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### **Settlement Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Newcomers in BC**

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# **Metropolis British Columbia**

## ***Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity***

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### **SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES OF LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL NEWCOMERS IN BC**

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**ABSTRACT**

Canada has a highly successful multicultural policy supporting the integration of newcomers into society; its federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial human rights codes recognize the rights of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) citizens to full inclusion in society. While the importance of addressing settlement service needs specific to racial minority, female, and young newcomers is recognized, those of LGB migrants are largely overlooked. In addition to having health and social concerns similar to those of heterosexual people, LGB individuals may also experience isolation and discrimination related to their sexual orientation. Relevant to the 'Welcoming Communities' policy priority, this paper reports on a Metropolis BC-funded study of settlement experiences of LGB immigrants and refugees in British Columbia. A qualitative descriptive approach was used to deepen understanding of LGB newcomers' settlement experiences in BC and of their perceptions of how their needs could be met by settlement agencies, to explore service providers' views of the needs of these populations and to develop insights into how LGB organizations could be more welcoming of newcomers. LGB participants were recruited from three cities of various sizes in British Columbia, partly on the basis that people living in larger cities generally have more welcoming attitudes regarding same-sex sexual orientation than people in smaller towns and rural areas. Interviews were conducted with a total of 87 participants, 22 of whom were LGB newcomers or relatives of non-heterosexual immigrants (three fell in the latter category), 40 of whom were service providers associated with settlement agencies, and 25 of whom were members of LGB-specific community organizations. Data were analyzed using an intersectional lens. Findings revealed the complexity of identifying as LGB for newcomers and highlighted experiences of lack of safety, isolation, and exclusion, particularly in smaller communities. Differences between newcomers' and service providers' perceptions of need also surfaced. Implications of findings for settlement service policies and programs and for increased collaboration between settlement services and LGB collaboration are identified.

## INTRODUCTION

Canada's federal government has often recognized the significant role of immigration in contemporary Canadian society. Indeed, a 2008 parliamentary background paper acknowledges that Canada has historically seen itself as a nation of immigrants and that immigration policy continues to reflect economic, social, and humanitarian objectives legislated by the federal government (Parliament of Canada 2008). Given the important role of immigration in Canadian society, as well as the challenges that immigrants and refugees experience in transitioning and adjusting to life in Canada (Canadian Council for Refugees 1998), attempts have been made to study the settlement needs of diverse newcomer groups, including those specific to poor, female, non-white and young immigrants and refugees (Omidvar and Richmond 2005). In spite of efforts to recognize and address experiences among various newcomer groups, however, few attempts have been made to study the needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) newcomers (O'Neill and Sproule 2011). In addition to facing challenges similar to those encountered by many other immigrants and refugees, including discrimination related to race and ethnicity, LGB newcomers are likely to encounter prejudice associated with their sexual orientation, both within their ethnic communities and throughout society at large.

In this paper, we discuss findings of a qualitative study designed to explore the settlement experiences and needs of LGB newcomers in British Columbia. We first offer an overview of contextual factors and relevant literature that have together provided a basis for conducting this investigation. Following this discussion, we outline methodological issues associated with undertaking this inquiry and then discuss the findings arising from the research process.

Finally, we provide an analysis of these findings, specifically in relation to existing policy and research on settlement, and conclude with implications of this study for policy development, service provision, and future inquiry.

## MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Settlement, in the context of this study, refers to processes of adaptation and integration among those who relocate permanently to Canada from another nation state under varying circumstances. Accordingly, settlement services are defined as comprising the broad range of resources mandated to facilitate these two processes for newcomers arriving in Canada, including those providing language training, assistance with labour market integration, individual and family counselling, referrals to health and social services, and language translation and interpretation services (Integration-Net 2003). It is important to note that although settlement services are typically intended to address the needs of newcomers when they first arrive in Canada, the settlement process has often been described as a lifelong endeavour involving issues often not addressed by formal systems of support, and the settlement needs of newcomers have therefore been said to regularly extend beyond the scope of assistance offered through programs intended for this population (Mwarigha 2002; Omidvar and Richmond 2005). As a result, in this paper, we take account of the full range of experiences and needs associated with newcomers' adaptation and integration processes in discussing phenomena related to "settlement," the realities of which may or may not fall within the mandates of existing settlement organizations.

