diversity and inclusion through leadership, vision, and collaborative action.

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of this paper is to specifically review the success and implementation of the 'Change Room Project' at other campuses and communities, and then use the information gathered to develop recommendations and design a communications plan, and to collect testimonials for the launch of the UBC Change Room Project in January 2018. Our objective is to produce recommendations that accurately amplify the voices of LGBTQ+ students, staff and faculty members in the discussion of experiences in locker rooms and recreation facilities. In doing so, we aim to educate recreation participants about the importance of inclusion in recreational facilities and programs/events.

Background Information/Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to examine existing research in the area of LGBTQ+ locker room experiences in order to inform interviews which were conducted within the UBC community for the purpose of developing a communications campaign. Literature was further focused on the experiences of LGBTQ+ students, faculty and staff using change rooms in recreation facilities on college and university campuses.

Two previous projects have been conducted in partnership with the Equity and Inclusion office and UBC Recreation on the topic of LGBTQ+ inclusion in athletics and recreation on the UBC-Vancouver campus. The first project (2015) was conducted for the purposes of creating content and marketing within recreation spaces that connected well with the LGBTQ+ community and incorporating inclusive and integrative LGBTQ+ leagues into current UBC Recreation programs (Busayong, Wilson, Allan & Fischer, 2015). As well, their recommendation to partner with UBC Pride Collective was to create a better reach to their target market. The second project heavily focused on creating inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ students in the recreation facilities and recognizing various barriers to participation in recreation. Their four key recommendations emphasized: "creating accessible universal change rooms and washrooms, improvements in visibility of the LGBTQ+ community, implementation of inclusive terminology, and mandatory inclusivity training for UBC Recreation staff." (Bordignon et al., 2016).

With the two previous projects as evidence of a institutional problem surrounding LGBTQ+ inclusion, an analysis of literature conducted at other North American universities was explored. Several studies stressed the importance of providing an open, accepting, and inclusive environment on university campuses for LGBTQ+ students (Bazarsky, Morrow, & Javier, 2015;

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Garvey, Rankin, Beemyn, & Windmeyer, 2017; Rankin, 2005). A study by Rankin (2005) surveyed more than 1500 LGBTQ+ identifying students, faculty, and staff across more than 20 institutions in the USA and found that the majority of respondents perceived their campus climates as unwelcoming towards the LGBTQ+ community. Later studies advanced this research by conducting further research that suggested that students who felt welcome in their school communities were more likely to be successful and resilient (Garvey et al., 2017). In many of the studies in this field, inclusion as a means to promote the overall wellbeing of students, especially as it pertains to marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ+ community emerges (Bazarsky et al., 2015; Garvey et al., 2017). Therefore it becomes increasingly worrisome that members of the LGBTQ+ UBC community felt like their needs were not considered when it came to recreation facilities (Bordignon et al., 2016). The findings of Bordignon et al. (2016) mirror the findings of many larger peer reviewed studies. Negrete (2007) found that many LGBTQ+ students may feel significantly more uncomfortable in recreation settings than they did in other settings on campus. Another study by Yost & Gilmore (2011) found that LGBTQ+ students were significantly less likely to participate in athletics than their non-LGBTQ+ identifying counterparts. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ students often expressed feelings of dissonance between their engagement in athletics and recreation and their sexuality and gender identity (Worthen, 2014). One athlete in a study by Worthen (2014) stated that she felt that "to succeed as an athlete is to fail as a woman" and therefore was concerned she would be outed as a lesbian if she did not distance herself from the label. Many researchers site internalized homophobia and an athletic culture of compulsory heterosexuality as a possible source of particularly negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community in recreation and athletic settings (Carter & Baliko, 2017; Worthen, 2014).

Inescapable from most athletic settings is the changeroom. Negrete (2007) analysed the experiences of trans identified individuals and their perception of locker rooms. Negrete (2007) found that non-passing or pre-transition trans identified individuals found the changeroom experience anxiety producing, vulnerable, and negative. Additionally students that chose to exist outside of the gender binary and students undergoing the transitioning process expressed concerns about the gender binary that existed in these facilities citing that they felt as if their bodies did not fit well into either the male or female spaces (Negrete, 2007).

Based on these findings, we were able to further shape and direct our project and focus on building the visual space representation that is desired by both UBC students and the LGBTQ+ community at large.

Methodology

Our first step was meeting with the members of the UBC Equity & Diversity Office to understand what they wanted to get out of this project and secondly to establish a timeline of achieving their goals. This was done using the CBEL toolkit given to us in the course content and tailored to fit our objectives. Next we conducted a literature review of other projects with similar initiatives. The literature reviewed included the University of Toronto Change Room project, which was the inspiration for launching a project at the University of British Columbia. Other literature included but was not limited to the City of Vancouver's Parks and Recreation. The literature review was expanded to include sources outside of the UBC campus as inclusion is a problem in all change rooms and a long-term goal is to expand this project throughout Vancouver.

