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**LGTBQ+ COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE AND POLICE
INVOLVEMENT IN PRIDE CELEBRATIONS IN A SMALL ONTARIO
CITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

by

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B.A. (Honours), McMaster University, 2014

THESIS

**Submitted to the Department of Criminology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for Master of Arts (Criminology)**

Wilfrid Laurier University

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ABSTRACT

As literature and media findings suggest, the relationship between the LGBTQ+ community and the police is complex. This qualitative research study seeks to better understand the relationship between the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community and the Ruralcity Police Service in a small city in southwestern Ontario—“Ruralcity”. Through the epistemological lens of symbolic interactionism and the critical approach of queer theory, I gathered the perspectives of five Ruralcity LGBTQ+ participants on the local police, including the kinds of interactions the participants have had with the police and how the police presence and absence at Ruralcity PRIDE events impact the participants’ sense of well-being. The participants emphasized the controversy surrounding the police removal from PRIDE, while providing recommendations for how local police regarding might develop a positive partnership with the LGBTQ+ community. Results from this study suggest that intersectionality and positionality play a significant role in the way an LGBTQ+ person perceives the police and the policing organization. Patriarchy and heteronormativity remain prevalent in systemic societal structures and institutions, contributing to oppression and discrimination against those who fall outside of the margins of privilege. This research adds to the academic literature on LGBTQ+ relationships with police by exploring the situation in Ruralcity, as the experiences of less urban LGBTQ+ communities with police are commonly overlooked, incorporating a different dimension to our understanding. Future research requires a more representative sample of the LGBTQ+ population with intersecting identities. Further, investigating the perceptions of privileged LGBTQ+ persons and marginalized LGBTQ+ persons is essential to understanding the root causes of the policing system’s systemic discrimination and structured violence against LGBTQ+ persons. Moreover, additional research focusing on the Ruralcity Police Service is vital to understanding their perspective on local LGBTQ+ matters.

Keywords: LGBTQ+, police, Ruralcity, symbolic interactionism, queer theory
intersectionality, heteronormativity

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Angela Dwyer (2014) wrote, “the history of police interactions with LGBT communities is one fraught with contradiction and tension” (p.3). This point continues to hold merit in current relationships between the LGTBQ+ community and police services (Karamali, 2018). In 2016, the Toronto chapter of Black Lives Matter (BLM) interrupted the Toronto PRIDE parade to voice their concerns regarding the perceived social injustices of racial profiling and carding that racialized Torontonians faced by the Toronto Police Service (Metro News, 2016; The Globe and Mail, 2017; Paradkar, 2017). In an attempt to obtain justice for these individuals, BLM demanded that PRIDE Toronto, in addition to incorporating more diverse performers belonging to marginalized communities such as black trans women and Indigenous people, remove all police representation from the PRIDE parade, such as uniformed officers and floats (Battersby, 2016; The City Center Mirror, 2016). With consideration from Toronto's PRIDE committee, the list of demands were signed and accepted by PRIDE's then executive director, Mathieu Chantelois (Mehta, 2016; Smith, 2016). In subsequent years, the PRIDE committee in Toronto has continued to limit police participation in annual PRIDE parades and events (Urback, 2016; Blinch, 2018; Polewski, 2019).

While PRIDE Toronto continued to cite BLM's demands, they also explicitly noted concerns with the way the Toronto police handled the investigation of Bruce McArthur, a landscaper who pled guilty to the murders of eight men in Toronto's Gay Village (Westoll, 2019). Perceptions of police indifference and neglect of these crimes contributed to many LGTBQ+ individuals feeling unsafe and distrustful of police (McLaughlin, 2018). PRIDE organizations in smaller cities followed the lead

of Toronto PRIDE and acted to request that uniformed police refrain from participating in PRIDE celebrations. However, much less is known about the relationship between LGTBQ+ communities and police in smaller cities and their motivations for removing uniformed police from PRIDE celebrations, beyond solidarity with the Toronto LGTBQ+ community.

This study seeks to better understand the relationship between the LGTBQ+ community and the Police Service in a small city in southwestern Ontario—“Ruralcity”¹. The population of Ruralcity is less than 100,000, and it is the only urban municipality situated within a rural county with a population of approximately 30,000. Ruralcity is an independent municipality, politically separate from the county. Ruralcity and the surrounding county are known to be conservative-leaning, politically, and the history of LGTBQ+ organizations and PRIDE celebrations in Ruralcity is about a decade old. This research adds to the academic body of literature on police relationships with the LGTBQ+ community by exploring the situation in Ruralcity as one example of a smaller Canadian city, as LGTBQ+ communities’ experiences with police in smaller cities and towns are commonly overlooked and seldom discussed. The bulk of research on experiences of LGTBQ+ people focuses on urban contexts. Like Toronto, Ruralcity PRIDE also requested that uniformed police not participate in their PRIDE celebrations. In addition to examining the reasons for the uniformed police removal from Ruralcity PRIDE, this research documents the LGTBQ+ participants’ perspectives of Ruralcity police, the policing system, and provides recommendations for improving the relationship between the two groups.

A wide array of literature, including Mallory, Hasenbush, and Sears (2015), Chatterjee (2014), and Dwyer (2011, 2012, 2015), suggests that police often disregard

¹ The name “Ruralcity” is a pseudonym used for ease of writing and clarity.

or fail to adequately investigate concerns raised by the LGBTQ+ community about their safety. Through a qualitative study, I interviewed a group of five participants, gathering their opinions on the relationship between the LGBTQ+ community and police in Ruralcity and the recent removal of uniformed officers from PRIDE. This research presents their accounts and experiences, as described in interviews conducted in March, April, and May 2019. These dialogues addressed the participants' participation, comfort levels, and atmospheric experiences at PRIDE, and examined the effect of police presence and absence at PRIDE on their sense of comfort. The participants' perceptions regarding their interactions with police, their levels of satisfaction with the police, and recommendations for improving the relationship between Ruralcity police and the LGBTQ+ community provided themes that developed the backdrop for the following chapters.

In this chapter, I begin by examining the academic literature and media reporting on police treatment of LGBTQ+ communities. This literature and media provides: 1) an overview of the historical relationship between LGBTQ+ community and the police, and 2) socio-political context for Toronto PRIDE's decision to remove police from participation in the parade. In chapter two, I outline the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism as the project's guiding theoretical approach and describe the research methods. I present the findings and analysis in chapter three, where I provide an inside look into the experiences that LGBTQ+ participants have had with Ruralcity police and their perceptions of the Ruralcity police. I also consider the relationship between their gender identities, sexual orientations, and their experiences with police. Drawing on Blumer's (1969) three premises of symbolic interactionism, I examine the participants' meaning-making processes as they relate to police participation in PRIDE, their opinions of Ruralcity police in PRIDE, and the

reasons for the removal of uniformed police participation from PRIDE. In chapter four, I apply Blumer's (1969) classification of physical, social, and abstract objects to policing to examine the participants' propositions for enhancing and developing the LGBTQ+ community's relationship with the Ruralcity Police Service. Finally in chapter five, I summarize the findings and implications drawn from the proposed research questions, explain how this research is important in understanding police and LGBTQ+ relations in smaller, less populated communities like Ruralcity, and provide recommendations for future research and further exploration.

Literature Review

Despite the objective that police and law enforcement are to be impartial to all citizens in society (Bowling, 2007), research has shown that there are inconsistencies in the relationships between police and the different communities they are to serve and protect (Nadal & Davidoff, 2015). Scholars have examined LGBTQ+ individuals' experiences and perceptions and found instances of adverse treatment by police and law enforcement (Dwyer, 2010; 2011; 2012; 2014; Dwyer et al., 2015, Nadal et al., 2015). Accordingly, I examine how the tension between the police and the LGBTQ+ community has unfolded over time and what has led to PRIDE's decision to request the withdrawal of uniformed officers from participating in their annual celebration.

Historical relationship between police & LGBTQ+ persons.

There is a societal understanding that "the purpose of law enforcement is to serve all citizens effectively and fairly" (Israel et al., 2014, p. 57). However, research suggests that a double standard exists within the criminal justice system between those who are considered part of privileged social groups and those who are marginalized by societal standards (Cole, 1999; Barnes, 2007; O'Conner, 2008). The communities that police serve are often racially and ethnically diverse and include

people of different genders, sexual preferences, ages, and cognitive or physical abilities. Studies have examined the approaches that police use when interacting with diverse groups of citizens (Cole, 1999; Barnes, 2008; Mallory et al., 2015). Research evidence suggests that police officers may treat citizens who identify as LGBTQ+ differently (Dwyer, 2014). Researchers have also conducted a wide variety of studies examining citizens' attitudes toward and perceptions of police officers (Cole, 1999; Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, & Ring, 2005; O'Conner, 2008). Research indicates that members of structurally victimized communities, such as visible minorities, young persons, and those living in high crime neighbourhoods, often hold negative perceptions and attitudes toward police officers (O'Conner, 2008). Individuals who belong to privileged social groups, such as those who are read as white and appear to adhere to societal norms such as patriarchy and heteronormativity, tend to have a higher level of satisfaction in their interactions with police (Barnes, 2007).

The LGBTQ+ community is recognized as a category of marginalized persons because members of this group have faced "dehumanizing and deplorable treatment based on their sexual orientation and gender diversity" (Dwyer, 2011, p.203). Studies have also shown that in the United States "discrimination and harassment by law enforcement based on sexual orientation and gender diversity is an ongoing and pervasive problem in LGBTQ communities" (Mallory et al., 2015, p.1). Additionally, some studies have shown that LGBTQ+ individuals fail to report crimes committed against them due to fear of secondary discrimination by police, such as the use of homophobic slurs or police making false accusations against an LGBTQ+ person who has not broken the law (Israel et al., 2014; Chatterjee, 2014). Thus, these examples

demonstrate that members of LGBTQ+ communities fear police discrimination relating to their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Scholars have also examined the experiences that younger LGBTQ+ individuals had with police through face-to-face contact. According to Dwyer's (2011) research in Australia, police heavily discriminate against LGBTQ+ youth, as compared to heterosexual youth. Dwyer's (2012) study suggests public spaces are heterosexual spaces, where police impose consequences like fines for visible "queerness" displayed by young LGBTQ+ individuals such as those who dress or behave opposite to the societal expectation of their visible gender. As such, LGBTQ+ youth may be victims of mistreatment in a public place by police officers. Although this study describes the intolerance LGBTQ+ youth face by police, these findings mirror the experiences of older, mature LGBTQ+ individuals (William & Robinson, 2004; Dwyer, 2010; Nadal et al., 2015; Mallory et al., 2015).

Chatterjee (2014) states that LGBTQ+ persons "...suffer from various forms of socioeconomic and cultural injustices causing them to not fully access and enjoy their rights as citizens" (p. 317). The unequal access to societal and systemic institutions is also apparent in the legal realm, as demonstrated by Mallory et al., (2015) and Dwyer, (2011). Fear of reporting crimes, (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2011; Briones-Robinson, et al., 2016), fear of discrimination and judgment, (Israel et al., 2014), police failure to address LGBTQ+ issues, and mishandling missing LGBTQ+ persons' investigations with a dismissive attitude (Blinch, 2018; Karamali, 2018; Khandaker, 2018) are just some of the challenges and legal injustices that LGBTQ+ individuals face in Canada, as well as in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia.

History of PRIDE with police and impact of the McArthur case.

There appeared to be some progress in the relationship between the police and the LGBTQ+ community in recent times, with a shift to making “police practices more accountable, human rights focused and supportive” (Dwyer, 2014, p.3) for LGBTQ+ individuals (Tomsen, 2009; Kirkup, 2013; Stuart, 2014). However, it is not clear that the progress has continued. It appears that past police oppression (Dwyer & Tomsen, 2016), coupled with current instances of perceived neglect (Karamali, 2018; Polewski, 2019; Howells, 2019), has contributed to a new chapter of discontent between the police and the LGBTQ+ community, exemplified by the PRIDE Toronto committee requesting the removal of uniformed police officers from the annual PRIDE parade in response to BLM demands (Metro News, 2016). This new demand adds to the long history of tension between the Toronto Police Service and the LGBTQ+ community.

Visible evidence of these historic tensions arose in February 1981, when Toronto police raided four gay bathhouses, leading to one of the largest mass arrests in Canadian history. Police arrested a total of 289 gay men (Giese, 2017) and protesters took to the streets of Toronto to voice their belief that the police actions were unjust. That protest rally has now transformed into what is commonly known as the annual Toronto PRIDE parade, an event for LGBTQ+ individuals to celebrate their identities along with their supporters and allies (Giese, 2017; Swenson, 2017). Since the 1981 incident, the relationship between the Toronto LGBTQ+ community and the local police had positively evolved to the point where the police were welcomed to participate in the annual PRIDE parade (Swenson, 2017). However, BLM’s 2016 demands and PRIDE Toronto's acceptance of those stipulations spurred the removal of Toronto police representation from PRIDE. The absence of uniformed

police in PRIDE 2017 was the first time in seventeen years that the Toronto police were not permitted to march in full uniform alongside the LGBTQ+ community (Wilson, 2018). While PRIDE Toronto's request for the Toronto police to withdraw their application to march in the PRIDE 2017 parade persisted, attention shifted to the alleged malpractice in the McArthur investigation as a cause for absence in PRIDE 2018. This proceeded to be the primary reason for the police removal in PRIDE 2019 (Warren, 2019; Casey, 2019).

A longstanding theme in the literature on police–LGBTQ+ relations deals with the sense of insecurity that LGBTQ+ individuals experience around police presence (Reading & Rubin, 2011; Corteen 2012; Rubinsztein-Dunlop, 2013; The Spec, 2016; McLaughlin, 2018). Revelations about how police handled the Bruce McArthur case and their response to the disappearance of the eight men increased the unsafe feeling Toronto LGBTQ+ community groups experience with their local police (Blinch, 2018; Karamali, 2018).

Several years before the Toronto police investigation of McArthur, there was suspicion within the Toronto LGBTQ+ community about a serial killer targeting their members (Teitel, 2018; Casey, 2019). Fear about a serial killer singling out LGBTQ+ individuals was heightened when gay men began to go missing between 2010 and 2017. The LGBTQ+ community responded by expressing their worries about missing loved ones and friends (Blinch, 2018; Karamali, 2018; Khandaker, 2018; Powers, 2019). The Toronto Police Service allegedly repudiated the missing person reports filed with the Toronto police by family and friends, months before the discovery of the bodies on McArthur's property (Blinch, 2018; Karamali, 2018; Khandaker, 2018). Furthermore, the LGBTQ+ community believed that Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders engaged in victim-blaming the community when he told a *Globe and Mail*

reporter that, "there is a strong potential that the outcome could have been different had people come forward" (Global News, 2018). This media source mirrored a *CTV News* article, which suggested that McArthur would have been caught sooner if members of the community spoke without delay (Fox & Freeman, 2018). Consequently, a letter submitted by PRIDE Toronto to request the withdrawal of the Toronto police, stated in part "...that the investigations into their disappearances were insufficient, community knowledge and expertise was not accessed and despite the fact that many of us felt and voiced our concerns, we were dismissed" (Karamali, 2018, p.1; Khandaker, 2018, p.1). These media sources validate the findings of other studies, particularly Mallory et al., (2015), Chatterjee, (2014), Dwyer, (2011), (2012), and (2015), which argue that matters raised by the LGTBQ+ community about safety concerns are not often thoroughly investigated and are overlooked by police and law enforcement.

Conceptualizing LGTBQ+ marginality & police participation in PRIDE.

The concepts of stigma and marginality are essential tools for understanding how and why some groups and individuals face discrimination. Goffman (1963) defines stigma as the "relationship between attribute and stereotype" (Goffman, 1963, as cited in Hannem, 2012, p.15). The two-part process of stigmatization requires that first, "...an individual possesses a particular attribute...defined by others, based on stereotypes, as an undesirable or negative characteristic" (Hannem, 2012, p.15). The second part of the process requires that the individual recognizes how others may perceive the attribute and that they are likely to respond negatively to it (Hannem, 2012). The individual's perception is formulated based on their socialization and what they have learned to be understood as acceptable in society. Consequently, the

stigmatized person anticipates and may be subject to discriminatory treatment in interactions with persons who are classified as "normal" by societal terms (Hannem, 2012).

Previous experiences of stigmatization and discrimination may have contributed to Ruralcity PRIDE asking uniformed police officers not to participate in their celebrations and may shape how members of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community experience interactions with police. There is evidence that members of racially marginalized groups and LGBTQ+ persons may experience negative and discriminatory treatment by police officers (Cole, 1999; Barnes, 2007). Some examples of police violence against members of visible minority groups include the police beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, California (Lasley, 1994; Barnes, 2007), and the police shooting death of Andrew Loku in Toronto (Metro News, 2016). Examining the police use of force against people of colour (Lasley, 1994; Cole, 1999; Barnes, 2007; Mehta, 2016), raises concerns about how police would treat an LGBTQ+ person who experiences intersecting marginalities.

Although marginalized groups are disadvantaged in society, Hannem (2012) argues, "...the marginalized are still a part of the larger society; they also often play essential social and economic roles" (p.15). Marginalized persons may use their agency to resist and challenge the social structures, values, and discourse that oppress them. This resistance is evident within the LGBTQ+ community and their recent stance to remove uniformed police officers from participating in PRIDE. There is a rift in the relationship between the Toronto LGBTQ+ community and their local police department, compared to previous years when uniformed police were able to march in PRIDE (Blinch, 2018; Karamali, 2018; Khandaker, 2018). This controversial shift is resonating in neighbouring cities and suggests that police

departments and political figures must take interest and address the LGBTQ+ community's concerns. By understanding the underlying reasons behind the LGBTQ+ community's request for uniformed officers to be removed from PRIDE, the police department and political figures can begin to work to address these concerns and find common ground between the two groups.

Conclusion

As apparent in the literature, there is research available on LGBTQ+ relations with police, but much of this research draws on data from large urban centers, while we know significantly less about the relations and experiences of LGBTQ+ members in less populated areas. Although the media has published clear explanations for PRIDE Toronto's removal of uniformed officers from PRIDE celebrations, linking the decision directly to perceptions of police behaviour, there is minimal discussion of similar decisions in smaller Canadian cities and towns.