## IMMIGRATION AND LGB ISSUES: THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

Given the important role of policy in shaping the settlement experiences of newcomers in Canada, we start our overview of relevant literature with an overview of policy related to both immigration and sexuality in Canada. We begin with an outline of issues related to immigration in Canada, then explore the political and legislative contexts surrounding issues of sexuality in this jurisdiction, and thereafter discuss possible interrelationships between both areas of policy. Using this context as a frame of reference, we finally describe the limited attempts already made at studying the settlement experiences of LGB newcomers in Canada.

### *Immigration Policy in Canada*

Canada's legislative framework for immigration, the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (s.c. 2001, c. 27)*, outlines three primary objectives on which the federal immigration program is premised. The first of these aims, described broadly as "economic," refers to Canada's goal of attracting skilled workers and business immigrants who may contribute to the country's economic growth. The second objective, delineated as "social," pertains to the federal mandate of enabling blood-related family members to accompany – or to be reunited with – principal immigration applicants. The final goal, which is described as "humanitarian," relates to Canada's commitment to offer protection to individuals fleeing persecution in their countries of origin, or to other persons considered to be in need of resettlement (Parliament of Canada 2008).

In light of the distinct objectives associated with the federal immigration program, newcomers to Canada are said to fall into three broad categories

that respectively relate to these aims: economic class immigrants (including skilled workers and business immigrants), family class immigrants, and refugees and other asylum seekers. Economic class immigrants comprised the largest proportion of newcomers in 2007 at approximately 55%, whereas family class newcomers and asylum seekers each represented approximately 28% and 12% of new residents, respectively (Parliament of Canada 2008). Given the relatively large proportion of economic class immigrants, and therefore the significant number of newcomers who are expected to contribute to Canada's labour market following their arrival, the federal government recognizes the importance of supporting settlement programs mandated to foster the integration of immigrants into mainstream Canadian society, particularly the Canadian labour force. Indeed, in a 2009 report by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the federal department acknowledged the funding of settlement programs, including language training and employment orientation services delivered by non-profit organizations, as areas of priority.

Despite the apparent relevance of supporting settlement services as a whole, however, scholars have indicated that diverse newcomer groups may each have differing needs relating to integration, and that close examination of these unique needs may therefore be required to render settlement programs more responsive and effective (Waters 2011). For instance, Ngo (2009), in his study of various Canadian programs and services geared at urban immigrant youth, concluded that these initiatives often overlook issues specific to younger newcomers, such as acculturation and identity formation, and that there may therefore exist a need to closely involve immigrant youth in identifying their own needs and claiming their rights in the context of settlement. Studies of other newcomer groups, for instance those addressing the experiences of immigrant women and diverse racialized groups (Dyck and McLaren

2004; Omidvar and Richmond 2005; Waters 2011), have all highlighted that indeed “settlement” issues may be unique, depending on the social locations of newcomers, and therefore the development of effective immigrant services may be contingent on appropriately identifying experiences and needs of specific groups.

Interestingly, aside from examining distinctions in settlement experiences across diverse groups of newcomers, some scholars have also addressed differences in adaptation and integration processes among newcomers who settle in non-metropolitan centres in Canada. For instance, Drolet and Robertson (2011) have noted that newcomers in smaller communities may encounter greater challenges in overcoming education and employment-related barriers during the settlement process, at least partly due to a shortage of community programs and initiatives intended to welcome newcomers in these settings. Accordingly, it is possible to suggest that settlement experiences and needs may vary not only as a function of identity-based factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, but also according to city size and physical location.

Though, indeed, there has been a growing recognition of diversity in settlement experiences among immigrants and refugees, both in relation to issues of social location (e.g., women’s experiences) and geopolitical context, there have been few attempts at examining the settlement needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) newcomers as already noted (O’Neill and Sproule 2011). Findings of the limited efforts made to study these phenomena will be highlighted shortly, but prior to this discussion, we wish to provide an overview of issues surrounding sexual orientation in Canada, particularly as they relate to the experiences of LGB newcomers.