The main source of information about the change rooms on campus came from interviews of members of LGBTQ+ community that used the recreation facilities. A literature review of

interview techniques was conducted to determine that a semi-structured interview would be most suitable style for our objectives. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) define a semi-structured interview as an outline of topics determined by the researcher but the interviewee's responses determine the way the interview is conducted. As our objectives sought after the participant's stories of resilience and life experiences the interviewee required the freedom to answer the questions without restraint, but we did require certain answers. Seven interview questions were drafted and presented to our partners for discussion and review while awaiting ethics approval. The interview questions were edited and refined using the recommendations from our partners. Then we reached out to members of the LGBTQ+ community to seek potential interviewees who would be interested and open to sharing their experiences. After ethics approval was received, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with the questions focusing on experiences in recreational facilities/change rooms with the aim to gather testimonials for the project.

Using the results of the interviews, common themes and answers were considered to determine what the community sees as the main problems in change room settings and suggestions of how to resolve them. Strong quotes were also noted to suggest to the UBC Recreation Marketing Manager to use in the next step of the project. The last step of the project was to use the information from the interviews and the literature review to provide recommendations and develop a resource guide for allies. The UBC Recreation Marketing Manager will then take this information and create marketing tools to spread awareness of the issues and tools to resolve them.

Discussions/Findings

Throughout the conducted interviews with members of the LGBTQ+ community that used recreation facilities, one of the main findings from the interview process was that almost all

participants expressed a feeling of vulnerability due to the binary and exclusionary nature of a change room environment, and this has at times discouraged their use of recreational facilities. One interviewee stated "[The change room] is one of the most vulnerable places you can be." Due to negative associations with the change room, many of them have said that the negative feelings and perceptions discouraged them from participating in recreation.

Furthermore, another main finding from the interview process was that many interviewees discussed the need to overcome mental barriers and internalized feelings in order to participate in a community recreation setting. Examples of barriers that were identified by the interviewees were negative attitudes and perspectives towards them, the athletic culture, and the exclusionary nature of the gender binary that exists in these facilities. The experiences of interviewees in a community recreation setting identified the degree of difficulty they have accessing recreation opportunities and how it differs from a cis-gendered individual. The barriers of a recreation setting that that were identified by the interviewees were similar to the barriers identified in the literature (Carter & Baliko, 2017), as both identified the athletic culture and negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community as a significant barrier to participation. However, one of the goals of the Change Room Project was to highlight stories of LGBTQ+ resilience and success. The majority of the literature that was reviewed had elements of negativity when discussing the issues that the LGBTQ+ community faces when participating in community recreation, and it was refreshing to discuss stories of resilience with the interviewees as most of our participants talked about their discomforts and negative experiences in the past tense; they expressed how they needed to overcome mental barriers, as well as spoke of internalized feelings of exclusion instead of actual explicitly exclusive experiences.

Lastly, the last major finding from the interview process was that most participants believed that their allies on campus and in change rooms were supportive, but stressed the importance of knowing when to let the LGBTQ+ community to speak for themselves, and when to intervene. Many of our participants believed that allies on campus were doing an immense job in creating an inclusive and safe space. "I'm all for allies that really want to support us but they can't speak for us". This comment stresses the importance of allies knowing when to hold spaces for LGBTQ+ members to speak on the contrary of when they need to step in and engage in the conversation.

The most considerable limitation of our study was the lack of diversity amongst the participants. Although many LGBTQ+ related organizations on campus were contacted for interview participants, we were unable to interview a broad spectrum of individuals from the LGBTQ+ community and were only able to interview people from our own social networks that consisted mostly of cis-gendered, gay, white males. Further research needs to be conducted to accurately represent the views of the LGBTQ+ community's diverse population.

A second limitation of this study is the interview style. Most semi-structured interviews are preceded by an observation period to fully understand the topic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). However, as our topic is around change rooms, there are ethical considerations of observing in that setting and therefore we based our understanding of the topic on knowledge of past experiences. Also, most interviewers are trained and have vast experience interviewing in a research setting. However, we were only able to research interview techniques with this being our first experience as interviewers.

Recommendations

Our recommendations come from both our research and our interviews with the LGBTQ+ community. We found that the LGBTQ+ community were a wealth of knowledge, as they were able to speak to their experiences best.