There is a lack of empirical studies that discuss how LGBTQ+ individuals in small cities and rural spaces perceive their interactions with police officers. Therefore, this research begins to address this gap by exploring the perceptions of LGBTQ+ participants who took part in Ruralcity PRIDE and their feelings about the absence of uniformed police in the parade. I draw on a symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969), to analyze the participants' perspectives of their interactions with Ruralcity police, focusing on the prominent themes that emerged from the interview data. In the following chapter, I describe the methods applied to conduct and complete this research project, the theory used for this study, and the limitations I encountered as a researcher.

Chapter 2

Methods

This chapter introduces and describes the theoretical framework and the methodological approach for this research project, including the data collection strategy and subsequent procedure for analysis. I discuss the difficulties of the recruitment process, along with how my identity as a researcher affected the overall undertaking of the project. Finally, I provide a description of the sample population and the method I utilized for analyzing the interview data and the coding process.

Queer Theory - A Structuralist Perspective

The theoretical lens of queer theory is a structuralist perspective that considers how societal classifications and understandings of gender and sexual fluidity are embedded in social structures, such as laws and the policing system. According to Seidman (1994), “both the backlash [against homosexuality] and the AIDS crisis prompted a renewal of radical activism, of a politics of confrontation...and the need for a critical theory that would link gay empowerment to broad institutional change” (p.172). Thus, queer theory responds to the heteronormative landscape by deconstructing the existing societal and cultural norms of sexual identity and gender diversity.

Seidman (1994) explains “queer theorists argue that identities are always multiple or at best composites, with an infinite number of ways in which ‘identity-components’ can intersect or combine” (p.173). The various elements of identity, such as age, ableness, class, gender, nationality, race, and sexual orientation, contribute to an individual’s experience as it relates to a particular interaction. Through the lens of queer theory, Seidman (1994) argues that “any specific identity construction is arbitrary, unstable, and exclusionary” (p.173), because placing

confinements around an individual's identity results in "silencing or excluding of some experiences or forms of life" (p.173). As such, queer theorists tend to leave identities open and flexible, so individuals can create an identity as it relates to their social, political, or cultural standpoint. Therefore, queer theorists analyze "the institutional practices and discourses producing sexual knowledges and the ways they organize social life, attending in particular to the ways these knowledges and social practices repress differences" (Seidman, 1994, p.174). Through this lens, we can focus on the participants' perspectives of the policing system as LGBTQ+ persons and perhaps begin to understand how sexual and gender identities shape perceptions of dominant social structures such as policing.

Historically, queer theorists have sought to diversify the theoretical landscape of sociological and feminine studies by expanding the societal constraints of gender diversity and sexual orientation (Smith, 1997). Many early interactionists have attempted to combat the criminalization of individuals based on the fluidity surrounding sexual orientation or gender with their contributions to queer theory. Scholars such as Humphrey (1970) and Warren (1974) have conducted studies to humanize individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ and provide discourse that minimizes the "deviant" reputation they have been assigned in a heteronormative society. Warren (2003) suggests that although there have been changes around the discussions of gender, sexuality, and stigma, there continues to be an ignominy attached to LGBTQ+ persons. By analyzing the participants' perspectives of the local police, this research will seek to understand whether the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community perceives that there is a stigma connected to their identity and how it contributes to their perception of the police and their presence at PRIDE.

Halberstam's (2005) concept of metronormativity, suggests that it is common for LGBTQ+ persons to migrate from rural (intolerant) places to (more tolerant) urban metropolises, and the majority of research on LGBTQ+ concerns, therefore, focuses on the experiences of urban communities. This research offers a less commonly examined narrative of LGBTQ+ people who have remained in a smaller center or returned to it. Ruralcity, as mentioned, is a smaller city within a larger county with a modest population. This research is an example of how "many have taken up the project of studying LGBTQ lives beyond metropolitan centers by focusing on rural areas, and more recently, smaller or 'ordinary' cities" (Podmore, 2016, p.21). Metronormativity, therefore, is viewed as a critique of queer research in previous studies (such as Herring, 2010 and Tongson, 2011) that have also found the spatial and geographical "limitations involved in constructing the urban as the authentic space of LGBTQ lives and liberations" (Podmore, 2016, p.21). Thus, this research, analyzed through the lens of queer theory and conducted contrary to a metronormative standpoint, offers a new perspective on LGBTQ+ community relations with police.

Exploring Human Interpretations of Knowing & Being

For this research project, I employed the epistemological lens of symbolic interactionism. The definition of symbolic interactionism is "a dynamic theoretical perspective that views human actions as constructing self, situation, and society" (Charmaz, 2014, p.262). The symbolic interactionist approach recognizes how individuals create meaning through interaction with others and how there are multiple perspectives on a situation, based on one's subjective position in a particular encounter (Charon, 1998). As symbolic interactionism focuses on meaning-making and the creation of diverse subjective realities, the theory is an appropriate frame for

qualitative research concerned with understanding individual narratives and perspectives. When conducting qualitative research, the researcher gains an insight into the participants' beliefs, opinions, and motivations as they relate to a specific topic. When examining the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community's relationship with the Ruralcity Police Service, it is essential to understand that individual participants have experienced different encounters with police. It is essential to examine the participants' individual experiences—their similarities and differences—as they provide an avenue for understanding the cultural, sociological, and societal implications of the system of policing and law enforcement.

The sociological paradigm of symbolic interactionism is a useful lens through which to examine the relationships between various groups and individuals in society. An individual's societal exposure and interactions inform how they understand or perceive the world. Charmaz (2014) suggests:

this perspective recognizes that we act in response to how we view our situations. In turn, our actions and those of other people affect these situations, and subsequently, we may alter our interpretations of what is, was, or will be happening. (p.262)

An individual develops their understanding of the world based on previous experiences in similar situations. If they have not been in a specific situation before, then they will begin to formulate a perspective to interpret the experience.

Herbert Blumer (1969) notably coined the term and defined the premises of symbolic interactionism (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). In his book *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, Blumer (1969) conceptualizes the approach with three premises that reinforce the importance of interactions that humans have

with one another, how they perceive those interactions, and what meanings they can formulate from the circumstances they have experienced.

Blumer's (1969) first premise states, "human beings act toward things based on the meanings that things have for them" (p.3). A person may view one's perception of the interaction with a police officer as positive, negative, or neutral. For instance, the individual may recognize a police officer as a symbol of protection, justice, and fairness, or they may view a police officer as a symbol of corruption, unfairness, and prejudice. Alternatively, their notion of a police officer may be considered a symbol of impartiality, one who objectively assesses the situation and enforces the law as required. Each of these "meanings" assigned to police officers and the institution of policing will shift the way individuals respond to police when they encounter officers in everyday life.

The second premise indicates, "the meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows" (Blumer, 1969, p.3). A person may have experienced a positive, negative, or neutral social interaction with a police officer. The type of social interaction formulates the individual's perception of the situation. Individuals also receive messages about the "meaning" of police through socialization, such as children who learn in school that police are there to protect them, or they may receive messages from peers or media about police actions. The totality of an individual's interactions with police and the messages they receive about them from others through interaction create the meaning that they attach to police.

Finally, Blumer's (1969) third premise explains how "these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (p.3). A person experiencing a police

interaction enters that encounter with the meanings they have derived from previous experiences and lessons (see premise two). The person's perception of and the meaning they attach to police may be either reinforced or modified based on the process and outcome of the encounter. If the individual experiences the encounter as a positive one, it may alter the meaning they attach to police in a positive way, whereas a negative encounter may create negative perceptions.

The interview data for this research thus focuses on the participants' symbolic interpretations of uniformed officers not only at PRIDE events but also within the broader Ruralcity community. Through the interview data, I analyze how participants create meaning around the institution of policing and police officers through their interactions with police and their exposure to stories of others' experiences with police, whether through individual interactions or media. An important concept to the symbolic interactionist approach is Blumer's (1969) explanation for how individuals define situations: "a human individual has to cope with the situations in which he is called on to act, ascertaining the meaning of the actions of others and mapping out his own line of action in light of such interpretation" (p.15). Individuals are socialized to act in accordance with expectations drawn from beliefs, customs, and traditions, generated from past and present collectives. When there is a clash of contrasting definitions of the situation in a social interaction, conflict can arise. The individual in the situation who is most influential and powerful, such as a uniformed police officer, can control and shape another person's definition of the encounter. Thus, the person in the position of power ultimately can define and remain in control of interactions with marginalized or less powerful individuals.

Blumer (1969) examines the symbolic nature of objects and designates three categories: physical objects, social objects, and abstract objects. He further classifies

the human being as an independent organism, an object capable of interacting with its “self” as an abstract object (p.12). The objects in themselves have no definitive meaning but are given meaning by individuals who encounter the object in their various social settings. Individuals, in turn, construct their social viewpoints based on a collaboration of meanings they have assigned to the objects and the ideas around those objects while adopting or modifying their perceptions of reality based on the interactions of other individuals or groups in society. According to Snow (2011), "neither individual or society nor self or other are ontologically prior but exist only in relation to each other; thus one can fully understand them only through interaction, whether actual, virtual, or imagined" (p.369). Individuals, therefore, do not exist independently of themselves or outside of one another, but only in adherence to societal functions and structures, which provide a platform for individuals to connect with objects and others to build and develop their meanings and notions of themselves and social reality.

In the interview process, the participants expressed their self-perceptions of police PRIDE involvement, and they described their interactions with police officers, representing and discussing their meanings and those of other LGBTQ+ community members. For Blumer (1969), "the human being is seen as ‘social’ in the sense of an organism that engages in social interaction with itself by making indications to itself and responding to such indications" (p.14). For example, it is vital to examine how individual participants understand a physical object such as a police uniform, a social object such as a police officer, and the abstract idea of policing on minority groups. I also considered how the participants internalized and responded to their interpretations of the meanings they had formulated before examining how their

indications relate to those of others interviewed, and the broader perspective projected within the LGBTQ+ community.

Blumer's (1969) premises of symbolic interactionism and theory of human beings interacting as "self" within social interactions are the sensitizing concepts that provide the groundwork for this research project, through the formation of the initial thought and design behind the project, to the composition of the interview guide and data analysis. Moreover, the topic of exploring the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community's perceptions of the Ruralcity Police Service and PRIDE involvement provides a new area in which to gather empirical data, as there is a minimal amount of qualitative research done examining the societal experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals in small communities such as Ruralcity. Consequently, the data collected for this research provides new insight into a topic that has little previous research. The theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism supports the examination and analysis of what LGBTQ+ community members are experiencing within their communities.

Objective & Research Questions

The objective of this research is to better understand the perceptions that members of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community have about the police, including how they feel about the presence of uniformed officers at PRIDE celebrations. Thus, the primary research questions that inform this study are:

1. How do LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and queer) individuals in Ruralcity perceive the local police?
2. How does the presence or absence of uniformed police at the annual celebrations affect LGBTQ+ individuals' experiences at PRIDE and impact their perceptions of police?

A secondary research question is:

3. What changes do members of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community feel are necessary to improve their relationship to the Ruralcity Police Service?

To answer the aforementioned research questions, I engaged in semi-structured, open-ended style interviews with participants, ranging from approximately fifteen minutes to thirty minutes in length. I conducted five one-on-one interviews in a quiet, private office setting arranged by myself, and approved of by the voluntary participant. The data collected for this research project is strictly and solely from the participants' responses given within the interview.

By drawing on the symbolic interactionist perspective on individual meaning-making and subjective realities, I used open-ended interviews to document the meanings and thinking tied to the life experiences of those participating in the interview. According to van den Hoonaard (2012), qualitative interviews, “allow people to explain their experiences, attitudes, feelings, and definitions of the situation in their own terms and in ways that are meaningful to them” (p.103). In addition to gathering individual accounts of perceptions regarding the police, the secondary question produced a platform for the participant to discuss any necessary improvements needed in the relationship with the Ruralcity police.

Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, it is vital to uphold the ethical standards outlined by the Canadian research councils when conducting research. Although there may be intrinsic overlap of ethical roles in qualitative and quantitative research, "in 2010, the new TCPS (Tri-Council Policy Statement) [established] a separate chapter devoted to qualitative research that serves as a guide to conducting social research in general, and qualitative studies in particular" (van den Hoonaard, 2012, p.56). This qualitative research, as it involved interviewing members of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community,

aligned with the three core principles of ethics outlined in van den Hoonaard (2012), which are respect for persons, concern for human welfare, and justice.

This study brought forth some ethical challenges that led to difficulty in collecting data from the Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community. As an outsider to not only Ruralcity but to the LGTBQ+ community, I had problems connecting with the local LGTBQ+ community organizations and groups. Although there was not a specific gatekeeper from whom I required permission to conduct this project, I created a list of six predominant LGTBQ+ associations within the Ruralcity area and contacted them through email. I explained to them who I was, informed them of the aims of my research, and provided them with the recruitment ad I developed and contact information if they wanted to get in touch or meet with me. I received no response from any of the LGTBQ+ organizations I contacted. After two weeks of posting recruitment ads throughout the greater Ruralcity community, a local leader in the LGTBQ+ community emailed me to request a meeting about my research project. When we met, along with my supervisor, she assured us that she was not seeking that I require her permission to do the study, nor enforce a gatekeeping position, but she wanted to establish community correspondence by personally connecting and understanding the research's main objectives.

Overall, my identity as a researcher and my motivations for the project was an ethical consideration I considered, as the Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community was unaware of the research project until I had emailed the local LGTBQ+ organizations and begun the recruitment process. The reason for not approaching organizations in advance dealt specifically with my waiting on the Laurier Research and Ethics Board to issue clearance to begin the research project. This experience suggests that, while important, ethics clearances processes may create additional barriers to engaging

marginal communities in research when the researcher is not already a member of the community. Researchers must carefully balance research ethics protocols with the need to engage and involve communities in planning for research that is relevant to them.

Protecting the confidentiality of the information and anonymity of the participants were points outlined to the interviewees in the consent form and explained before the commencement of the interview. The methods employed to protect the individual identities of the participants included the designation of a pseudonym for the participant's name and the research location. I also concealed identities within research documents such as coding, analysis, memos, and the write-up of this thesis.

Ultimately, I provided full disclosure and transparency to all interested participants and community members who sought out the specific ideas and motives for this research. I asked each participant to sign a consent form before beginning the interview process. The Laurier Research Ethics Board (REB), #5986, approved the consent form, which provided a synopsis of the research study's objectives, and definitively outlined the steps taken to protect the distinctiveness of the participants involved.

Data Collection: Recruitment Process, Difficulties & Interviewing

Recruitment ad.

In the process of completing my ethics package for the Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University, I designed a recruitment ad to gather participants willing to participate in my research project. The recruitment ad included the line, "PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH PROJECT," the title of the project, an invitation to participate for those meeting the outlined criteria, an explanation of

what the interview would discuss and consider, the incentive provided for participating, and my email as well as my supervisor's email and telephone number. At the bottom of the ad, I included the research project's review and approval by the Wilfrid Laurier University Research and Ethics Board along with the reference number to validate the authenticity and authorization to complete the research project.

To attract attention and establish a connection with potential participants, I incorporated the "Laurier: Inspiring Lives" picture, as well as a picture of the rainbow flag and the word "PRIDE" colourfully illustrated with the rainbow flag in each letter. In using the Laurier advertisement, I wanted onlookers to know that the origin and development of the project was affiliated with Wilfrid Laurier University, and, hopefully, that the motivation behind the project would be perceived as an educational endeavour. My intention for using the rainbow flag and PRIDE symbols was not only to draw the attention of the Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community but for any onlookers to know at the outset what the project might entail and have them automatically distinguish whether or not they should continue reading the ad. By incorporating vibrant and vivid symbols, with a variety of font sizes to capture the essence of the research project, I intended to seek out the audience required in a respectful and meaningful way that also implied the source of the project.

The original recruitment ad did not include the variation in font sizes or the pictures at the top. However, all the writing used was the same, and I further included the participant's criteria, the incentive, and the acknowledgement of approval by the Wilfrid Laurier Research and Ethics Board. All these additions are from the approved REB application. The reworking of the recruitment ad provided specific information about the participant's criteria to onlookers, and the aesthetic uplift aided in improving the attractiveness of the ad.

Once my supervisor approved the updated recruitment ad, I posted it on various social media platforms. I created a Facebook page posting a picture of the ad along with information regarding the research, as well as copied these postings to existing Twitter and Snapchat groups. Private Facebook groups and chats provided a platform to share the ad with several peers, friends, and family members who may have known any individuals fitting the outlined criteria. As stated previously, I contacted six predominant Ruralcity LGBTQ+ organizations through email with an explanation of my position as a student researcher at Wilfrid Laurier University, the main objectives of my research, an attachment of the recruitment ad, and a request to post or share the ad, and return contact information. In addition to online methods of recruitment, I posted paper copies of the recruitment ads throughout Ruralcity.

I posted ads in as many community centers, grocery stores, convenient stores, fast food restaurants, and public service agencies that would allow me to post the ad. In all, I distributed over 60 ads within the greater Ruralcity community. Moreover, I messaged and spoke face-to-face with other friends and acquaintances regarding my research project, personally giving them an ad and a business card with my contact information to pass the message along to prospective participants.

Difficulties of the recruitment process.

Despite the recruitment process lasting approximately a month and a half, beginning in the middle of March 2019 and ending just after the first week of May 2019, I was unsuccessful in gathering the six to ten participants I anticipated interviewing. As a direct result of my inability to connect personally with Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community groups, I found it challenging to recruit the minimum number of participants assigned at the commencement of this research project. Although I had emailed Ruralcity LGBTQ+ organizations and community groups, I did not take a

step further to call or go in person to these places and try to connect personally with administrative or authoritative figures within these establishments.

Moreover, as an infrequent and uncommon user of any social media platforms, I opted out of creating a more visible and expansive Facebook page that could have potentially reached a further or larger population of online users or a Twitter page solely for this research project. Hence, the primary method of recruitment that I was most comfortable with was going out into the community and handing out or posting recruitment ads and talking with people face-to-face to explain and promote my research project.

