

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



Key Details

KEY WORDS

Immigrant Youth, Service Access, Intersectionality, LGBTQ

POPULATION GROUPS

Newcomer Youth
LGBTQ Youth

STEPPING UP THEME

Diversity, Social Inclusion & Safety

RESEARCH ORIGIN

Ontario

SOURCE

Academic

“Addressing the needs of LGBTQ newcomer youth is about more than culture, it is about recognizing the unique experiences, knowledge, and worldviews of queer and trans diasporas... Furthermore, helping people to make friends and build community are not necessarily on the agenda of mainstream social service agencies, but are clearly important to newcomers” (p. 101).

Challenging neo-colonialism and essentialism: Incorporating hybridity into new conceptualizations of settlement service delivery with lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer immigrant young people

1. What is the research about?

This research is about the challenges and barriers experienced by lesbian, gay, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) newcomers in settling in the community and in accessing services. It examines the services provided to LGBTQ newcomers in order to raise questions about, and gain a better understanding of, the shortcomings of settlement services in meeting the needs of this population of young people. This research could inform the development and improvement of LGBTQ-specific settlement services that have otherwise faced difficulties in responding to LGBTQ newcomer youth in ways that respect their individual experiences.

2. Where did the research take place?

This research took place in Toronto, Ontario, in the context of a youth-serving organization that was running settlement services for LGBTQ youth.

3. Who is this research about?

This research is about LGBTQ newcomer youth. Participants were between the ages of 16 and 24, with an average age of 22. Most of the participants immigrated to Canada and had been in the country for an average of five years (the length of time ranged from one month to 15 years). The youth in this study had come from the Caribbean, West Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia, and Central and South America. Eighty-one percent of participants were racialized youth.

4. How was the research done?

Youth for this research study were recruited through email, listservs, posters, announcements, in-person recruitment at community agencies, social media, Craigslist, and Facebook. A semi-structured interview guide was developed in consultation with community stakeholders, and 31 interviews were conducted in person with LGBTQ newcomer youth.

5. What are the key findings?

Four key themes were identified based on the analysis of the interviews:

(a) The need for additional supports: Youth expressed a need for additional supports in finding housing, accessing education, securing employment, and gathering information

about their legal rights, through supportive counselling, drop-in groups, workshops, support in applying for government programs, services and scholarships, and referrals.

(b) The need for improved outreach and engagement strategies:

Young people expressed difficulty in connecting with services due to lack of awareness and uncertainty about where to find support, partially due to terminology used in describing services.

(c) The need to address barriers to accessing services: Youth with intersecting identities expressed feeling shy, scared, or embarrassed about accessing services, and did not know where to turn or how to navigate confusing systems.

(d) The need to improve service delivery and uptake: Youth identified that settlement services could be improved through online services, a central community centre or meeting spot for LGBTQ youth, and more services delivered in high schools and shelters; warm and welcoming environments with drop-in formats were suggested. Staff should be informed, non-judgmental, and accepting; many youth shared their hopes of accessing service providers who were LGBTQ-identified or youth themselves, and who spoke the same language.

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

This research may help social service professionals gain a better understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ youth, and in designing and delivering programs that better respond to the needs of LGBTQ newcomer youth in their communities. The research supports the need for specialized services for LGBTQ newcomers, which tend to be offered within either the LGBTQ service sector or the settlement sector, rather than in programs that respond to the intersecting needs of being both LGBTQ and a newcomer.

The researchers recommend that **existing LGBTQ settlement services need to reconceptualize themselves as both LGBTQ services and settlement services; these services must also adapt to the needs of newcomer youth.** The service sector must move away from a model that emphasizes *individual* needs to one with **an increased emphasis on community.** The researchers further suggest that services improve their engagement strategies and use clear language, with an awareness that terms such as 'settlement services' may not be understood by newcomer youth. Flexible service hours, locations, and programming formats, designed to support LGBTQ newcomers in making friends and creating community, will also improve effectiveness.



Yee, Y.J., Marshall, Z., & Vo, T. (2014). Challenging neo-colonialism and essentialism: Incorporating hybridity into new conceptualizations of settlement service delivery with lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer immigrant young people. *Critical Social Work*, (15), 88-93.

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http://www1.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/challenging_neocolonialism