*Homophobia, Heterosexism, and Immigration in Canada*

Whereas the term “homophobia” has grown over time to broadly refer to discrimination or prejudice against sexual minority groups (Dermer, Smith and Barton 2010; Herek 2000), the construct of heterosexism has been developed to describe the systemic privileging of heterosexuality; the ideological premise that “straightness” is ideal and preferred (Herek 2004; Walls 2008). Similar to many other jurisdictions across the world, expressions of homophobia and heterosexism have remained pervasive in Canada, despite a range of constitutional and legislative reforms that have arisen to address these realities. Although Canada’s *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* has been interpreted to include issues of sexual orientation in its scope of recognized protections, and full marriage rights are now afforded same-sex couples in all provincial and territorial jurisdictions across the nation, sexual minorities in Canada continue to encounter sexuality-based discrimination. For example, police reports indicate that hate crimes continue to be committed against LGBT people and that they are the most violent of those perpetrated against all minorities (Dowden and Brennan 2012).

Nonetheless, due to the legal protections currently available to LGB people residing in Canada, it is important to note that the social context of non-heterosexuals in this country differs to some extent from that of sexual minorities located in other regions of the world. For instance, because fundamental protections and human rights are still not afforded to non-heterosexuals in the majority of non-Canadian jurisdictions (GLAD 2010), it is necessary to emphasize that Canadian LGB groups may experience the realities of homophobia and heterosexism differently than their non-heterosexual counterparts in other

regions of the world, whose experiences may more directly reflect the lack of legislative recognition and protection.

Due likely to the social and legal disparities that exist between Canada and a large number of other countries, specifically in relation to issues of sexual orientation, the Canadian refugee claims process is an area in which immigration and sexuality-related issues overlap at the policy level. Specifically, given Canada's mandate to protect individuals fleeing persecution in other jurisdictions, the Canadian federal government regularly receives refugee claims from persons who experience discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in their countries of origin and frequently validates the legitimacy of these claims. CIC (2011a) formally recognizes sexuality-based persecution as well-founded grounds for pursuing refugee status and, accordingly, acknowledges one example of an explicit relationship between immigration policy and issues surrounding sexual orientation.

Aside from the refugee claims process, however, a second area of policy in which immigration and sexuality issues often intersect includes sponsorship, specifically in relation to same-sex partners of Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Indeed, Citizenship and Immigration Canada now recognizes same-sex partners of Canadians as potentially eligible candidates for sponsorship, provided that relationships between sponsors and prospective newcomers are marriages recognized by law in Canada or elsewhere, are common-law relationships of 12 consecutive months or longer, or are "conjugal relationships" in which exceptional circumstances prevent cohabitation. Interestingly, in stipulating the conditions of sponsorship, this federal department acknowledges that barriers to the attainment of common-law status and, therefore, the legitimate presence of "conjugal relationships" may be present among

same-sex couples whose partnerships are not formally recognized in jurisdictions other than Canada (CIC 2011b).

#### LITERATURE ON CANADIAN LGB NEWCOMERS

Though, as already noted, few studies have focused on the context and settlement experiences of LGB newcomers, there exists, nonetheless, a small body of literature related to this area. Perhaps the most significant subset of this field of inquiry includes research on the circumstances and experiences of LGB-identified refugees fleeing persecution in their countries of origin, a realm of inquiry, as already noted, in which overlaps between sexuality-related issues and immigration policy are evident. In Canada, a number of studies have specifically explored psychological, social, and legal barriers that sexual minority refugee claimants regularly encounter upon their arrival in Canada, often following experiences of violence and trauma (Jordan 2010; Lee and Brotman 2011; Parrish 2006).