Another factor that potentially impeded my ability to recruit the minimum number of participants may have dealt with the acronym I chose to illustrate on my ad. The recruitment ad that I posted both in print and online included the standard LGTBQ initialization. Upon collecting my data and in the writing of this thesis, I began using LGTBQ+. If I had incorporated the + symbol within the ad, I might have extended the invitation to forthcoming participants who affiliate and identify with the LGTBQ+ abbreviation. Based on the usage of just LGTBQ, I may have unintentionally dismissed participants who excluded themselves from the study because they felt they did not fit the specific LGTBQ category.

Researcher's identity as hindering.

As mentioned in the ethical considerations, being an immigrant to Ruralcity and not having a direct link or association with the Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community were likely contributing factors to the recruitment difficulties. Furthermore, being a heterosexual female from a very sheltered, conservative upbringing, who has very little exposure or experience with PRIDE events, celebrations, or any LGTBQ+ organization, produced an apprehensiveness in reaching out to an unfamiliar

community group. Although I have family members and friends who would identify with the LGTBQ+ community and have had PRIDE experiences, their discussions about those interactions are their own, and not ones I can verify. Therefore, being unable to connect personally with Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community groups or affiliated organizations and introducing myself personally, inhibited me from potentially gathering a larger group of participants for my research project.

Conducting interviews.

For someone who has never had any experience interviewing another person in any setting other than in mock classroom exercises, I was quite concerned about how the interview process would play out and had reservations about my position as the interviewer. Once willing participants began voluntarily emailing me to schedule an interview, I responded with a request to meet at a quiet, public space in Ruralcity.

In the interview room, I provided the participant with the consent form whereby I asked them to read through thoroughly, ask any necessary questions, and sign and date once they agreed and accepted the terms. The signed consent form signaled the commencement of the interview. All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and the participants were very elaborate and detailed in their responses, appearing very calm and collected.

Consistent with a semi-structured interview method, I asked “a series of pre-determined but open-ended questions and used a variety of probes eliciting further information” (van den Hoonaard, 2012, p.103), as required. The interview guide contained three distinct categories with the appropriate introduction and conclusion to help the participant once again reinforce the main components of the research. The first category spoke to the participant's engagement with the local PRIDE events and celebrations, referring specifically to their personal opinion about the atmosphere and

comfort level at PRIDE while tying in their views regarding Ruralcity police in PRIDE, what they do there, and the removal of uniformed officers from participating in PRIDE events. The second category addressed the participant's interaction with Ruralcity police officers and how their perception is affected as it related to the various probable encounters they may have had while including a question associated with the recent Bruce McArthur police investigation occurring in Toronto (Blinch, 2018). I asked demographic questions in the final section of the interview and wrapped up by asking for any concluding thoughts of the overall relationship between the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community and the Ruralcity Police Service.

All the participants answered all the questions asked. Any questions I skipped or overlooked were because the participant responded to the question within another answer. There were no requests to remove a question or to stop the interview at any time. There was a story that one participant told during the interview but requested for it to be off the record and not included in my analysis. At the end of the interview session, I gave each participant a \$10 gift card from Tim Hortons, as a gesture of appreciation for participating in the research study with the participant signing a receipt to ensure they received the promised incentive. I also gave the participant a copy of the consent form, which both the interviewer and the participant signed and dated to keep for their records.

Participants

With such a small sample size, it is crucial to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants by being as nonrepresentational and abstract concerning their responses to individualizing questions. As such, I removed any dialogue about demographics, the highest level of education the participant completed, and their occupation. On the other hand, the describing characteristics of

the sample, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and age help to contextualize the data and are reflective of the participant's perception that impacted the findings and analysis. Furthermore, the ethnic background provided an exploration of the individuals represented within the data, and those who were not, resulting in an overall discussion of the sample's limitations.

There were a total of five participants. The participants predominantly self-identified with female gender, with one participant specifically using the term “cisgender woman,” two using the term woman, and one using the term female. The fifth participant identified as a cisgender male. All participants identified with the gender they were assigned at birth. With respect to sexual orientation, two identified as lesbian, one identified as gay, one identified as bisexual, and one identified as queer. Moreover, three identified their ethnic background as Caucasian, while two identified as people of colour².

Participants ranged broadly in age, from twenty to fifty years old. Age is a significant consideration when thinking about individual experiences, as the thirty-year age gap results in different experiences as it relates to the participants' attendance at PRIDE events, their life experiences, and the general scope of their interactions with local police officers.

Limitations of the sample.

As a consequence of acquiring only five interviews, there is a multitude of sample limitations. For one, the sample size is very small, and although the overall population of Ruralcity is small, a research project representing five members of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community cannot be considered representative of the entire LGBTQ+ community in Ruralcity. With such a small sample size, individuals who

² Due to the small sample size, and the small community, the specific ethnic identifications have been redacted to protect the participants' anonymity.

identify as transgender, two-spirited, or others who are experimenting with their sexual and gender fluidity, are not represented.

The sample over-represents women and this may be significant in the sense that men are statistically more likely to come into contact with police as the accused, and they are more likely to be subject to police violence (Najdowski, Bottoms, & Goff, 2015). The sample population is predominantly Caucasian and although there were two participants who identified as people of colour, Indigenous people are not represented. This, again, is a key limitation given the prevalence of racial profiling and racialized and Indigenous persons' disproportionate experiences of violence by police. I did not ask questions relating to religion and marital status, which may have supplied a more in-depth, reflexive, analysis. However, additional demographic markers of education and occupation have been redacted to protect the participants' identities. This research, as with much qualitative research, cannot be considered representative. However, it does offer a snapshot of LGBTQ+ persons' experiences with police in Ruralcity.

Data Analysis: Transcribing & Coding

The interviews ranged from fifteen to thirty minutes in length, and I transcribed them verbatim. After the transcription process, I emailed each participant who asked to receive a copy of the transcribed interview via the consent form. All interviewees agreed to have the conversation recorded, but only four out of five participants requested a copy of the transcription. The transcription process provided a starting point for revisiting the interviews and reflecting on the participants' narratives.

Under the guidance outlined by Charmaz (2014), I coded each interview line-by-line and developed the underlying themes as I went through each section of the

participants' interviews. In some cases, questions that resulted in simple, short answers, such as "How long have you lived in Ruralcity?", "How often do you attend the annual Ruralcity PRIDE parade?", "What is the atmosphere like?", "What is your level of comfort?" and "Were you aware that the PRIDE organizing committee asked the Ruralcity police not to participate in the PRIDE festivities in uniform last summer?" were placed in a chart to distinguish individual participants and their specific responses to the question. Overall, I utilized charts four times, which included organizing the demographics section, the frequency of participants' attendance at PRIDE, how they feel at PRIDE, and whether they were aware of the removal of Ruralcity police from PRIDE.

According to Charmaz (2014), "initial codes help you to separate data into categories and to see processes" (p.127). The initial coding phase produced broader, over-arching themes such as "reasons for police removal from PRIDE," "reasons for why police would want to be involved in PRIDE," and "participants providing recommendations to the Ruralcity police to improve relationships", which were then broken down into smaller categories once I reviewed all the interviews. For example, "reasons for police removal from PRIDE" was further coded into separate categories such as "police creating harmful spaces/scenarios," "Black Lives Matter," and "uncomfortable/intimidating police presence." Some substantial topics remained, such as "distinguishing job from identity," "societal perceptions of policing system," and "negative/positive police experiences," while others like "perception of Grindr users" and "Netizens" were removed by looking at the frequency and weight of what the dialogue expressed in each interview.

Coinciding with Charmaz's (2014) proposition to code the mundane codes, I discovered further connections and remarks that assisted in building upon the themes

found in the initial coding. For example, "police training" was a repetitive code found in the initial coding, and I had more than fifteen quotations under this category. As Charmaz (2014) advises, "by coding your codes, you push yourself to look for patterns and think more analytically-and you keep interacting with your data and codes" (p.128). Upon further coding of the code "police training," I interacted with the data in more systematic way. Participants discussed a wide variety of topics such as needing more police training, the number hours that police go through training, the kind of police training given, police officers engagement in the training, and police officer self-awareness. These additional codes helped to construct a further, more developed analysis on the participants' perspectives around police training on LGTBQ+ matters.

When I analyzed how these specific codes interconnected, I discovered the ways the Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community perceives how their relationship with the local police service could be improved. By connecting the code of "improving the relationship," with the initial code of "police training," and the secondary codes of "more police training," "level of police engagement in training," and "police officer self-awareness," I found other references that added to this theme, such as "providing advice to police concerning LGTBQ+ matters" and "the symbolic weight of the police uniform." These interconnected codes formed the basis of chapter four, in which the main theme discussed is the Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community's recommendations for the local police on improving their relationship through an examination of how participants evoke meaning on the physical object of the police uniform, the social role of the police officer, and the abstract object of the policing system on minority groups.

In addition to using Charmaz's (2014) line-by-line coding technique, I also constructed a memo record that contained the titles of the essential themes and the interesting observances that I recognized within the data coding and analysis. Charmaz (2014) states, "memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue" (p.162). Some of the themes outlined in the memos document contained the overarching topics related to participants feelings at PRIDE as attendees, the perceived discomfort felt from police at PRIDE, the involvement of the Ruralcity police chief, the symbolism attached to the police uniform, the recognition of the policing system on marginalized groups, reforming the police organization, and providing advice to police on LGBTQ+ matters. Overall, this document brought forth the general, recurrent notions discussed by the participants and laid the groundwork for the forthcoming chapters that 1) analyzed the LGBTQ+ community's perception of local police including their presence at PRIDE events and 2) LGBTQ+ community providing suggestions to police on improving the relationship with the local police.

Conclusion

There were discouraging and complex moments of this qualitative research project that dealt explicitly with the difficulties in gathering an adequate number of participants to represent a sample portion of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community. These factors were a combination of personal reluctance to approach local LGBTQ+ organizations and introduce myself as the researcher, being casual with recruiting through social media platforms, and using the restricted LGBTQ acronym in my advertisement. Despite these obstacles, and through the lens of symbolic interactionism and Blumer's (1969) three premises, I discovered valuable data regarding the local LGBTQ+ community's perception of the Ruralcity police

concerning how its presence at Ruralcity PRIDE affects their sense of well-being and their recommendations for the local police on improving relationships and understanding LGTBQ+ matters. I analyze and explain these topics in considerable detail within chapters three and four, respectively.

Chapter 3

An Inside Look into the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ Community's Perception: Examining Police Presence at Ruralcity PRIDE Celebrations & LGBTQ+ Individual's Experiences with Police

To this point, the literature on interactions between police officers, law enforcement, and the communities in which they serve finds that the LGBTQ+ community is subject to instances of adverse treatment by police officers when they report victimization and when they encounter police in the community (Dwyer, 2011; 2012; Chatterjee, 2014). A study of LGBTQ+ perceptions of the criminal justice system by Nadal, Quintanilla, Goswick, and Sriken (2015), investigated how LGBTQ+ persons describe their interactions with police and government personnel and found that LGBTQ+ persons often report unfair treatment. Furthermore, Cole (1999) argued that there is a double standard in society where those who are privileged do not experience the unfair treatment that occurs within the criminal justice system. Systemically, privileged individuals are better able than marginalized persons to exercise their constitutional protection from police power (Cole, 1999). I argue that this double standard also affects the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community. In this chapter, I discuss how police attendance at PRIDE affected participants' experiences and their opinions of the recent removal of uniformed officers from PRIDE events. I also examine participants' perceptions of their interactions with Ruralcity police. The dominant themes that became apparent in the interviews are the role of intersectional identities in individual perceptions of police and discrimination, the symbolic weight of the police uniform, LGBTQ+ individuals' experiences of police violence and discrimination, LGBTQ+ understanding of police participation in PRIDE, and instances of positive police interactions.

Individual Perception of Police & Discrimination

While individual participants had various perspectives about police and police victimization, it was clear that participants' positionalities and experiences, as well as markers of privilege (such as class and race), conditioned their perspective. As Blumer (1969) explained, the "meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows" (p.3). Thus, attitudes vary from participant to participant, as each forms their meaning and interpretations from the experiences they have encountered with police officers and others.

For instance, Tony, a gay cisgender male, (age 50), expressed that "...nobody has said 'hey, you're gay, therefore you have fewer rights...'" He goes on to describe a hypothetical example of being caught for speeding by a police officer:

I mean, I don't get pulled over for speeding or anything like that, but if I did I would just take it like I'm a speeder, I'm not gay, straight, white, black, I sped, I got busted, right? So, but that's my outlook, that's not everybody's 'cause I, I take less of a victim status.

From his perspective, Tony explained that an individual's gender identity or sexual orientation may be of little importance when it comes to someone violating the law or committing a crime. Pinel (1999) provides the concept of "stigma consciousness" to describe how individuals may be differently disposed to assuming that others are reacting to them based on a stigmatized identity. Pinel (2004) defines stigma consciousness as "the extent to which targets believe that their stereotyped status pervades their interactions with members of the outgroup" (p.39). Tony's perspective reveals a low level of stigma consciousness in that he does not automatically assume that a negative interaction with police (such as a speeding ticket) is the result of his identity as a gay man. Rather, Tony argues that if a person acts defiantly, a police

officer is required by law to charge or apprehend the individual accordingly and that these events operate independently of the individual's sexual orientation.

Other participants, like Sonya, a bisexual female (age 20), believed that she is more likely to be discriminated against or victimized based on her sexuality and membership in the LGBTQ+ community. Sonya stated:

Then it's very discouraging when you think about a police officer, like a police chief kind of talking over the truth of this community just because a lot of people support more of the heteronormative community usually anyways, but *it does make me feel like I'm open to potentially being a victim just because of my sexuality* (emphasis added).

In this case, Sonya was referring to the comments made by Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders about the McArthur case. Saunders was quoted as saying that there is a "strong potential that the outcome could have been different had people come forward" (National Post, 2018). This idea mirrored a *Globe and Mail* interview, as well as a *CTV News* article that suggested if LGBTQ+ community members came forward promptly with information related to Bruce McArthur, he would have been caught sooner (Fox & Freeman, 2018). In understanding the victim blaming approach taken by the Toronto police chief, Sonya felt that her sexuality could potentially cause her to be more vulnerable to being victimized, or secondarily victimized by police neglect. Her perspective on the police and potential victimization was very different from Tony's view.

Crystal, a lesbian cisgender woman (age 40), also had a similar perspective of policing and concern for the potential of victimization. When asked if she was satisfied with any parts of the relationship between the Ruralcity police and the local LGBTQ+ community, she explained:

I mean, I wouldn't say that I'm satisfied with any, but mostly because my perceptions of policing are that they're there to basically uphold dominant societal norms, and *while it's not a crime to be queer, you can be mistreated because you are* (emphasis added).

While Crystal's perceptions of police and victimization coincided with Sonya's, Crystal wanted to make clear that the problem lies with the system of policing as being a heteronormative entity and not with each police officer.

Carmen, a lesbian cisgender woman, (age 39), explained her perception of police and victimization when she stated, "I have to be honest, I'm a very privileged person. I've never had negative run-ins with the law." However, she did elaborate on how interactions with police officers can impact one's perceptions, as well as how one's characteristics may play a role in the comfort level one has with police officers. She expressed:

I think it depends on the situation and that is coming from me who is ...like because of my age because I'm white, because of all these things, like I'd... some police officers I feel comfortable around and others ones, it makes me feel very uncomfortable.

Carmen also discussed a situation that occurred at an LGBTQ+ event in a small village outside of Ruralcity, where she witnessed LGBTQ+ individuals being victimized by police officers. Although she was not the direct victim of the police, she described feeling that she had been indirectly mistreated because of her affiliation with the LGBTQ+ community. She stated:

I was there, and I actually witnessed that. Like, I witnessed them telling people that they had been assaulted that they needed to like just shut up or they would be arrested. Like literally that what was said, so that really, that

was the first time that really put into perspective like I felt like a second-class citizen in that situation.

Carmen's experience as a witness to police discrimination and harassment of LGBTQ+ individuals had an impact on her own comfort with police.

However, others did not have these kinds of negative experiences with police. Concerning individual perception of comfort and safety around police, Lynn, a queer woman (age 31), described how the police presence at previous PRIDE events did not impact her comfort level or the potential of being victimized by police. She described her stance:

I think that in terms of like actual relationships with police like my comfort level was the same in like I don't feel like I have a negative relationship directly with the police myself and so I was not uncomfortable by having police presence.

Although there is evidence to support the uneasiness LGBTQ+ individuals feel around police officers, not all participants have negative perceptions of police officers and their presence at PRIDE.

While some participants discussed the potential for victimization by police, they also raised the important question of the source of police discrimination. Participants questioned whether police discrimination is, in fact, based on parts of a person's identity that may be more apparent, such as race, gender, or age, rather than from being a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Sonya, for instance, highlighted the blurred lines of potential discrimination:

I think it's hard sometimes to kind of identify if someone is from the LGBTQ community or not, so sometimes I think that's hard just to kind of clarify like if they are discriminating against you because of that or of something else

especially because of like my race, for instance. It's hard to separate the two or understand why.

Visible identity markers such as race could be a potential source of discrimination, rather than the fact, whether it is known to the police officer or not, that the person with whom they are interacting identifies with the LGBTQ+ community. Therefore, it is difficult for the individual to discern the origin of the perceived police discrimination.

This point coincides with the theoretical perspective of Goffman (1963), who outlined the distinction between discredited and discreditable identities. Identities deemed as discredited include individuals "whose stigma is clearly known or visible" (Chaudoir, Earnshaw, & Andel, 2013, p.75). Some of these attributes include age, race, perceived gender, or physical disability. Discreditable identities are those "whose stigma is unknown and can be concealable" (Chaudoir et al., 2013, p.75). Discreditable identities include less visible stigmas related to mental illness or sexual orientation. Contextualizing Goffman's (1963) theory aids in evaluating the origin of the LGBTQ+ perceived police discrimination where a police officer may discriminate against an individual based on a discredited, that is visible identity, while secondary discrimination may arise from a discreditable identity that is eventually revealed through the interaction between the officer and the individual. In this case, a discreditable identity, such as sexual orientation, can become a discredited identity, once the officer is aware of the stigmatizing attribute. It is important to note "the stigmatized individual need not directly experience discriminatory or negative behaviour from others in order to feel subjectively that he is socially discredited" (Hannem, 2012, p.49). However, through societal awareness of what constitutes

stigma, or “stigma consciousness” (Pinel 2004), individuals may perceive that they are stigmatized and subject to discrimination.