Our first recommendation is to collect additional interviews from a more diverse sample. While the LGBTQ+ community is often lumped together as one social category (Fish, 2008), there is inter-group diversity that cannot be ignored. If ignored, erasure of individual and intersectional identities occurs (Fish, 2008). Unfortunately, due to time constraints and limited availability, our interviews were largely limited to gay, white, cis-gendered men. While their voices are needed as part of a holistic approach, they are only part of the equation. As a result of our interview pool, we did not get a chance to examine the intersectionalities and unique issues that other people may experience. For example, a white, gay, cis-gendered man may have a different experience in the changerooms than an Asian transgender woman. For this reason, we are suggesting contacting individuals of various races, genders, sexualities and abilities in order to get the full picture, prior to implementation.

We acknowledge the difficulties in this suggestion, as often times these intersectionalities may deter people from full integration into activities on campus (Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2004). Culture may play a role in even the disclosure of identity, wherein people of colour are often the last to disclose their identities to friends and family (Rosario et al., 2004). As mentioned prior, recreation and athletic settings often have a hyper heterosexual culture, which may deter students on the UBC campus even further (Carter & Baliko, 2017; Worthen, 2014).

Our second recommendation is in regards to both experience and allyship. We suggest highlighting the experiences discussed within the interviews in the actual campaign. Our

interview participants proposed several structural solutions to their negative change room experiences. However, we found that social change is more likely to be generated through exposure to personal narratives (Duhigg, Rostosky, Gray, & Wimsatt, 2010). Allyship is crucial to this process, as it serves as a means of solidarity. Allies may use their privilege in order to keep the ball rolling and prevent discrimination (Cooper, Dollarhide, Radliff, & Gibbs, 2014). As one of our interviewees put it, "If you're hearing people talking in a certain way that is homophobic, transphobic, fat-phobic, you know that harbors a certain phobia that makes people feel unsafe or that they would have to rush out. That's the true test of what allyship is, it's being there when [things are] hard."

Education is a part of this recommendation, as it serves as a tool for change. Everyone has had their own unique experience with change rooms at recreational facilities, but are more often than not unaware of how others may personally interpret a change room environment (Duhigg, Rostosky, Gray & Wimsatt, 2010). We are suggesting that the campaign involve education of the entire student body on campus. Education can happen through several means, and we are suggesting advertising and advocacy events on campus.

Lastly, we recommend implementing a cohesive and intentional branding strategy of nonbinary change rooms on campus. Much of the feedback we received on non-binary change rooms was positive but tainted with feeling uncomfortable to use the space because of its perception as a family space. Many of our interviewees shared feeling like they would be perceived in a negative or creepy way if they were to use the space because of its longheld association with family change rooms. Marketing these non-binary change rooms as explicitly for everyone and steering away from any family branding may be helpful in breaking down the stigma associated with using the non-binary change room and creating a more inclusive, well-used and positive space. Many studies have echoed this and acknowledged "that [the family change room] name in most places is no longer politically correct or otherwise accurate," and should be updated (Steinbach, 2017).

Conclusion

The LGBTQ+ community continues to face challenges and barriers in change rooms in on- and off-campus settings. This project focused on individuals' experiences and stories, as well as previous research in an effort to provide UBC Recreation & Athletics and UBC Equity and Inclusion with valid support of The Change Room Project and quotations to use for it. Many of our interviewees shared experiences of feeling vulnerable in a change room setting, valuing nonbinary change rooms, and recognizing the support of allies but asking that they allow for LGBTQ+ voices to be heard before their own. Based on our research and interviews, we have come up with four recommendations when looking forward; to conduct interviews with a broader and more diverse sample of individuals, to use the stories and experiences shared within the interviews in the campaign, to use and promote education as a tool for change, and to create intentional non-binary branding of the spaces to promote use from all individuals, not just families.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Work Plan

Name of Project: Change Room Project

Purpose(s) of Project ("why are we doing this?"):

"We want to amplify the voices of LGBTQ+ students, staff and faculty members in the discussion of experiences in locker rooms and recreation facilities. In doing so, we aim to educate recreation participants about the importance of inclusion in recreational facilities and programs/events."

Deliverables ("what are we going to create?"):

- Communications campaign (poster/art installation etc.)
- Allyship Toolkit
- Final report
- Final presentation

Methods ("how are we going to do this?"):

We will be conducting a small literature review to gain insight into the issues that the LGBTQ+ community faces in recreation and change room settings. We will then be using these findings to develop semi-structured interview questions which we will then pose to a small number of individuals in the LGBTQ+ community in order to understand their own lived experiences. We will be looking for stories of resilience and perseverance. We will then select quotes from these interviews to use in a communications campaign through the Equity and Inclusion Office and UBC Rec.