Another participant questioned whether a police officer recognizing an individual as LGBTQ+ would change how they respond or react to the individual or circumstance. For example, Tony stated that if he required police assistance, he has no doubt that they would come to his aid. He feels certain that the fact that he identifies as gay would not be directly evident to police and therefore would not affect their reaction. He stated:

I'm pretty sure they'd be there when I need them. I know a part of this whole thing is that I don't... most people wouldn't identify me as gay on first sight.

I'm not flamboyant, I don't know. I'm not in drag or whatever.

As a result of Tony's discreditable identity (Goffman, 1963), it is unclear whether the police perception and response would change or remain the same if the police were aware of his sexual orientation.

A participant who referred to students and community members being mistreated by Ruralcity police based on visible identity markers such as perceived socioeconomic status, age, and race, suggested that it was those distinguishing characteristics that produced the negative treatment from Ruralcity police and not being part of the LGBTQ+ community. Lynn described:

I have seen the way that the police have either intervened or failed to intervene for folks based off other parts of their identities that are more visible. So, students, for example, who might look poor, or community members that might look poor but aren't necessarily poor, but how they are perceived or that are racialized and that they've had negative experiences with the police.

Also, Lynn explained that once the visible identities were singled out, their LGBTQ+ identity then created an opportunity for further harm and mistreatment to be expressed. She explained, “I think in some spaces, it wasn't necessarily like targeting their LGBTQ+ identity, but it was targeting other parts of their identity, and then that part of their identity came into play.” Thus, LGBTQ+ individuals with intersectional identities may experience double victimization from the police as a direct result of their discreditable identity.

Consistent with theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), the different elements that construct a person's identity, such as race, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity, intersect. These various identity markers can prompt oppression and harm. As Parent, DeBlaere, and Moradi (2013) outlined, “interactionist perspectives suggest that, beyond their independent effects, minority statuses and related experiences may interact to shape people’s experiences, with the typical implied nature of interaction being that one minority status or experience may exacerbate the effect of another” (p.640). In being targeted by a police officer for an observable characteristic, learning or recognizing another discreditable identity marker may cause further discrimination. Mallory et al., (2015) found that people of colour, age, and LGBTQ+ identity, have been "subjected to profiling, entrapment, discrimination, harassment, and violence by law enforcement" (p.6). The intersection of these overlapping identities resulted in discrimination by police and law enforcement and makes it impossible to identify a single cause of oppressive behaviours.

The Symbolic Weight of The Police Uniform

Upon investigating the participants' perceptions of police, an important theme brought forth by the participants is the uncomfortable and intimidating presence that

police uniforms represent for many marginalized individuals. The police uniform holds a significant amount of power, influence, and symbolism as it relates to individual perceptions of police and policing as a whole. As indicated by Johnson (2001), "the uniform of a police officer has been found to have a profound psychological impact on those who view it" (p.1). This point draws on Blumer's (1969) first premise that "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them" (p.3). The findings of this study suggest that the meanings associated with the police uniform are significant in PRIDE's decision to ask police not to participate.

Some of the participants described that they experienced the presence of uniformed police at the annual PRIDE flag-raising ceremony in 2013 as particularly uncomfortable and intimidating. One participant explained that the Ruralcity police chief had instructed the officers to attend PRIDE events that year in order to show the organization's support of the local LGBTQ+ community. Crystal perceived that not all the officers had an open and positive attitude toward this assignment:

An officer came to the flag-raising, and he stood...like this...like with his arms crossed, looking miserable, and it was very intimidating, and a number of people were like, "why doesn't he leave if he doesn't want to be here?" He wouldn't take a flag. Somebody from the community, like a community organization, tried to give him a rainbow flag, and he was like, "uh, I don't want that." So, his presence there was felt, and it was intimidating, and it sort of felt like he was disgusted by our presence in the community, which is not how PRIDE should ever feel.

Furthermore, Carmen described a similar experience:

So, there was a time when police came to Ruralcity PRIDE, the flag-raising, and you could tell that he did not want to be there, one officer, and he was like grumpy. Someone tried to give him a flag, and he [refused to take it], so that officer made me feel very uncomfortable. He was being negative. You could tell he didn't want to be there, and he was being intimidating—even just his whole presence was very intimidating.

In both explanations of the incident, it is evident that this individual officer created an atmosphere of discomfort and uneasiness for some of the participants present at the event. For the participants who experienced this incident, the police uniform was connected with the officer's actions, which, they interpreted as offensive and intimidating. It is likely that the uniform itself augmented the effect of the officer's behavior. According to Johnson (2001), when a civilian is observing or communicating with a uniformed police officer, the uniform significantly affects the dynamic of the interaction because the uniform represents power and authority, and when a person is wearing a police uniform "citizens believe that they embody stereotypes about all police officers" (Johnson, 2001, p. 27). The uniform's absence removes the social status and power, changing the effect of interaction. As evident in the participants' accounts, the police officer's actions at the event represented the discomfort and intimidation the police uniform can carry for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Concerning Ruralcity PRIDE's 2017 decision to request that there be no police representation including "uniforms, signage or weapons" at PRIDE events (Ruralcity PRIDE), the participants discussed how police officers, the police as an organization, and their presence had created harmful and unsafe spaces at LGBTQ+ events. When participants were asked the specific question, "why, in your opinion, do

you feel the Ruralcity police were asked not to participate in PRIDE?” four out of five participants referred to the uniform police presence in PRIDE events and celebrations as discomforting and/or intimidating.

Sonya stated that the presence of uniformed officers at PRIDE “might kind of create just an aura of intimidation or kind of make people feel a little bit more insecure.” Carmen expressed, “it’s not that I don’t want to work with the police but just that they don’t need to be *in uniform* making people feel uncomfortable at our, when it’s a day about our community, and they’re not treating us very well” (emphasis added). It is evident within these accounts that the police uniform carries a symbolic weight of intimidation and insecurity that is felt by some LGBTQ+ community members.

In understanding why the police presence at PRIDE events and celebrations would be viewed as unsafe, participants’ responses unpacked how the police organization created oppressive spaces for marginalized individuals and how the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee is committed to removing that feeling of vulnerability for LGBTQ+ members. Crystal expressed this viewpoint:

In my opinion, PRIDE was trying to listen to community members who were the most marginalized. We live in Ruralcity where there’s a huge Indigenous population here. Indigenous people experience an extreme amount of violence from the police, and if you’re Indigenous and queer, there’s multilayered marginalization that happens. So, in my opinion, PRIDE was trying to make PRIDE safe for LGBTQ people and all LGBTQ people.

Lynn describes a similar perspective:

I think that similarly to other PRIDEs that asked police not to participate in uniform, that policing as an organization has caused great harm to

marginalized communities, and that you are more likely to have a negative interaction with law enforcement experiencing like harsher punishments and be penalized if you are someone with a marginalized identity. I think that a lot of the types of violence that folks are resisting is often upheld by law enforcement, and so I think that for those reasons, they have asked the police not to participate as an organization and, therefore, to not participate in uniform.

In considering the underlying reasons why the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee requested that any form of police representation at PRIDE events be absent, it is clear that the police uniform and presence can be linked to LGBTQ+ individuals' perceptions of insecurity, fear, and oppression. According to Johnson (2001), "depending on the background of the citizen, the police uniform can elicit emotions ranging from pride and respect, to fear and anger" (p.2). This point is validated within the participants' responses as they relate to police treatment based on marginalized identities. Therefore, the symbolic weight of the police uniform is significant for all members of society, but continues to be a symbol of oppression and harm to those who have been exposed to adverse police treatment.

Distinguishing profession from personal identity.

A question that emerged in the process of this research project is: why do some police officers view the request to not attend PRIDE events in uniform as a form of exclusion although they are still welcome to attend in civilian clothing? Other professional areas such as education, healthcare, and business sectors are not present at PRIDE or do not have a group of their employees attend to represent these various occupations. Two participants expressed a comparable notion regarding the representation of professions in PRIDE while implying the importance of people

coming to PRIDE as themselves, divorced from their working identities. Lynn referred to this point:

Like no one else comes in with their profession, no one else has a car that says, "I'm an aesthetician." Or like teachers aren't like, you know what I mean like "I wanna wear this," or like whatever. People come as themselves, and I think that becomes really important, especially for those of us who work in harmful systems.

Attending PRIDE as an individual separate from a working identity, or a professional standpoint leaves a person free to express themselves as an ally or member of the LGBTQ+ community. Crystal touched upon the challenge that some police officers face when asked to leave the uniform behind, while also making the distinction between detaching one's working identity from one's character:

I think, first and foremost, police officers are people, and they can also be LGBTQ. And a part of what I've been reading is there's a real struggle between police officers saying that "we're people too." But they're not identifying themselves as people first, and then officers. It's a job, right? I don't wear my uniform to everything I go to, so why should they?

Following PRIDE's objectives and aims of producing an impartial space free of "colonialism, racism, ableism, classism, misogyny, and heterosexism" (Ruralcity PRIDE), it is necessary that PRIDE's atmosphere exhibit inclusivity and acceptance of all people. The participants outline two main reasons why individuals who work in social systems or institutions that have perpetuated harm should attend PRIDE "as themselves"—detached from their uniforms and working identities. According to most participants, the police uniform carries a negative symbolic weight for marginalized LGBTQ+ persons, who have historically had difficulty finding safe

spaces for community socialization where they are not subject to harassment or made to feel uncomfortable (Wildman, 2017). Overall, the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee's request for the removal of uniformed officers from PRIDE events was made to allow people to come as themselves, without any ties to their profession, while simultaneously creating a safe space for LGBTQ+ members to express their identities.

Police Discrimination Experienced By LGBTQ+ Individuals

After examining the participants' perceptions of police, the police uniform, and whether they believe that their specific LGBTQ+ identities result in potential police discrimination, I would now like to focus attention on some incidents that the participants shared in which they were victimized or witnessed the victimization of others based on their gender identity or sexual orientation. I asked participants directly if they had experienced discrimination from a Ruralcity police officer. While most of the participants said that they had not personally experienced discrimination by a Ruralcity police officer based on their LGBTQ+ identity, they knew of situations experienced by others and were open to sharing some examples of instances where LGBTQ+ individuals and organizations were targeted victims of police oppression.

First, I would like to provide some examples of participants who were personally victimized or targeted by the Ruralcity police. In the first instance, the participant described sitting with his friend in a parked car in a local community park when two police officers approached the vehicle to question their presence. Tony explained:

But I found that two guys sitting in a car and having tea, but we happened to be at that park, we got bothered a little bit more. They'd pull up and say, "what are you doing here?" "Umm, we're having tea, what do you think we are doing here?" You know, just inappropriate, but not necessarily illegal, so I

wasn't totally pleased, and almost I was that close to, for the record, one inch (laughs). I was one inch close to going to the chief of police and saying we need to sit down and talk about this.

The park to which Tony referred in his story has the reputation of being a “cruising ground;” he further clarified, saying, “I don’t know if it still is, where gay men would go into the woods and have sex...” Tony is unsure if this still currently happens but he discussed that it would not be unusual for police to question individuals who are spending time in locations that are known for things like drugs, prostitution, or other illegal activity like public sex. Nonetheless, Tony was not pleased with this incident and felt targeted by the Ruralcity police.

Crystal discussed that after the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee made the formal decision to request the removal of Ruralcity uniformed officers from PRIDE events, she experienced discrimination by a Ruralcity officer on social media:

I’ve been harassed by a police officer here in Ruralcity on social media after the decision was made to not allow police in uniform. A police officer harassed me for a while, and just like kept sending me weird things like "I'm not privileged. I grew up poor" and like, and I was like, "I'm not saying that you didn't grow up poor, but you're still white, right, like I'm saying that we all don't start in the same place" and, so this continued for a while.

Although Crystal did not mention if she had posted a comment based on the decision, or the context preceding the officer's comments, it is clear from Crystal's perspective that the officer was unhappy about the decision made regarding uniformed officers in PRIDE and she felt targeted by the multiple messages.

In addition to online harassment by a Ruralcity police officer, Crystal shared a disturbing occurrence that took place at an organization that she works for. The

organization was displaying a PRIDE flag in the front window when it was smashed by vandals. The employees believed that the window was smashed *because* of the PRIDE flag. Additionally, they also felt that the local police dismissed their concerns when they suggested what their perception of the motivation was:

Someone smashed the window, and the police refused to take our statements as a hate crime, like we kept saying that “this is hate crime,” and they kept saying that anyone could have smashed the window for no apparent reason. But it was the window the PRIDE flag was hanging on, and my boss is pretty good at discussing things with the police, and they just would not hear it as a hate crime.

Despite the organization’s executive director and employees suggesting to Ruralcity police that the window was smashed because it displayed a PRIDE flag, Crystal asserted that the police would not accept the incident as a hate crime. She described how the police maintained that there was no proof to indicate the claim the organization was making, minimizing the concerns of the LGTBQ+ organization. Also, she explained that the police refused to take their statements in order to avoid officially recording the organization’s assertions that what occurred was a hate crime. Drawing on a symbolic interactionist framing, this incident displays how the two sides interpret evidence and facts. An individual makes sense of their subjective reality, through the experiences they have with others in their social reality. But there can also be multiple views of the same scenario (different definitions of the situation) as there are different subjective positions among individuals. For the purposes of this research, we do not have the Ruralcity police’s perspective on this incident, but it is clear that the participant and her colleagues viewed this incident as a much more serious violation than the police understood.

Participants who did not describe a personal experience of homophobic discrimination or heterosexism by the police had heard about or witnessed instances they would classify as discrimination by Ruralcity police officers. Accounts from the participants in this study suggest that the local LGBTQ+ community has been subjected to oppressive treatment and discrimination by the Ruralcity police.

Carmen expressed that the decision to request the withdrawal of uniformed police from PRIDE dealt explicitly with understanding how marginalized communities perceive the police. She shared:

We [the LGBTQ+ community] listened to more marginalized groups and what they were feeling. So, in Ruralcity here, that was mostly like Indigenous communities, and trans folks— not all, just some— and people were saying that they would feel safer without police there because of the system of oppression that police uphold.

She continued by explaining that a research project concerning the LGBTQ+ community found that “there [were] actually examples of negative treatment of the queer community from Ruralcity police within that year [before the police were asked not to participate in PRIDE].” Carmen then revealed that she did not experience discrimination personally, “but because I read research that was done locally, I knew that other people probably have.” In addition to the research, another participant, Lynn, expressed how she also had not experienced direct discrimination based on her sexual orientation but recalled events where she witnessed homophobia and heterosexism:

I had very little engagement with the Ruralcity police directly outside of like some more official events, like the flag-raising and things like that, you know,

where generally the police and politicians come and say really insensitive things unfortunately.

Therefore, from the participants' explanations, they have both experienced discrimination from the police firsthand and witnessed others. The participants' accounts of their experiences, encounters, and prior research done in Ruralcity supports Chatterjee's (2014) explanation that marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ members are "considered social outcasts in society" (p.317). Consequently, adverse police treatment and the sense of feeling unsafe in the presence of Ruralcity officers was another reason for PRIDE to request that officers not attend their events in uniform. It is essential to comprehend that the actions of a few officers do not necessarily represent the entire Ruralcity Police Service. Thus, the next section provides a necessary consideration of participants' perspectives of the Ruralcity Police Service's past participation in PRIDE, why the participants feel police would want to be present, and additional reasons for the removal of police presence from PRIDE.

LGBTQ+ Understanding of Police Participation in PRIDE

As a way to understand the kind of relationship and interactions between the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community and the Ruralcity police at PRIDE, it is vital to delve into the participants' previous experiences with police before they were asked to attend in civilian clothing. After exploring these responses, I will examine their opinions in response to the question: Why do you think Ruralcity police would want to participate in PRIDE? Insight into this question provides useful information about how members of the LGBTQ+ community perceive their relationship with the Ruralcity police.

From the participants' responses, it appeared that the Ruralcity police were previously invited to participate in PRIDE from its inception, but police chose not to attend the PRIDE events. Both Carmen and Tony recounted this invitation to Ruralcity police:

They [the police] didn't want to be involved for many years; we [the LGTBQ+ community] asked them to actually, and they didn't want to be involved. (Carmen)

It's funny because the police first became part of PRIDE because we [the LGTBQ+ community] invited them. Then we just kept that format and everything we were doing all the different events, and then we kept inviting them. (Tony)

Although police were invited to attend PRIDE events, before they were asked not to participate in uniform, participants recalled that the Ruralcity police did not routinely attend the celebrations. Carmen, Tony, and Crystal explained the police absence from PRIDE:

It was like we've had flag-raising since 2013 like I'm just guessing, but it was a few years before the police were asked to participate. So for two years in between, the police did not come to PRIDE, they had no presence. (Carmen)

...but they [the police] hadn't been participating before that [since the flag-raising in 2013] or since then... (Crystal)

... so other than [the flag-raising ceremony at City Hall], there hadn't been any Ruralcity police in uniforms as part of PRIDE. (Tony)

Participants highlighted that the Ruralcity police were absent from PRIDE celebrations as attendees. However, the participants discussed the presence of

Ruralcity police working at PRIDE, as per the city's by-laws, to supervise and maintain safe conditions for the attendees. As Tony stated:

...but in the past, the only reason there's any involvement is because the by-law said we had to have a police escort for the walk, so we got them to do it for free, and they started charging us in following years.

Both Lynn and Crystal also emphasized that police involvement in PRIDE had traditionally been limited to a working escort capacity:

In my experience is that either they have been like marshalling or like controlling the crowds. (Lynn)

They lead the march because we walk on the road, so the police have to make sure that the roads are safe, so they attend that, but they do that because they are paid to, like a significant amount of money. (Crystal)

Both Tony and Crystal mentioned that the police are paid to provide a measure of safety at the PRIDE event. In these examples, the police are at the PRIDE event not by their own choice, to support the community or to participate as allies, but solely to fulfill their job requirements.

For the most part, the participants described a lack of police presence at Ruralcity PRIDE when invited to participate, and they perceive that Ruralcity police have attended only out of obligation to ensure public safety at the event. The participants perceived these actions by the Ruralcity police as a lack of support or interest in their community. From the participants' standpoint, it appears that the Ruralcity police are not committed to developing a positive and stronger relationship with the local LGBTQ+ community or an understanding of their concerns. Consequently, the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee requested the removal of uniformed police from participating in PRIDE, as LGBTQ+ members feel unsafe in the presence

of police as per Mills, Dion, Thompson-Blum, Borst, and Diemert, (2019) and Wildman, (2017).

Four of the five participants stated that they agreed with the decision to remove uniformed police from Ruralcity PRIDE events because the removal of police presence increases their comfort level at the event. One participant, Tony, was not in favour of the uniformed police removal from PRIDE; he argued that the event is already quite small and that the more diversity and inclusiveness displayed with police presence would be better. He also referenced Black Lives Matter (BLM) in Toronto, who demanded that PRIDE Toronto remove any police representation in PRIDE (Battersby, 2016; The City Center Mirror, 2016). He stated:

That's the whole part that I don't understand what the hell is going on in Ruralcity. Toronto, I get it, with the Black Lives Matter, and they actually had sort of platoons of police marching, not actual platoons, but enough to be a platoon.

Carmen also made explicit acknowledgment of BLM's demand, "We were also listening to what Black Lives Matter had to say out of Toronto; we didn't make our decision on that though, but they started the conversation." As the participants described, the choice to remove the Ruralcity police from PRIDE was not because of BLM's stipulations for PRIDE Toronto, but emerged through conversations with the Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community members, getting their opinions on the subject, and following through with a decision that would best suit their unique circumstance.

In addition to addressing the theme of LGTBQ+ individuals feeling unsafe in police presence, there has been a discussion that the LGTBQ+ community has not been inclusive of people of colour. Although this is far more apparent in Toronto's PRIDE, which lead to BLM's demands for PRIDE Toronto to incorporate more black

performers, black trans women, Indigenous people, and individuals from racialized communities (Battersby, 2016; The City Center, 2016), some of the participants expressed these concerns in addressing the question of uniformed police's removal from Ruralcity PRIDE.

These participants expressed that there were more individuals from marginalized communities present at Ruralcity PRIDE once the police were asked to not participate in uniform and that individuals' overall comfort levels increased when police were no longer visibly present. For instance, Crystal explained:

I think like from my own perspective that first year that the police weren't there, there were, as somebody who attends every single year, there were far, far more Indigenous people, more people of colour than there ever had been. Like, it would have been rare to see a person of colour at PRIDE, and there were lots.

Another participant, Lynn, stated:

I know a lot of people that feel really alienated by sharing space with folks like that [uniformed police officers], so I think that general comfort levels increased with first-time folks.

The participants suggested that the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee was trying to provide a safer, more inclusive space for marginalized individuals. Historically, many PRIDE events have been comfortable spaces for privileged individuals such as police officers and LGBTQ+ persons who are white, middle to upper-class cisgender gays and lesbians (Furman, Singh, Darko, & Wilson 2018). Furman et al., (2018) examines how the concepts of whiteness, blackness, transness, and queerness may be separated through discourse, rather than treated as site of potential intersectionalization. In separating these identities and emphasizing only diverse sexualities at PRIDE, event

organizers and participants may inadvertently create exclusionary spaces that are not sensitive or responsive to the concerns of racially marginalized or indigenous community members.

Some participants specifically discussed the intersectional identities of PRIDE attendees and how PRIDE was attempting to create a safe space for racially marginalized individuals in the LGBTQ+ community. . Lynn explained by deciding to disallow police representation:

It allows people who are most marginalized, so people with really intersectional identities, so like for example racialized people who are experiencing poverty, who might be doing sex work, who identify as part of the queer/trans community to exist in these spaces in safe ways and that's really important for us to not only hold events that are only for really privileged types of folks.

Crystal described her perception of the situation:

So at the point that a PRIDE committee recognizes that there are LGBTQ people who aren't white, that's a first step, but then publically stating that we want to make it safer, for all members of the LGBTQ community, I think is what really moved things forward.

The participants explained that the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee acknowledges the experiences of all members of the local LGBTQ+ community, including those who are racially marginalized, and that requesting the removal of uniformed police from PRIDE was an attempt to create a safer and more inclusive atmosphere.

Although they perceived this decision to be a positive step forward in making Ruralcity PRIDE a safer place for all members of the LGBTQ+ community, some individuals—including members of the LGBTQ+ community—did not support the

decision. Lynn described the larger Ruralcity community's negative reactions to the police removal from PRIDE, saying:

There were a lot of people that came out, especially white people from middle and upper-class backgrounds, who were like actively wanting the police to be there and actually enacted a lot of harm in response to that. So [they] would write like really negative comments on the PRIDE Facebook page or would say really racist things or would just like come into the space with a really like negative attitude and stuff like that.

One participant who did not agree with the decision revealed that he did not attend PRIDE last year because the police were not invited to be there and that his comfort level had dropped as a result. Tony, who is a Caucasian, cisgender gay man, expressed a viewpoint inconsistent with the four female respondents, two of whom have a racialized identity. He stated:

Well, up until last year, it was a 100% comfort level. Last year I didn't attend because of the fiasco around the police 'cause I think they should be there or allowed to be there.

The reactions depicted in the participants' accounts are not new and media reports have noted similar reactions in Toronto and among some members of Toronto's LGBTQ+ community groups. Those individuals who disagree with removing police participation from PRIDE argue that the policy is exclusionary (Paradkar, 2017). This intracommunity controversy apparent in Toronto is also taking place in Ruralcity, adding to the rhetoric surrounding police removal from PRIDE.

Regardless of the current tension around PRIDE's decision to remove police presence, the participants' expressed, overall, a very high comfort level at PRIDE and

PRIDE events throughout all the years they have attended. Participants expressed their sense of belonging at PRIDE:

There are lots of allies around me, and it's not like the only person like myself is there, so it feels nice to have like a backing of similar people behind you.

(Sonya)

So like the very first flag raising, for example at that time, the only person that I knew who was queer was my partner in this town, so when I attended that first event, I was like “Wow, this is amazing!” like there's so many people like us. (Crystal)

[PRIDE, evokes] a really positive feeling around coming together with folks with like similar experiences. (Lynn)

It just feels relaxed and like friends getting together, then, like a huge, but also the parade is really...the atmosphere of the actual parade itself, not just the event, is like its visibility is exciting and celebratory, which I really like.

(Carmen)

Well, usually pretty good, celebratory, but to be festive, to celebrate, to, you know be able to be out and meet people. (Tony)

When I asked participants directly about how they feel when they attended PRIDE as it related to the atmosphere and comfort level, only one participant discussed their discomfort at PRIDE being directly connected to the police not being permitted to participate in uniform. The remaining participants only discussed their opinions toward police participation in PRIDE when asked about it directly.

Finally, I asked participants why they feel that the Ruralcity police would want to participate in PRIDE. A variety of reasons were discussed, including hidden agendas to promote policing, “optics,” and Ruralcity by-laws, but overall, the

dominant response included to show support and to build relationships. These responses suggest that some members of the LGTBQ+ community have hope of building a better relationship with the Ruralcity police:

Hopefully, just to show that they are community partners and to show that they are... that they're trying to reach out like community development.
(Tony)

I would say they would want to participate in PRIDE to gain a better understanding of the LGTBQ community, or even just so that they feel they...I guess give that inclusive feeling to others as well, to kind of make them feel like they are included if they feel like they are subjected to being or looked over or victimized by the Ruralcity police. (Sonya)

I also think that there would be individual officers that may want to participate, as they are members of the LGTBQ+ community 2S+ community, or because they have friends or family, and they feel passionate about advocating for those folks or like participating in PRIDE on like a personal level. (Lynn)

So, I think to the Ruralcity Police Service trying to show that they're more supportive by...I know that when the new police chief started, he came to the first flag-raising. (Carmen)

However, the history of poor police representation at PRIDE raises suspicion among some participants about police motives for wanting to attend. For example, Crystal, expressed that because of the lack of police presence in previous PRIDE events (except for the police chief's attendance), she believed that, "the only reason they want to participate is because they were asked not to."

Ultimately, because this research focuses on the perspectives of LGBTQ+ community members and I did not interview police, I am unable to discuss the Ruralcity police's perspectives on the decision made by the PRIDE Committee. Nor can I comment on their reasons for wanting or not wanting to participate in the Ruralcity PRIDE parade. However, understanding how community members interpret and give meaning to the police actions (in attending or failing to attend PRIDE), provides context to consider the challenges and barriers to improving the relationship between the two groups.

Instances of LGBTQ+ Positive Police Experiences

So far, I have discussed the dominant themes outlined in the interviews that dealt with individual perception of police and discrimination, the symbolic weight of the police uniform, LGBTQ+ participants' experiences of discrimination by the Ruralcity police, and LGBTQ+ perceptions of police with regards to PRIDE participation and involvement. I now want to draw attention to some of the positive experiences with Ruralcity police that the participants chronicled in the interviews.

Three of the interview participants offered positive compliments and expressions of gratitude to Ruralcity's police chief, particularly with respect to his initiatives to encourage officers to attend LGBTQ+ community events and his efforts to respect PRIDE's request for officers to attend events in civilian clothing. These participants respected and praised the police chief for his attempts to understand the concerns of the LGBTQ+ community, and they perceived that he appears to be committed to building and establishing positive relationships with the LGBTQ+ community.

The first year that the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee announced that uniformed police officers would not be permitted to participate in PRIDE, three participants

recollected that the police chief attended PRIDE in civilian clothing. Carmen described, "then the biggest difference to me was just how much I respected the chief for coming in his plain clothes." Crystal shared how she was able to have a one-on-one discussion with the chief about the nature of the police uniform saying:

I had a good conversation with the police chief, actually. He attended PRIDE, the year that PRIDE asked the police not to participate in uniform. He attended in regular clothes, and I walked with him for about 20 minutes of the walk, and we talked.

Lastly, Tony recounted learning that the police chief had attended PRIDE in civilian clothing. He expressed:

As far as I know, only the police chief showed up in a golf shirt. He showed up to show that he was willing to work with the PRIDE committee, but I didn't go. I just saw that in the paper, or it was on Facebook or something.

From these accounts, it is clear that the participants appreciated that Ruralcity's police chief was willing to show solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community by coming to the PRIDE event in civilian clothing. Not only did he express his support for the community by making his presence visible, but he also showed that he is interested in understanding the specific issues that matter to the LGBTQ+ community and is willing to promote a positive working relationship with the group. While I cannot comment on the police chief's motivations for his actions, what is clear is that his actions were noticed and appreciated by members of the LGBTQ+ community, and that they interpret these actions as indicative of his support and allyship to the community.

While many of the previous comments highlight criticisms or concerns with the institution of policing, and the literature is rife with examples of discrimination by

police, the participants in this research did recount positive interactions with Ruralcity police officers. Their perceptions are neither one-sided nor only focused on the negative. Some of the participants further relayed the positive encounters they had with the police chief:

Just the fact that the chief of police would come out to the flag-raising and come out to PRIDE to me was a positive interaction, and I met him a few times, and to me, it was like we're working in tandem. (Tony)

Yes. I have. So, I explained to the police chief many times [about the police uniform]. I've had experiences where they're reaching out and they have been positive. (Carmen)

There were many instances in the interviews where participants complimented the police chief for being open to work and talk with LGBTQ+ members regarding matters dealing with their community. In addition to the positive interactions with the police chief, participants also expressed positive encounters they have had with other police officers. Some of these encounters were focused on how they were treated by police individually in the course of their work, and in these instances, police may not have been aware of their identities as LGBTQ+ people. For example, Sonya described:

I've had one positive experience, but it was just like a group of us in the house, and they [the police] had just come to check on us because there was something going on with the neighbours. So they did seem like they were very concerned for our well-being, especially because we were young, and it didn't seem like they cared or had any interest in the fact that some of us had identified with a different sexual orientation than others.

In other instances, police were actively working in the community and with LGBTQ+ groups to combat discrimination and to improve community relationships. These examples provide a sense that some police are aware of the structural oppressions that exist for LGBTQ+ people and the difficulties that they face in the community. For example, Lynn described:

[There] was an officer who was actively engaged in trying to address a lot of issues around oppression, especially like groups in the local Ruralcity area that would cause harm.

In another example, Crystal discussed the liaison officers who were invited to attend PRIDE organizational meetings and who initially were reluctant to attend in civilian clothing:

Neither of them understood it, in the beginning when they [police officers] were asked not to wear uniforms. And they are not supposed to take their uniform off [during an LGBTQ+ organizational meeting] because they are supposed to if something happens, they have to do something about it. But we talked [and they agreed to come in civilian clothing].

Crystal credits the positive experience she had with Ruralcity police when they were willing to show up to community meetings in civilian clothes, and she perceived this willingness to be receptive to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community as a positive step.

These independent examples suggest that each participant has experienced some positive police interaction. They also exhibit that individuals, whether police officers or LGBTQ+ members, draw meaning from their interactions with others, shaping their perceptions and experiences (Blumer, 1969). While one person cannot be a complete representation of an entire department or a group of people, their actions will reflect on others' perceptions of the group or class of people. The

meaning that one individual gives to another shapes the social interactions that they share, and these meanings and encounters are shared with other people and have an impact on their perceptions as well. Therefore, all interactions between Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community members and police contribute to the shared understanding of the situation and individuals' perceptions of police.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed the participants' perceptions of the interactions between Ruralcity police and the LGTBQ+ community, as well as their experiences of personal encounters they had or witnessed with police in the community. Themes included the participant's perceptions of police and discrimination, the symbolic weight of the police uniform, police discrimination experienced by LGTBQ+ members, LGTBQ+ understandings of police participation in PRIDE, and instances of positive interactions with police.

This research offers an analysis of the reasons for the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee's decision to remove police representation from Ruralcity PRIDE. It is important to recognize that while the decision was not explicitly related to BLM's demands for PRIDE Toronto, the participants did discuss the importance of recognizing that diverse and racialized members of the LGTBQ+ community may be less comfortable with police presence than white, middle-class people who do not face racial discrimination. Ruralcity PRIDE's decision examined LGTBQ+ members' perceptions of police, and how police presence impacted their sense of safety and security. The finding that some members of the LGTBQ+ community feel unsafe around police reinforces claims made by Malloy et al., (2015), The Spec, (2016), Wildman, (2017), McLaughlin, (2018), and Mills et al., (2019). Ultimately, the decision to remove police representation in PRIDE events and celebrations is

understood as a necessary step to make PRIDE events more inclusive and a way to provide safer spaces for more marginal members of the community (Wildman, 2017; Furman et al., 2018). The majority of the participants communicated the importance of creating events “for everyone,” and not just for white, cisgender, middle and upper class people. As such, the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee examined Ruralcity's LGBTQ+ community concerns regarding police participation in PRIDE and made a decision that they believed would improve the inclusivity of the event.

Furthermore, this chapter investigated how individual perceptions shaped the participants' interactions with police officers and how their discreditable identities created a situation in which they were concerned about being targeted or victimized. Most participants communicated that they experience the presence of uniformed police as uncomfortable and intimidating, where the same concern does not seem to exist with the presence of officers in civilian clothing. This realization sparked an analysis of how the participants perceive the police uniform. The analysis of the interactions and relationships between the Ruralcity police and the local LGBTQ+ community discussed in this chapter highlights places where the relationship might be improved. Chapter four further addresses recommendations for strengthening and improving the relationship between police and the LGBTQ+ community.

Chapter 4

Recommendations for Police on Improving Relationships with LGBTQ+ Communities

The literature suggests that in some countries, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, police officers have undergone sensitivity training to better comprehend the concerns and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals and to improve their awareness of the history of oppression they have faced (Williams & Robinson, 2004; Mallory et al., 2015; Dwyer, 2014). As described by Dwyer (2014), one way to understand the relationship between the police and the LGBTQ+ community is to examine the progression of discrimination and how each separate instance shapes the relationship between the two groups that move beyond mere training. Dwyer's (2014) argument recognizes that humans create meaning based on their social interactions and that prior experiences and interactions shape the overall context of the relationship. That is, each new encounter does not occur in a vacuum, devoid of the weight of historical events, but these historical events shape individuals' experiences of the present.

The moments of discrimination highlighted by Dwyer (2014) between the LGBTQ+ community and the police evoke Blumer's (1969) concept of "objects," which he separated into three distinct categories of physical, social, and abstract. Blumer's (1969) three categories of objects provide a useful framework to think through the participants' perceptions of police and the system of policing, and their suggestions of necessary improvements for the Ruralcity police. The construct of "police" is a social object, and the participants identify and interact with police as persons with a specific role, based on their perceptions and the broader perspective of the LGBTQ+ community. Understanding how the physical object of the police

uniform and the abstract object of the system of policing are perceived by minority groups such as racialized, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ communities, in addition to the social object of the officers themselves, allows us to consider the layers of meaning involved in every interaction between an LGBTQ+ person and a police officer.

This chapter will discuss the participants' recommendations for Ruralcity police on improving relationships with the LGBTQ+ community by analyzing the physical, social, and abstract objects of policing through the lens of symbolic interactionism. To understand the context of the participants' recommendations, this analysis incorporates themes relating to the physical object of the police uniform and its symbolic significance, the social objects of police officer training and self-analysis, and the abstract objects of participants' perceptions of the policing system, the discourse surrounding the need to improve police policies for minority groups, and the effect of dominant cultural norms.

Physical Police Representations: Participants Recognize the Symbolic Influence of the Police Uniform

In the previous chapter, I examined the symbolic weight of the police uniform as it related to some of the uncomfortable and intimidating circumstances that LGBTQ+ individuals had with Ruralcity police officers. In this section, I will focus on how participants attach subjective meaning to the physical object of the uniform, and their insights into the kinds of messages that the presence of the police uniform conveys to the LGBTQ+ community.

A critical discussion that arose out of the interviews was the kind of symbolism correlated with the police uniform. From a sociological standpoint, "the uniform serves several functions: it acts as a totem, reveals and conceals statuses, certifies legitimacy, and suppresses individuality" (Joseph & Alex, 1972, p.719).