| Project Members | Skills/Interests | Role(s) in the project | Availability |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rachel | Passion | Contact Person Liaison – | Monday, Wednesday |
| | Organization | responsible to make initial contact, | mornings, Friday Morning. |
| | Communication | set up meetings and maintain | |

| Jordan | Relationship development, cooperative, open-minded | contact, and gather feedback on deliverables Recording responsibilities at meetings | Majority of Fridays. Monday until 4pm, Tuesdays (11:00am- 4:00pm) |
|---------|---|--|--|
| Emily | Communication, Logistics, Problem-solving | Gap filler Interviewer | Mondays, Fridays, before 12 Thursdays (11-1) |
| Lauren | Critical thinking Communication | Gap filler | Tuesdays (12:30-4:00) Thursdays (12:30-2:30) |
| Chris | Ideation, Communication, Creativity | Idea Generator, Brainstormer | Tuesdays (11-2PM, 3:30-6PM) Thursdays (11-2PM, 3:30- 4PM) |
| Gurleen | Creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, editing, writing | Writing, cultivating good ideas/putting them to work | Mondays (12-3:30 PM) Tuesdays (after 12:30 PM) Wednesdays (11-2 PM) Thursdays (12:30 - 3:30 PM) |

| Project | Specific Task | What do | Who is | When is this due? |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Component | | you need in | responsible? | |
| | | order to get | | |
| | | this done? | | |
| First meeting | Email contact | Learn | TEAM | Oct 3, 2017 |
| with Contact | person to | people's | | |
| Person | introduce your | availability | | |
| | group and ask | | | |
| | for a meeting | | | |
| | Meet with the | Read the | TEAM | October 3, 2017 |
| | contact person | background | | |
| | and discuss | information | | |
| | project goals | listed on the | | |
| | and details | course blog | | |
| | | before mtg | | |
| | | | | |
| | | Begin filling | | |
| | | out workplan | | |
| class | Workplans due | Complete | | Submitted October 18th |
| requirements | via email to | workplan | | |
| | Janna/Liv and | with detailed | | |
| | community | timeline and | | |
| | partner | | | |

| | organization of work | | |
|---|--|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Midterm Progress report due via email to Janna/Liv and | Create a peer evaluation form that we all agree | | Completes throughout the term |
| community partner | with | | |
| parado | Update our work plan | | |
| Report or equivalent | See instruction on blog | TEAM | |
| Presentation | See instruction on blog | | November 30, 2017 |
| Peer Evaluation | Reflect on your group members' contribution to the project | All group members | December 7th, 2017 |

| Preparation | Develop | Literature | LGBTQ+ | October 16th, 2017 |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| for | questions & | review of | Representati | |
| Interviews | literature review | relevant | on: | |
| | of best interview | materials and | Lauren | |
| | practices & | interview | Gurleen | |
| | LGBTQ | practices | Rachel | |
| | participation in | | Jordan | |
| | recreation | | | |
| | | | Interview | |
| | | | Practices: | |
| | | | Chris | |
| | | | Emily | |
| | Ethic approval | Know the | Gurleen | October 9th, 2017 |
| | | format of | | |
| | | interviews | | |
| | | | | |
| | | Email | | |
| | | Janna/Adelin | | |
| | | е | | |
| | | | | |
| | | ት ጉ ት ተ ፲ | | |
| | Reaching out to | ***In a | TEAM | October 16th, 2017 |
| | possible | casual setting | | |
| | participants | as we do not | | |
| | | | | |

| | | have ethics approval yet just create a mental list | |
|------------|--|---|-------------------|
| Conducting | Develop | Using the | Oct 23rd- ONGOING |
| Interviews | Questions | literature review and input from community partners finalize a series of questions to guide interviews | |
| | Meet with and interview participants | Get ethics approval -find a safe and private place Record interviews | TBA |

| | Code for themes | Transcribe interviews Look for relevant information | | November 22nd |
|--|--|--|------|---------------|
| Creation of Communicati ons (Jordan) | Identify the quotes/messages to be used for the posters | Interview responses of the participants | TEAM | Nov 10th |
| | Design of Poster/Decals to be used | Brainstorm of ideas, and use previous designs that may have been used by other institutes (UofT) | TEAM | Nov 14th |
| | Develop a final draft of what we would like the poster to | Resources supplied by UBC Rec and our sponsor, to | TEAM | Nov 16th |

| | advertise and look like | determine if the design aligns with their vision | | |
|---|---|---|--------|---|
| Final report/paper | Using our data and primary research, we will be conducting our final paper | Primary research and data from conducted interviews and support from organizations | TEAM | Draft: Nov 20th Final Paper: Dec 7th |
| Final meeting with Contact Person | Prepare project to present to contact person | Team to do their parts | Team | Nov. 20th |
| (Lauren) | Meet with Contact Person and get their feedback on final project | Schedule meeting | Rachel | After Nov. 20th |
| | Give final amended project | Amend project according to | Jordan | After meeting, before Dec. 7th |

| | to Contact | feedback | |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| | Person | from contact | |
| | | person | |
| Final Edits | Edit report | | NOV 24th |
| (Emily) | | | |
| | Edit | | ТВА |
| | presentation | | |
| | | | |