Further findings from psychological research suggest, "clothing has a powerful impact on how people perceive each other" (Johnson, 2001, p.27). As evident in the literature, the physical police presence and uniform representation cause many LGBTQ+ individuals to feel unsafe (Corteen 2012; The Spec, 2016; McLaughlin, 2018). As such, participants expressed a common perspective on the symbolic nature of the police uniform as it related to the removal of police representation from PRIDE events and everyday interactions that they have had with police officers. Most participants highlighted this point in their responses and advocated that Ruralcity police shed the uniform and representation at LGBTQ+ events. Most participants discussed how they perceive the police uniform as a symbol of insecurity and intimidation.

The following accounts provide instances where participants explained how the police uniform evokes a sense of insecurity in them. In the first example, Crystal explained how members of a local LGBTQ+ advocacy group attempted to share with police officers in attendance how their uniforms carried a discomfoting symbolism for some LGBTQ+ people. She stated:

The two police officers that attend [LGBTQ+] committee [meetings] through lots of conversations understood why they needed to attend not in uniform, and they do [attend in civilian clothes]. *It actually changes the whole dynamic in the room when they become regular people and not people carrying guns.*

Another participant, Carmen, also suggested the importance of the LGBTQ+ community having conversations with the police about shedding the uniform. She said, "from both sides, I think it's having these talks, like continuing with talks and working together, but also not necessarily needing to be in uniform." Carmen continued by expressing her perception of how local police can improve their

relationship with LGBTQ+ community by moving on from superficial physical gestures like showing up at an LGBTQ+ event, to incorporating more sensitivity training and services for all marginalized people including the LGBTQ+ community into their police practices. She explained:

I think police really need to look at how they are treating, not just people of colour, though that is very important, but all marginalized groups and really not just through these token things where you show up one day in uniform in a parade, but actually do some real work to make their services more inclusive and safe for people.

Thus, participants suggest that not only shedding the police uniform at PRIDE events will remove the uneasy feeling experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals but propose that the police also need to be committed to building safer services for marginalized individuals in the community.

In the previous chapter, many participants alluded to the broader LGBTQ+ perception that the police have created harmful spaces of oppression and violence for marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ+ community. As a result, a dominant opinion articulated by participants was that interacting with uniformed officers at PRIDE events forced them to engage with the harmful symbolism attached to the police uniform. As such, participants at PRIDE events welcome police officers who are willing to come as themselves, divorced from their professional identity. Lynn explained:

I think that for those reasons [policing organization caused harm to marginalized communities and resistance to violence upheld by law enforcement], they have asked the police not to participate as an organization

and, therefore, to not participate in uniform. But if they want to attend as themselves, as a human person, then they are totally welcomed to be there.

Sonya expressed that she believed that many PRIDE attendees would be relieved at the absence of uniformed police and that the atmosphere would be more comfortable and relaxed:

I do feel like, for the most part, probably it would make people feel a little bit more comfortable to know there is not just like some looming kind of aura upon them that kind of makes them feel like they have to center themselves that they might be subjected to police abuse.

From these accounts and the literature (Dwyer, 2014), there is evidence to suggest that the physical representation of police through the uniform evokes feelings of harm and insecurity for many LGBTQ+ individuals who have experienced negative police interactions.

However, the participants in this research were clear to differentiate the symbolic referent of the uniform from the individual wearing it. As Tony stated, "the police chief is only the police chief if he is wearing his police outfit, otherwise he's just some guy in a golf shirt." The physical object of the police uniform influences an individual's subjective interpretation of the situation, based on their previous interactions with that object (Blumer, 1969). In these examples, the participants' responses indicated that their perception of the intimidating symbolism tied to the police uniform is validated by further negative experiences while verifying and providing a significant reason for the Ruralcity police to take seriously PRIDE's request for officers to not attend in uniform.

While many LGBTQ+ members express discomfort with the police uniform, this experience is not universal. Although it is less commonly reported in the

literature on LGBTQ+ perceptions of police and police presence, some LGBTQ+ persons feel that the police uniform, for them, evokes a sense of empowerment and safety. Therefore, some LGBTQ+ community members object to the complete removal of police representation in PRIDE—a position that is a minority opinion in this research and media findings (Belec, 2016; Urback, 2016). One of the five participants in this research expressed that he welcomes the police presence at PRIDE and credits his sense of being able to do whatever he wants in life to visible police involvement in LGBTQ+ events.

This participant, Tony, views physical police representation through the uniform and the police presence at PRIDE as empowering and liberating for LGBTQ+ people:

I just want to point out that it is awesome to see this because to me, when I was in my more formative adult years, like my early 20s, and I go to Toronto PRIDE, seeing the military involved and the police I felt I could do whatever I want. To me, I thought yes, good role modelling.

Tony, who identifies as a gay cisgender male, explained how his perception of the visible police and military presentations at PRIDE made him feel that there are available opportunities for law enforcement and community service career paths opened to LGBTQ+ individuals and the positive impact he believed the police presence at PRIDE could have on others identifying as LGBTQ+. Thus, he continues to advocate that the Ruralcity police should have a place at PRIDE.

The symbolic interactionist approach aids in unpacking this discussion of how participants internalize the physical representation of the police uniform. As demonstrated, there are a variety of meanings that have been subjectively interpreted by the participants and communicated within the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community. The

research illustrates how the police uniform and representation evokes a symbol of insecurity, vulnerability, and power among the majority of participants (Mallory et al., 2015). It is also evident, but not widely articulated, that the uniform and police presence are also symbols of empowerment and safety for others (Belec, 2016; Urback, 2016).

Police Officers as Social Beings: Participants' Propositions to Ruralcity Police on Improving their Relationship with The Local LGBTQ+ Community

By considering the police uniform as a physical object with which people interact, we can see that some participants view the uniform as a symbol of intimidation and discomfort, while others find a sense of empowerment and security in it. The narratives from most of the participants emphasized that they felt it was important for Ruralcity police to shed the uniform to participate in PRIDE events and celebrations. In addition to analyzing the physical object of the police uniform and what it represents for the participants and the broader LGBTQ+ community, it is vital to explore the participants' perception of police officers as social beings and their suggestions on how police roles and actions can be improved to offer more inclusive services to the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community.

Opportunities for Police Training on LGBTQ+ Community.

There is a wide variety of literature that covers police officer training for understanding and meeting the personalized requirements of LGBTQ+ individuals (Williams & Robinson, 2004; Dwyer, 2014; Mallory et al., 2015). Moreover, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police's (OACP) Diversity Committee has issued a *Best Practices in Policing and LGBTQ Communities in Ontario*, which is "a resource document for police services across the Province of Ontario" (Kirkup, 2013, p.2). This document is committed to "assisting police services to proactively develop

inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ police personnel and to develop and maintain relationships with members of LGBTQ communities” (Kirkup, 2013, p.2). Although this resource document exists, under the heading of "Police Services/Organizations” neither the municipality of Ruralcity nor well-known Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community organizations are listed (Kirkup, 2013). As this research did not include interviewing Ruralcity police, it is difficult to determine if the Ruralcity Police Service is aware of this document, if they use it as a resource despite the lack of acknowledgement, or if they have composed a similar document tailored to their specific jurisdiction. A search of “LGTBQ+ resource document” and “policing training on the LGTBQ+ community” on the Ruralcity police website generated no results. Therefore, if such materials exist, the public does not have access to them.

However, the participants maintain that there are a variety of training opportunities available for police in the Ruralcity community. For example, a participant outlined that there are opportunities within Ruralcity for police to engage and interact with the local LGTBQ+ community, other than the annual PRIDE events. Lynn expressed:

It would be amazing to see more police engage in the programming that is offered by the community, collectively and individually. There are lots of trainings and events and opportunities that are opened to people coming as themselves and learning and being part of community that I don't think people are actually leveraging or being a part of. So when it comes to just like coming to the PRIDE events, like PRIDE events happen all year along, you know, not just the parade, but that's when the police want to be there— the parade. So what are the other opportunities of community building or relationship building or education?

Lynn suggested that the Ruralcity police are welcome to attend year-round events and training that PRIDE has to offer. These opportunities would allow Ruralcity police to connect with the local LGTBQ+ community in a positive, on-going, and meaningful way.

Tony further proposed that LGTBQ+ organizations in Ruralcity should reach out to the Ruralcity police when they are having specific training sessions on the LGTBQ+ community. He stated:

I think if [the LGTBQ+ Community Group], which is the sort of the founding organization of PRIDE if they went said and "we're doing outreach, and we're doing sensitivity training for the LGTB, is Ruralcity police willing to, you know to have a seminar?" I'm pretty sure they would, unless, their union has organized something like that, because I know a lot of unions do that as well.

The participants' accounts highlight that there are opportunities for Ruralcity police to participate in training within their advocacy groups and community events. However, it is unclear if the Ruralcity police union has organized any specific training on LGTBQ+ issues or if they have participated in any kind of LGTBQ+ training articulated by the participants.

More Exhaustive & Effective Police Officer Training.

One reason for some of the violence, oppression, and homophobia that LGTBQ+ individuals face from police officers is a lack of police education on LGTBQ+ issues (Park & Halawi, 2014). Subsequently, the participants suggested that the Ruralcity Police Service could improve their relationship with the LGTBQ+ community by including more training programs on LGTBQ+ individuals, with specific attention to sensitivity education on the spectrum of sexualities and gender

identities that exist within the community. The participants' responses to the idea of more police training included the following:

I would say probably more training if possible. I know obviously, financial issues are a burden, but I think just letting people be more aware of the different sexualities that exist and how to be more culturally sensitive around the topics might be a good idea. (Sonya)

I think there needs to be more training. It is an hour, you can't really give a good perspective on things for an hour, it's a start. I'm not saying, like I know that they are trying, but like an hour is not enough. (Carmen)

Police definitely need more training. They haven't had nearly enough. They have had training here in town, but it's a one-hour training. (Crystal)

I think that the Ruralcity police need to develop like a very targeted anti-oppression strategy that looks at the ways in which oppression is like manifest and is reproduced within the systems in which they work and provide like really extensive training to everyone of their staff about how this will come up in their work and how the types, the ways in which they respond will either work to actually build community or work to further that oppression. (Lynn)

Two of the four participants referred to the length of the police training being an issue. They both shared that the Ruralcity police did indeed have training on the LGBTQ+ community, but it was only an hour-long, not enough to fully explore points of education and scenarios that the police officers can encounter and experience with the LGBTQ+ community. As such, the participants suggest that police officers could claim that they are aware of LGBTQ+ issues and how to deal with LGBTQ+ matters because they have had the one-hour sensitivity training, yet

continue to uphold heteronormative societal norms behaving in discriminatory or insensitive ways when interacting with LGBTQ+ individuals.

Thus, the participants propose that the Ruralcity police, as an organization, needs to be willing to allocate their time and resources into providing practical training to their officers that does justice to understanding LGBTQ+ issues. Subsequently, police training requires more extensive anti-oppression training, which would consider the systemic role of police in LGBTQ+ oppression.

Moreover, Crystal advocates for a focused level of engagement by police officers during the training and information sessions. She insists “they need to be engaged when they are having training.” Overall, Crystal’s perception of the comprehensiveness of Ruralcity police training is consistent with literature that emphasizes that police require more committed training on LGBTQ+ community topics (Israel et al., 2014; Park & Halawi, 2014; Mallory et al., 2015; Owen et al., 2018).

Crystal provides an example where police officer engagement in LGBTQ+ seminars is vital to understanding individuals belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. She emphasized the trans community’s relationship with the Ruralcity police and how an officer’s level of training may impact the perception of an encounter with a transgender individual. She said:

I mean, if we look at the way police are trained to see, so say they're driving down the street, the way they are trained to see something that might warrant them stopping to check it out, typically also gets missed. So, for a trans person who might not pass fully as the gender they are, then the way that gets perceived by police is that they are up to something and that they're not...do

you know what I mean? I think trans people probably have a very particular relationship with police, policing that is really scary for them.

Bringing forth these issues in a safe, neutral space such as an information session with police could address these scenarios. These sessions, as participants suggest, deliver opportunities for the policing system to adjust or incorporate sensitive, respectful, and meaningful approaches that police officers can use in interactions that could otherwise lead to instances of implicit bias and discrimination. With proper education and examination into LGBTQ+ matters, and in particular transgender individuals, these seminars can assist in changing not only the person's perception of the police but also the police's perception of the transgender person (Nadal, Davidoff, Allicock, Serpe & Erazo, 2017).

Police Officer Self-Awareness.

Another point that the participants recommend to the Ruralcity police is to focus on themselves as individual police officers and become more aware and critical of the issues and oppression that LGBTQ+ individuals face. Specifically, the participants' referred to the Ruralcity police shifting their policing methods to be more attentive to LGBTQ+ community matters while hiring police officers from a wide variety of educational backgrounds, including social justice disciplines.

The participants provided the following examples of their ideas to the Ruralcity Police Service about police officers being more self-aware of their position. Carmen explained her stance:

I just would like to see them have more self-analysis as an officer, even as individuals not just as an organization, but as individual officers. So I just feel like they need to reflect on that a little bit better and be more connected, and I think that's what lacking.

Crystal discussed her perspective, stating:

In my understanding of Ruralcity police is that they are trying to do, they are trying to recruit like potential officers from programs like social work, so they would have a lens of more helping than arresting, which would be helpful.

While Lynn expressed:

It would be really wonderful if there were more folks [police officers] who thought really critically about their roles and say “you know what I could understand how this might create harm, but I also want to participate and learn and be in community, and I actually don't believe that oppression is right”...

According to the participants’ responses, individual police officers need to focus more on the needs of communities they serve and engage with, and understand how their role as a police officer is perceived to a civilian, taking on less of an authoritative persona but one recognized with equity and justice.

Police officer self-awareness and perceptions of marginalized communities including the LGTBQ+ community is an area that has been studied by researchers, (Lumb & Breazeale, 2002; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015), and although some policing services have implemented institutional change for dealing and understanding LGTBQ+ matters (Dwyer, 2014), more work is required. The relationship between the Ruralcity Police Service and the local LGTBQ+ community could benefit from longer and more involved training sessions, as well as engaging individual officers in personal reflection and consideration of their roles in systems of oppression. As such, participants in this research strongly believe that the Ruralcity police need to put more effort into better understanding the local LGTBQ+ community.

Bridging the Gap Between Ruralcity Police & Local LGBTQ+ Students.

A further proposition acknowledged by some participants was incorporating community development programs between the Ruralcity police, and students enrolled in the criminology program at the local campus who may also identify as LGBTQ+. Participants perceive the university campus as a neutral space in which to associate, and as a casual and friendly environment where the Ruralcity police can access and engage further with local LGBTQ+ students. These connective opportunities on campus could potentially lead to improved connections with LGBTQ+ community groups and organizations.

One bisexual participant spoke directly about the lack of awareness and opportunities available for community building and development between the Ruralcity police and LGBTQ+ students. Sonya stated, "I don't think, in my opinion, a lot is done to kind of tie in the Ruralcity police with like the LGBTQ community student population, so I haven't heard much about that." Although there is not a direct connection between the Ruralcity police and straight students or any other group of students on the campus, the participant suggests that incorporating workshops with all students, including LGBTQ+ can begin discussions on the larger issues facing marginalized youth with intersecting identities. Besides the participant's perception regarding the absence between Ruralcity police and the LGBTQ+ student body, she shared her consideration of including more regular interactions with the Ruralcity police that could be organized by either the university or the police department. Sonya revealed:

I haven't had many interactions even just like facilitated interactions with the police at all where they come in and introduce themselves to the community or

try their best to kind of bridge the gap between LGTBQ students and Ruralcity police.

Sonya recommends that the university connect the Ruralcity police with local students through the criminology department, and in turn connect with LGTBQ+ students. The educational institution provides a space where criminology professors could contact the Ruralcity Police Service to host guest speakers from the police department to come in and discuss their perspective on issues affecting youth, while using the opportunity to connect with individual students who are racialized, Indigenous, and LGTBQ+ to understand their experiences and perspectives of the police. For Sonya, the idea is practical because it is not only a valuable learning experience for the students who can apply these scenarios to criminological theory, but the Ruralcity police could gather real-life examples of how students belonging to marginalized groups with intersecting identities interact with police, and implement ideas for formulating and modifying current systemic police resources.

The literature proposes that LGTBQ+ youth experience differential treatment (Dwyer, 2011) and selective victimization (Ventimiglia, 2011) by the police as a direct result of their sexual orientation and gender diversity. Through Sonya's explanation, she recommends that the local university and the Ruralcity Police Service can do more to incorporate these “facilitated interactions” between the criminology student body and the police. These kinds of interactions can be used to help the police better understand the specific circumstances of local LGTBQ+ youth and improve their relationship with not only the LGTBQ+ student population, but also the overall LGTBQ+ community by reducing the stigma attached to those with an LGTBQ+ identity.

To construct these meaningful relationships, another participant, Lynn, spoke mainly about the Ruralcity police connecting with the criminology students who may be prospective candidates for a career in the policing, law enforcement, and criminal justice fields. Lynn described her perspective by saying:

I also think that something that people talk about a lot is that in Ruralcity, for example at the [university] institution, there's the criminology department and these are people, there are lots of people who are students who want to move into a role of being involved in the criminal justice system.

By bridging the gap with students and being more involved in the university student community, Ruralcity police and local students can have discussions about various topics that Lynn outlined in her response:

What is their engagement with these concepts? What is their engagement with Ruralcity more generally? What is their engagement with thinking about the way oppression works in the criminal justice system? If they identify as part of the queer and trans community, what is their engagement with the police, or their experiences as folks who are transient? Those sorts of things, so I think there are some communities we are not actually talking about or paying as much attention to.

From this participant's viewpoint, there is an eagerness to connect the Ruralcity police with all students, including LGTBQ+ youth, who are interested in pursuing a criminological career to begin conversations that have otherwise been suppressed or overlooked.

The literature presents discrepancies and double standards that occur in the criminal justice system (Cole, 1999), while there is “hesitation trusting police officers and court systems due to the hostility and the current systematic practices against

LGTBQ people” (Nadal et al., 2015, p.480). Yet, there is a motivation to work towards inclusion through education (Chatterjee, 2014), and this notion can only be apparent by forming earnest relationships and employing advantageous opportunities to start discussions that will aid in improving the relationship between the Ruralcity police and LGTBQ+ community. In addition, it may be necessary for criminology professors to incorporate more LGTBQ+ issues within their classroom activities and assignments to address this prevalent area and prepare students who may want to pursue a career in law enforcement. By having exposure to these issues in a university setting, the students may be better equipped to handle similar instances they may encounter as future police officers.

Conceptual Notions: Participants’ Perceptions & Ideas of Reshaping the Policing System

To comprehend participants’ suggestions for the Ruralcity police on improving the relationship with the LGTBQ+ community, examining the abstract object of the policing system on minority groups is essential, as it relates to participants’ perspectives of the relationship with local police and highlights issues of concern connected to the Ruralcity LGTBQ+ community. According to Statistics Canada (2018), "the roles and responsibilities of police services have changed over time, creating new challenges in areas such as crime prevention, law enforcement, public assistance, maintenance of public order and responding to emergencies." From this standpoint, it appears that police services have complied with the changes and shifts that have been evident in the present system to enhance policing services. In clarifying this point, the review stated, "as such, police, policy-makers, and the public requires information to monitor and make information-based decisions regarding the administration of policing" (Statistics Canada, 2018). From this statement, there is

evidence to suggest that policing is a system made up of many vital contributors besides police officers.

Police, along with policy-makers and the public, contribute to how policing is manifested within the community. Collective action, inclusive of law enforcement, policy-makers, and the public have the responsibility to oversee that the system of policing is maintaining and improving ways that help in the protection, justice, and fairness of the overall community. There are laws and resources enacted such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects the equality rights of all citizens under Section 15 (Stuart, 2014), as well as the *Best Practices in Policing and LGBTQ Communities in Ontario* document described in the previous section (Kirkup, 2013). The application of such laws and documents are only useful if police follow suit in upholding and implementing what is outlined to protect citizens' rights. There are rules and regulations to protect citizens' rights in law and policing, both nationally and provincially. However, the participants articulated that there are issues within the policing system that need to be changed regarding matters related to minority groups.

The participants expressed their perspectives of the policing system and how it affected their interactions with police. For instance, both Carmen and Lynn exemplify how they characterize individual police officers while revealing this is just one component of their overall experience with the policing institution. The participants describe a similar perspective of police officers when they say:

I don't think being part of the police is synonymous with being a bad person, but I think it's the way the system is set up. It's set up to allow for harm to exist, if you take up that role, despite the fact that rule is set up and constructed in a helping way. (Lynn)

Just more to like the systems things are like, I don't believe that all police are bad, but I do think that there is a problem in our policing system, and that's across the board. So even though some members of different services might be trying really hard, I think it has to be like a really big shift. (Carmen)

The participants' perception of the social roles of police officers and the abstract notion of the policing system appear to be disconnected from one another in terms of viewing police officers through a different lens than the overall policing organization. In solidifying this distinction between the police officers and the policing system, Crystal expressed:

No, it's not the police, it's systemic, it's not the individual police. It's the overall system of policing because I think like if you think about criminals if you think about like the way that police are taught, there's like these are criminals, and these are not criminals. I don't think it's so black and white for people.

Therefore, the meanings that participants attach to the system of policing are different from the meanings they project on to individual police officers.

Subsequently, the participants described how police officers are conditioned to view criminals and attach stereotypical viewpoints to individuals, which are directly related to the methods of policing as a whole. For example, Crystal's perception of police officers is that they are doing their job by following the policing system. As she stated,

I think if you look at why policing was created in the first place, it was to keep Indigenous people in their place, so I would argue that policing is doing its job by upholding, the norms right, like societal norms.

From Crystal's stance, there appears to be an inherent problem within the policing system as it seems to support heteronormative ideals and viewpoints, while it continues to oppress those who are neither white nor have a middle to upper-class socioeconomic status.

The public, including members of the LGBTQ+ community and minority groups, expect that police should carry out their duties impartially and equitably (Rosenbaum, 1994). However, nonpartisanship is not always exercised to the community as “equity issues are at the core of many forms of community policing” (Rosenbaum, 1994, p.5). The police investigation of missing LGBTQ+ individuals in Toronto (Blinch, 2018; Karamali, 2018; Khandaker, 2018) is perceived by marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals as a prime example of the inequities that occur within the policing system, as the victims who went missing were part of a marginal group.

As part of the interview, I asked participants if they had heard about the Toronto police investigation of the Bruce McArthur case, which revolved around the disappearance and murder of eight gay men over a period of seven years. I asked them how hearing about that case affected them as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and if it had an impact on their perceptions of police. The participants' responses reflected the meaning-making associated with both the social and abstract objects of their perceptions of police officers and the policing system in which they operate. For example, Carmen expressed that she believed that the police investigation reflected the unequal social value placed on the lives of more marginal individuals:

It took basically a Caucasian man to go missing before they really stepped up their investigation, at least that's what it appears from the outside. I cannot speak for what was happening internally.

Crystal shared a similar viewpoint:

So many men were missing, and they were all men of colour, and the police were ignoring that for so long, which is what tends to happen. As far as I'm aware, there were multiple complaints and multiple missing person reports that came in and the police just really never investigated until things really broke and now they, they're sort of backpedalling and trying to do lots of work in that area.

From these accounts, the policing system continues to operate for the privileged members of society, emphasizing the inconsistency within the law enforcement sector as it deals with marginalized groups (Cole, 1999).

This idea of police following a system that is constructed for the privileged groups and individuals in society is a common theme that is also manifested in the media's representation of the broader LGBTQ+ community's perspective (Teitel, 2018; National Post, 2018) and found in the literature (Barnes, 2007; O'Conner, 2008). Lynn explained how the police officers view victims and how the system of policing is designed not to believe individuals who are victims of violent crime. She expressed:

I think that a lot of our systems are set up to not believe folks who are survivors of any type of violence, so that doesn't surprise me. I also think that there's lots of narratives around who is a good victim and I can see how like gay men who are going on Grindr might be perceived in a particular way as

promiscuous or is this or is that, and their quote-unquote “victimhood” would be not taken as seriously as other folks.

Lynn's perspective of police responses to LGBTQ+ victims and the rhetoric connected to the type of victims police encounter is linked to the policing system and is the broader outlook exhibited by not only LGBTQ+ persons but individuals reporting certain types of crimes. Wolff and Cokely (2007) conducted a study of the role that law enforcement plays in responding to LGBTQ+ victims and found that the "most common complaint by Helpline callers was inadequate response by the police; there were also numerous callers indicating that they were further victimized at the hand of law enforcement officials" (p.1). This finding mirrored Briones-Robinson, Powers, and Socia (2016), who stated, "victim reluctance to contact law enforcement may arise from perceptions of police bias" (p.1688). Other crimes, such as sexual assaults (Stoll, Lilley & Pinter, 2016) and hate crimes (Perry, 2001; Iganski, 2002), tend to go underreported because victims perceive that the police will be biased and may blame them for their victimization.

Another participant, Tony, suggested that although the police investigation of the McArthur case caused concern and controversy within the LGBTQ+ community, the public does not know all the facts. He maintained that he continues to believe that Ruralcity police and the policing system are impartial saying:

I like to think it's a different time now, and now they are saying like we don't care what race or religion or sexual orientation or gender you are, we're doing, you know, the investigation. So negative stuff usually, usually gets spread like wildfire. I haven't heard anything, so I don't know. So, I'm not saying that it [discrimination] doesn't exist, just not to me.

Although the majority of the LGBTQ+ community suggests that police discrimination exists not only with LGBTQ+ victims tied to the McArthur case (Blinch, 2018), but also in their overall treatment by police (Herek, Cogan, & Gillis, 2002). This participant's perspective illustrated a different subjective reality to the other participants. His outlook upholds the idea that police and the policing organization are providing resources to enact a system that is neutral and nondiscriminatory (Kirkup, 2013) while aligning with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms Section 15 Equality Rights (Stuart, 2014). Thus, an individual's meaning of "objects," whether social or abstract, that are tied to their lived experiences generate a perceived meaning of the social interactions encountered that permit one to create their subjective truth.

Concerning this participant's varying view of the police, it is important to incorporate how intersectionality and positionality may contribute to the alternative opinion of a Caucasian, middle to upper class, cisgender man who also identifies as gay. The intersection of “whiteness and middle-classness and the complications arising from ethnicity enables the exploration of power in relation to the enduring inequities between groups” (Levine-Rasky, 2011, p.239). With this participant reflecting the dominant societal norms, it may not be by chance that his opinion of the police organization is positive and depicts a very different perspective from that of an LGBTQ+ individual with an intersectional identity. As such, “dominant positionality is embedded in intersectionality theory as part of a complex, postmodern identity formation in which- even at the individual level- oppression co-exists alongside domination” (Levine-Rasky, 2011, p.239). Therefore, there can be two individuals with varying intersectional identities, but the dominant positionality can result in the two individuals belonging to the same group to have contrasting views about a particular topic.

Within the literature, it is evident that the relationship between LGBTQ+ individuals and police is a complex aspect of law enforcement (Briones-Robinson et al., 2016). Several studies have found police mistreatment of LGBTQ+ individuals (William & Robinson, 2004; Dwyer, 2010; Nadal et al., 2015; Mallory et al., 2015). Briones-Robinson et al., (2016) states that despite "cultural strides having demonstrated greater acceptance, and legal protections have been extended to sexual minorities, LGBT individuals continue to be victimized [and discriminated by police] as a result of bias against their sexual orientation" (p. 1703). Police discrimination of LGBTQ+ individuals is a common notion that is exhibited by most of the participants interviewed. When talking about the decision made to incorporate the presence of Ruralcity police into PRIDE events, Carmen discussed her viewpoint regarding how police officers are viewed as privileged members of society and how they exercise that power directly or indirectly:

Well, and their privilege and like I think officers need to be able to look at their place in society and how much privilege, I know that word gets used a lot. But how much power and control they have that other people don't have and how that can influence how people see them and how that can make people feel, and it's not their intent, it's not what their intending but that is how they are seen, they are seen as powerful.

From this account, Carmen expresses how police privilege and power can evoke a feeling of insecurity among individuals with intersecting identities, which calls for re-evaluating the systemic structure of the policing institution and the cultural standards upheld by society as it relates to the treatment of marginalized groups.

The participants expressed their perceptions of policing and cultural norms as systemic functions of society that sustain and preserve a heteronormative stance

(Dwyer, 2012). The participants advocated that there needs to be a change in the way that policing is approached with regards to LGBTQ+ matters, and the cultural notions surrounding LGBTQ+ individuals embracing fluidity in their sexual orientations and gender identities. Some of the recommendations for the Ruralcity police that participants emphasized relate to Blumer's (1969) characterization of abstract objects. This section explored the abstract idea of policing on minority groups, which include Indigenous, racialized, and LGBTQ+ individuals with intersecting identities and positionality through the participants' proposals for improving the relationship with the Ruralcity Police Service.

Through the participants' experiences and interactions with police, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system, they have brought forth some of their perceptions for the ways policing can be improved for themselves and their community. Some of these include the following:

I think just letting people be more aware of the different sexualities that exist and how to be more culturally sensitive around the topics might be a good idea just so that there is no preconceived bias when you're coming into anything, and then you can just focus on the issue and not have someone maybe push the case back just because they don't feel necessarily like they want to work on it because they do have like a bias behind them. (Sonya)

I think that the queer community could give the police some ideas of ways that might, things that they would like to see them do. I think they could be more open about that. I feel that the Ruralcity police are opened to hearing, not that would necessarily do it, but I feel like they're open. (Carmen)

I think that one of the things that comes up for me is this idea around like the type of education that police officers are receiving. Like there are ways in which you can identify your bias. There are ways in which you can understand how oppression works. There are ways in which you can be like more sensitive and responsive to these scenarios. There are ways in which you can predict who would be most likely to experience these types of violence. These are all things that like, social justice activists have been doing for time that they can also learn and incorporate and adjust to. So for me, I think that it's just like, there's like basically a lot of work, there's a lot of labour that I think a lot of individual police officers and also like just law enforcement as a broader sector can do to support people. (Lynn)

These narratives outlined some of the ways the participants suggest that Ruralcity police can improve their understanding of the LGTBQ+ community.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the physical, social, and abstract objects and how each participant as “self” developed meaning through their social interactions with these objects to create a subjective truth, I examined how the LGTBQ+ participants proposed suggestions for improving their relationship with the Ruralcity police. LGTBQ+ participants engage with various objects in the social world that can influence and validate their perception of the police. Some factors discussed in this chapter include the physical representation of the police uniform, the social role of the police officer, and the conceptual notion examining the system of policing on minority groups. I explored each indicator, drawing on participants’ perspectives of the Ruralcity Police Service and the participants’ suggestions for how local police can better understand and create a positive relationship with the LGTBQ+ community.

Many of the points analyzed coincide with previous research, such as the feeling of insecurity that the police uniform evokes on LGBTQ+ persons (Corteen, 2012), the need for further police training on LGBTQ+ matters (Park & Halawi, 2014), police connecting with LGBTQ+ youth to reduce victimization (Ventimiglia, 2011), and addressing the heteronormative policing system currently manifested (Dwyer, 2014). An uncommon finding was the feeling of empowerment and security experienced by one participant from the police representation in PRIDE (Belec, 2016; Urback, 2016). However, future research needs to gather the perspective of the Ruralcity Police Service to better understand their LGBTQ+ policing resources on heteronormativity and homonormativity to improve their relationship with the local LGBTQ+ community.

By utilizing a symbolic interactionist framework, I focused on the participants' meanings tied to their interaction with police, and how they perceive that relationship can be improved both personally and collectively in the LGBTQ+ community. The notion of power that police officers and privileged LGBTQ+ members hold is an important finding as it further contextualizes the concepts of intersectionality and positionality, and how the abstract "object" of the policing institution operates within society. Additionally, the participants' accounts provided a snapshot into the perceptions tied to the local LGBTQ+ community, and are, to an extent, a reflection of the overall community. Nevertheless, further research requires a more comprehensive sample of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community with an emphasis on involving participants who identify as trans, two-spirited, and categories outside the standard classifications of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and queer.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The relationship between the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community and the Ruralcity Police Service continues to be a complex and intricate association that mirrors literature and media findings that describe the relationship as moving back and forth between periods of tension from past pain and positive progressions. The lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ participants in this study provide a glimpse into their perceptions of the Ruralcity police, the kinds of interactions the participants have had with the police, and how the police presence and absence at annual Ruralcity PRIDE events impact the participants' sense of well-being. In addition to exploring the participants' perception of the local police, the participants explained their reasoning for the removal of Ruralcity police from their PRIDE event and provided suggestions for ways that the police can develop and enhance a positive connection with the broader LGBTQ+ community.

Answering Research Questions: Findings & Implications

The data collected for this research project was a small sample as I only interviewed five LGBTQ+ participants; nonetheless, the responses provided unique and rich perspectives for analysis. As discussed in the methods chapter, the purpose of this research is to better understand the perceptions that members of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community have about their local police service, which included how they feel about the presence of uniformed officers at PRIDE celebrations. As such, I sought to answer two primary research questions:

1. How do LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and queer) individuals in Ruralcity perceive the local police?

2. How does the presence or absence of uniformed officers at the annual celebrations affect LGBTQ+ individuals' experiences at PRIDE and impact their perceptions of police?

I also answered a secondary research question:

3. What changes do members of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community feel are necessary to improve their relationship with the Ruralcity Police Service?

When examining how LGBTQ+ individuals in Ruralcity perceive the local police, it is necessary to incorporate the concepts of intersectionality and positionality to draw conclusions on how each participant experienced an interaction with Ruralcity police. By analyzing the participants' perceptions through an intersectional lens, I began to recognize how a combination of overlapping social identities such as sexuality, gender, race, age, and socioeconomic status provide viewpoints of oppression, discrimination, or neutrality as it relates to encounters with police officers.

Two participants expressed relatively similar viewpoints relating to their perception of police as not inherently discriminatory toward them. Tony, (age 50), a Caucasian, gay cisgender male of middle to upper socioeconomic status, demonstrates a noticeably different perception of police and the policing system from some of the other participants interviewed. His impartial outlook of the policing institution may be linked to his positionality and is consistent with the dominant societal expectations of power and privilege. For another participant, Carmen (age 39), her perception of policing as a Caucasian, lesbian cisgender woman remains somewhat consistent with Tony's stance; however, her female identity is a relational characteristic that could potentially contribute to systemic discrimination. Although she recognizes the oppression that LGBTQ+ persons face by police, Carmen suggests that her markers of

privilege such as class and race may aid in minimizing police victimization and discrimination.

On the other hand, the additional three participants presented viewpoints of policing that articulate the concern about the inherent systemic bias against LGBTQ+ persons. Crystal (age 40), who mirrors Carmen's identity as a Caucasian, lesbian cisgender woman holds a slightly contrasting perception of police. As an LGBTQ+ individual who experienced first-hand discrimination by Ruralcity police, Crystal perceives the function of policing as maintaining the prominent societal norms of patriarchy and heteronormative privilege. Likewise, Lynn (age 31), a queer, racialized woman, expressed a similar perspective as Crystal of Ruralcity police and the policing organization. Her intersectional identity as a middle-class, racialized, LGBTQ+ female contributes to her opinion that policing as a whole is protective of the core principles of society and tends to oppress, discriminate, and victimize individuals whose identities fall outside the margins of privilege and power. The remaining participant, Sonya (age 20), a biracial, bisexual female, perceives the police as representatives of civilian safety and security, yet still attributes police discrimination to intersectionalized identities and positionality.

Therefore, the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ participants in this research express a broad range of different perceptions of their local police department and the policing institution, which may be the result of their intersecting identities and their positionality in society. Individuals can display similarities in their perceptions of their social reality with those who convey parallel social identities, despite perception being an individualistic and subjective notion.

Another main objective of this research endeavour was to better understand the perceptions that members of the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community have about the

local police including how they feel about the presence or absence of uniformed officers at PRIDE celebrations and events. As such, the participants provided personal and varying reasons for why they believe the decision was made to disallow uniformed police participation in PRIDE. These reasons are comprised of the unsafe feeling LGBTQ+ individuals experience with police presence, the desire to create safe spaces where marginalized communities can express their LGBTQ+ identities, and the recognition of previous research findings in Ruralcity regarding LGBTQ+ experiences of structural violence when accessing healthcare and social services (Wildman, 2017). These varying opinions about the Ruralcity police presence in PRIDE events show the intracommunity controversy that is also present in other cities such as Toronto.

In addition to displaying the continuing issue of police in PRIDE, the comments are also portrayals of an individual's subjective reality. These accounts establish how individuals create different meanings for similar objects such as a police officer, a police uniform, or the policing system as they interact with these objects in the social world. Similar experiences with similar objects will manifest corresponding subjective truths, while differing experiences may encompass contrary viewpoints. As evident, some participants have interacted or encountered similar feelings of insecurity around police, while others are more welcoming to their presence. Ultimately, the broader LGBTQ+ community understands a notion of oppression and victimization of individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ with intersecting identities, and therefore, the Ruralcity PRIDE Committee issued the removal of police presence from PRIDE accordingly.

The final research question analyzes the changes that LGBTQ+ members feel are necessary to improve their relationship with the Ruralcity Police Service. Chapter

four responded to this research question through the application of Blumer's (1969) conceptualization of how an individual as "self" interacts with physical, social, and abstract objects to create meaning in their social environment. Through the physical representation of the police uniform, the social beings of police officers, and abstract notion of the policing system response to minority groups, I examined the participants' responses for the meanings they created as they pertained to each object, to other participants' viewpoints, and the broader perspective conveyed within the LGTBQ+ community.

From this analysis, I was able to obtain a better understanding of how the participants interpret each specific category and how they suggest the aspects of policing that can be advanced to generate a more positive relationship with the Ruralcity police. A common focus of concern for the participants is the symbolic weight of the police uniform and how, depending on an individual's positionality and intersecting identity, it can be viewed as a symbol of security, intimidation, or empowerment. Thus, the participants suggested that the Ruralcity police become more aware of how their uniform is perceived.

Another recommendation for the Ruralcity police is to utilize community-based opportunities for police training on the LGTBQ+ community as an attempt to implement additional police training seminars. Many participants highlighted the need for more effective police training on LGTBQ+ matters. Some participants suggested that the police connect with grass-roots LGTBQ+ organizations in the community or have the police incorporate further training sessions in their department that do justice to LGTBQ+ issues. Without these information sessions, participants believe that Ruralcity police will continue to misunderstand and overlook the local LGTBQ+ community. A third recommendation is to connect the Ruralcity police with Ruralcity

criminology students to discuss issues surrounding youth with intersectional identities in an academic environment. The students can apply criminological theories to scenarios shared by police, while the police can return with information to aid in modifying or implementing police practices that will help marginalized youth. A final recommendation consists of reshaping and adopting more inclusive LGTBQ+ related policing resources. It is unclear if the Ruralcity police have implemented any LGTBQ+ resource documents since I did not interview them, but the participants suggest that the policing institution must enhance its resources to address issues that deal with systemic oppression and discrimination of LGTBQ+ individuals.

These findings demonstrate that there is a disconnect between the LGTBQ+ community and the Ruralcity police, which displays a difference in power and privilege. The LGTBQ+ community is a marginalized group according to societal standards, and experiences structural violence by the policing institution. Moreover, individuals identifying as LGTBQ+ with intersectional identities such as race and class are frequently subjected to further systemic oppression and discrimination.

According to some participants, the policing system continues to endorse dominant societal standards, while upholding violence and oppression for marginalized persons. In an attempt to change cultural and societal viewpoints on people who fall outside of the affluent, white, straight category, marginalized groups such as the LGTBQ+ community voiced their concerns about police treatment by asking for the removal of police presence from their PRIDE celebrations and events. Literature exists on how police services worldwide have applied and incorporated LGTBQ+ police training and programs to become more culturally aware and sensitive to LGTBQ+ matters (Dwyer, 2014; Mallory et al., 2015; Williams & Robinson, 2004). However, I have shown how individual objects of policing construct symbolic

meanings for LGBTQ+ individuals, and participants provided recommendations for the Ruralcity police by suggesting they focus their attention on how each of these policing objects is perceived to provide a more respectful, meaningful, and practicable policing approach for sensitive communities.

The Significance of This Study

The current literature on the LGBTQ+ community does not include the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community with regards to their perception of Ruralcity police and how that perception is affected by the presence or absence of uniformed police at PRIDE, as the police absence at PRIDE is a rather new occurrence within the past five years. Although Ruralcity is quite a small community, with a modest population, LGBTQ+ issues within structural organizations and services situated in larger cities such as Toronto and Hamilton, still exist in less dense areas such as Ruralcity. This is contrary to an argument pointed out by Connor and Okamura (2019) who state, “when urban sexuality scholars do consider the context of the rural, they assume that LGBT persons living in rural settings exist in a very different world where LGBT persons must remain in the closet or try to pass as ‘straight’” (p.3). This reasoning, however, is inconsistent with the findings of this research project, as not only do LGBTQ+ individuals reside in Ruralcity, they are open about their sexual identities, gender diversity, and their experience with systemic oppression and discrimination from structural institutions such as law enforcement.

Despite the decision to remove uniformed police officers from PRIDE beginning in the “big city” of Toronto, it did not take long for smaller communities in less urban settings like Ruralcity to follow suit in their PRIDE festivities. The dominant ideologies of patriarchy and heteronormativity and the intersecting social identities of race, class, sexuality, and gender are not characteristics apparent only in

big cities. Previous research findings regarding safe spaces for people with an LGBTQ+ identity suggests that there are struggles that LGBTQ+ people face when it comes to finding an inclusive space for community socializing because they are situated in smaller communities (Wildman, 2017). Therefore, previous research and this research project indicate that not all LGBTQ+ people live in urban metropolises, so thinking about structural violence and oppression as it relates to one's gender, race, sexual orientation, and class in a smaller city adds a different dimension to our understanding.

Overall, this research project contributes to a broader understanding of how the Ruralcity LGBTQ+ community perceives their local police department and how that perception is affected by the presence or absence of uniformed police at PRIDE. The findings from this research highlight the marginalization that some LGBTQ+ individuals experience from police as they relate to intersecting identities such as gender, race, and class, which are considered society's standards to measure forms of power and privilege. There is evidence to suggest from this research that the most privileged of the LGBTQ+ community, including Caucasian, middle to upper class cisgender gays and lesbians, tend to have a more neutral or positive stance to the policing organization and police presence at PRIDE events. However, LGBTQ+ persons who have an intersectional identity tend to hold contrasting perceptions of police and the policing system.

Recommendations for Future Research & Issues for Further Exploration

In lieu of these determinations, however, my research provides the perspective of only five LGBTQ+ individuals, which does not demonstrate an all-encompassing view of how the broader LGBTQ+ community in Ruralcity perceives the local police. There are numerous sexualities and gender identities that have yet to be addressed in

this type of study, such as individuals identifying as trans, two-spirited, and those who do not identify under the standard classification of LGBTQ+. Future research should develop a more representative sample of LGBTQ+ individuals with intersecting identities to better focus on how gender, sexuality, race, and class contribute to the power dynamics that take place in structural organizations such as the policing system. A further discussion into perceptions of policing regarding privileged LGBTQ+ individuals and marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals is essential to combating the systemic discrimination and structured violence oppressed LGBTQ+ members face. As Wildman (2017) states, “the importance of social movement rethinking and infrastructure building is about inclusion of the whole LGBTQ+ community, ensuring that no one is being left behind, and divides within the LGBTQ+ are eliminated” (p.78). There is an intracommunity divide regarding the presence of police at PRIDE, and the problem stems from various opinions discussed within the broader LGBTQ+ community. Hence, further research on the homonormative issue as it relates to policing and how the perception of Ruralcity police and their presence at PRIDE fits into the broader discourse is a notable area of future study.

Additionally, future studies should focus on talking with the Ruralcity Police Service to understand their perspective of the local LGBTQ+ community through the lens of heteronormativity and homonormativity and examine what training and policing resources they have implemented to utilize regarding LGBTQ+ matters.

Conclusion

As the LGBTQ+ community remains marginalized and misunderstood in society and within the policing system, it is vital to have a thorough and accurate grasp of the lived experiences and encounters that LGBTQ+ individuals face to better

understand their circumstances. The LGBTQ+ community continues to have a problematic relationship with the police, which resulted in the removal of uniformed officers from PRIDE due to the effects of stigmatization.

However, marginalized groups such as the LGBTQ+ community can use their agency to challenge central ideologies and norms of race, sexuality, gender, and class. Change is a gradual process that must begin at the local LGBTQ+ level and within grass-roots organizations that can eventually lead to societal, cultural, and institutional reform. By incorporating the Foucauldian link between knowledge and power, the societal landscape can become refined to a place where marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals can voice their concerns and enact change in structural realms of society such as the policing system.



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

An Exploration of the Ruralcity LGTBQ Community's Perceptions with Ruralcity Police Services: LGTBQ Perceptions of Ruralcity Police & PRIDE Involvement

Are You:
18 years or older
Part of The Ruralcity LGTBQ Community
Ruralcity Resident
Attended The Ruralcity PRIDE parade and/or associated events/celebrations

If you answered yes to the above noted questions you are invited to
volunteer in this study!

You are invited to participate in an interview about your experiences as a member of the Ruralcity LGTBQ community who has attended Ruralcity PRIDE celebrations. I want to learn more about your experiences at the Ruralcity PRIDE parade, and your interactions with Ruralcity police officers; I am particularly interested in how the presence or absence of uniformed police officers affects your sense of well-being. Your comments will be kept anonymous and all information provided will be kept confidential.

In appreciation of your time, you will receive a \$10 gift card from Tim Hortons.

If you are interested in participating in this study or for more information please contact: Master's Student Researcher, Priscilla Ramjit @ ramj7190@mylaurier.ca. Alternatively you may contact the researcher's thesis supervisor, Dr. Stacey Hannem, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Criminology, Wilfrid Laurier University. Email: shannem@wlu.ca Telephone: 519-756-8228 ext. 5785.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board (Reference #5986).

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

An Exploration of Ruralcity LGTBQ Community's Perceptions with Ruralcity Police Services: LGTBQ Perceptions of Ruralcity Police & PRIDE Involvement

You are invited to participate in a study examining Ruralcity LGTBQ community's perceptions of local police services. This research is being conducted by Priscilla Ramjit, Masters Student at Wilfrid Laurier University, supervised by Dr. Stacey Hannem, Associate Professor at Wilfrid Laurier University. This study aims to provide insight into how members of the Ruralcity LGTBQ community feel about the Ruralcity Police Service and their treatment of LGTBQ persons, and how the LGTBQ community understands their relationship with Ruralcity police. An objective of this research is to document LGTBQ persons' perceptions of Ruralcity police and the relationship between PRIDE and the Ruralcity Police Service in order to discuss how the police may better serve the LGTBQ community and how the relationship can be improved or maintained.

You are being invited to participate as a member of the Ruralcity LGTBQ community who has attended the annual Ruralcity PRIDE parade. If you choose to participate you will take part in an interview with the researcher about your experience at the Ruralcity PRIDE parade, your thoughts about police participation in the celebration, and your perception of the Ruralcity Police Service. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted in person at a location where you are comfortable to speak freely. I will be asking questions about your involvement in PRIDE, perceptions of the Ruralcity Police Service, experiences interacting with police, as well as some basic demographic information about yourself (age, gender identity, occupation, etc.). As a gesture of thanks for your time in participating in this research, you will be offered a \$10 gift card for Tim Hortons. If you decide to withdraw from the study prior to its completion, you will still be eligible for the \$10 gift card. In order to ensure that the information you provide is recorded accurately, I will ask your permission to audio-record the interview using a digital voice recorder. If you decline to be recorded, I will take notes on our conversation to record your responses as accurately as possible.

Given the subject of this research, there is a chance that some of the questions may cause you to feel uncomfortable. If at any time during the interview you do not wish to answer a question, you are free to decline to answer. You may also end the interview and withdraw from the study if you wish, at any time, for any reason, without any explanation. There is no consequence to withdrawing your participation in this study. If you withdraw from the study, every attempt will be made to remove your data from the study, and have it destroyed.

All information provided to the researcher for the purposes of this study will be kept strictly confidential and your identity will be protected. The information that you provide will be retained indefinitely by the researcher (Priscilla Ramjit) until they are no longer required for verification of analysis and/or publications. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to signed consent forms containing your name; the interview recordings and transcripts will be kept separately from the consent forms. Electronic material will be stored in password protected files on a secure computer terminal and paper documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office. When the information you have provided is no longer required, all electronic files will be deleted and hard copies of any transcripts or consent forms will be shredded securely.

In order to ensure anonymity, in the written record of the interview we will use a pseudonym in place of your real name and will alter any identifying names, places, or specific events to protect

your identity. You also have the right, if you so choose, to obtain a copy of the transcript of your interview and to delete any information that you do not wish to be used in analysis. Please indicate below if you wish to receive a copy of the transcript and provide a contact email or mailing address.

In writing up the research, I may wish to use (and publish) direct quotes from your interview. If you do not wish to have your exact words quoted (with the safeguards of changed names, etc. mentioned above), you may decline below and still participate in the research. I anticipate that there be will approximately 6-10 participants in this study.

The data will be used by Priscilla Ramjit for publications such as a thesis, conference presentations, or journal articles. I may also make research results and recommendations to the Ruralcity Police Service. If you wish to receive copies of any publication of the research results, please provide me with a mailing address or email that we may use to contact you, or you may contact the researcher (Priscilla Ramjit) at any time to obtain copies. At the conclusion of this project and no later than December 2019, a summary of the research findings will be made available upon request.

If you have questions at any time about the study, or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study please contact the researcher, Priscilla Ramjit at ramj7190@mylaurier.ca. Alternatively you may contact the researcher's thesis supervisor, Dr. Stacey Hannem, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Criminology, Wilfrid Laurier University. Email: shannem@wlu.ca Telephone: 519-756-8228 ext. 5785.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board (Certificate #5986). If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact

Dr. Jayne Kalmar, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-1970, extension 3131 or REBChair@wlu.ca.

Please feel free to ask the interviewer any questions that you may have about this research. If you wish to participate in this study, please sign the following statement of consent: (You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep for your records).

CONSENT

I, (print name) _____, have read and understand the above information about the study of the Ruralcity LGBTQ community's perceptions of Ruralcity Police Services being conducted by Masters Student Priscilla Ramjit of Wilfrid Laurier University. I have received a copy of this form and I agree to participate in this study, in accordance with the terms set out above.

Consent & Privacy Options

Yes No

I consent to the interview being recorded with a digital voice recorder.

I agree that anonymous direct quotations from this interview may be used in publications.

I wish to review the final transcript of the interview and/or approve the use of quotations in publications. (If YES, please provide contact info below).

I agree to allow follow-up contact by the researchers for the purpose of clarification.

Follow-up contact phone number and/or email address:

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

Introduction

I am conducting this research in order to better understand how the LGBTQ community in Ruralcity perceives their relationship and encounters with the Ruralcity Police Service, and whether and how the relationship can be improved. In addition, I would like to understand how the Ruralcity LGBTQ community feels about police participation in the Ruralcity PRIDE celebrations.

The interview guide is divided into three categories.

PRIDE Involvement

- 1) How long have you lived in Ruralcity?
- 2) How often do you attend the annual Ruralcity PRIDE parade?
- 3) How do you feel when you attend?
 - a. What is the atmosphere like?
 - b. What is your level of comfort?
- 4) Why, in your opinion, do you think Ruralcity police would want to participate in PRIDE?
 - a. Does their presence change the way that you experience the atmosphere at PRIDE?
 - b. What are the actions and behaviours of the Ruralcity police at PRIDE?
- 5) Were you aware that the PRIDE organizing committee asked the Ruralcity police not to participate in the PRIDE festivities in uniform last summer?
 - a. If yes, how were you made aware of this request?
 - b. Why, in your opinion, do you feel they were asked to not participate in uniform?
- 6) How do you feel about PRIDE's decision to ask officers not to attend in uniform?
 - a. How did the lack of police presence impact your comfort level and attendance?
- 7) How did you feel about the fact that the Ruralcity police were still able to participate as long as they wore civilian clothing?
 - a. Did it make a difference in the way you participated in the parade?

Before leaving this section, is there anything you would like to add about your experience with PRIDE and the police involvement, or anything else related to this issue?

Police Perception

I'd like to ask you about your experiences with the Ruralcity police, specifically if you have had an interaction or personal encounter with them.

- 1) Research conducted in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States suggest that some LGBTQ persons report being discriminated by police because they

identify as LGBTQ, have you experienced this sort of thing by a Ruralcity police officer?

- a. If yes, could you please discuss this?
- b. If yes, how do you deal with this?
- c. *If required, do you report this? To whom?*

2) Have you or anyone you know who identifies as member of the LGBTQ community ever turned to the Ruralcity police when victimized?

- a. If yes, what was the response?
- b. If no, why not?

3) Have you ever had a positive experience with a Ruralcity police officer? If so, can you tell me about that experience?

4) Have you heard about the on-going Bruce McArthur case involving LGBTQ individuals who were murdered in Toronto, and the police investigation tied with it?

- a. How does hearing about this case as a member of the LGBTQ community affect you?
- b. Does it affect your perceptions of the Ruralcity police?

Before leaving this section, is there anything you would like to add about your relationship with the Ruralcity police?

Demographics

Thank you for your responses so far – we’re getting near to the end. I would just like to clarify so personal information about you: [Questions may not be asked if participant has already provided information indirectly]

- 1) How do you self-identify? (What is your gender identity and sexual orientation?)
- 2) How old are you?
- 3) What is your ethnic background?
- 4) What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- 5) What is your occupation?

Concluding Thoughts/Wrap-up

This is the final section of the interview. Here I am asking you to take a step back and think about these issues more broadly.

- 1) We have discussed a lot of issues and circumstances between the LGBTQ community and the Ruralcity police. Are there any issues or concerns that I have missed? If yes, could you please discuss them?
- 2) What parts of the relationship between the LGBTQ community and the Ruralcity police are you satisfied with?
 - a. What are you not satisfied with?
- 3) What changes do you believe could improve the relationship between the LGBTQ community and the Ruralcity police? For example, what can the

Ruralcity police and/or the Ruralcity LGTBQ community do to improve the current relationship?

Thank you for your time and participation in this research study. If you would like to provide any feedback that could improve the interview process, the questions asked, or the overall experience, it would be greatly appreciated.

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