Though some Canadian writers (LaViolette 1997; Rehaag 2008) have exclusively focused on how the legitimacy of sexuality-based refugee claims is often assessed against Western 'folk' conceptualizations of gender and sexual orientation in Canada, thereby revealing the confluence of racism and heterosexism embedded in the legal structure of the refugee determination system, others have broadened their analysis beyond the realm of legal scholarship. Some (Jordan 2010; Lee and Brotman 2011) have instead argued that Canadian LGB refugees' experiences are often marked by complex interactions between dominant structures that organize marginalized dimensions of race and sexuality pertaining to their lives and asylum seekers' own subjective constructions of their racial/cultural, sexual, and gender identities. For instance, in their critical examination of the experiences of Canadian non-het-

erosexual and transgender asylum seekers, Lee and Brotman found that study of these realities required attention both to processes through which complex structural forces shaped the lives of these newcomers and to the ways that refugees themselves constructed subjectivities that challenged these realities. They argued that attention to these processes could provide advocates and policymakers with greater insight into how refugees actually experience their lives in Canada, and how systemic legislative and policy changes may be made, particularly to an arguably rigid refugee determination process, with an aim of better reflecting the social needs and human rights of these asylum-seeking newcomers.

Aside from research on the context and experiences of non-heterosexual refugees, there exists a smaller body of literature related to settlement among LGB newcomers that is primarily concerned with sponsorship and other issues affecting same-sex couples. Though works examining the Canadian immigration context of same-sex couples are limited (LaViolette 2004), or predominantly concerned with the political and legal frameworks surrounding this relatively recent phenomenon (Ho and Rolfe 2011), they are important given that sponsorship and family reunification are other areas in which sexuality and immigration policy interface. LaViolette in particular has studied legal barriers affecting same-sex couples who either intend to immigrate together from a foreign country, or who wish to use Canada's sponsorship program for the purpose of reunification. Although her piece was written prior to the federal recognition of same-sex marriage in Canada, some of her analyses continue to hold relevance, including the arguably discriminatory need for non-cohabiting same-sex partners to provide substantial proof of sexuality-based persecution in their countries of origin, in order to legitimately co-apply for permanent residency as "conjugal" partners. Regardless, this very limited

body of literature is primarily focused on legal issues pertaining to the recognition of same-sex couples in the context of immigration and sponsorship and, accordingly, provides little insight into the experiences of settlement among partnered LGB newcomers, or those arriving in Canada as sponsored relatives of same-sex citizens or permanent residents.

Interestingly, the two aforementioned bodies of literature pertain to the experiences of newcomers who arrive in Canada primarily under “humanitarian” and “social” components of the country’s immigration program, respectively. Although, as noted earlier, immigration associated with the “economic” element of the framework represents perhaps the greatest proportion of new arrivals and is consequently recognized as an area for which the provision of settlement services is prioritized (CIC 2009), the experiences of LGB newcomers who fall into this broad category are yet to be fully investigated. Arguably, since a large number of non-heterosexual new arrivals may be neither refugees nor persons affected by policies on spousal recognition, a substantive proportion of newcomers may have been overlooked in existing literature on immigration of sexual minorities. Accordingly, though we use the term “newcomers” in this study to refer to the full array of new arrivals in Canada (including refugees), we are primarily concerned with the experiences and needs of immigrants who access settlement services, a significant portion of whom are likely to be “economic” or skilled newcomers. Indeed, because we use the term “settlement services” to refer to language, education, and employment programs designed to facilitate the integration of new immigrants into Canadian society and the labour market (CIC 2009), our study focus was on all LGB settlement service users, including refugees, “family class” immigrants, and the largely overlooked category of skilled workers. In the section that follows, we discuss our primary research objective of examining the

settlement experiences and needs of LGB newcomers and outline the design of this qualitative study. Before engaging in this discussion, however, we wish to critically examine our reliance on Western terminology to describe alternate sexual identities ("LGB") throughout this piece of inquiry, particularly as writers of past research have problematized the use of such language to study issues of sexuality and sexual identity in varying cultural contexts (O'Neill and Sproule 2011).

#### IDENTIFIERS OF SEXUAL ATTRACTION, SEXUALITY, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION USED IN THIS STUDY

We use the terms "lesbian," "gay," and "bisexual" (or "LGB") to refer specifically to variations of same-sex sexual attraction. Though we employ this language for the purpose of convenience, we do so with the recognition that these terms may not represent conceptualizations of same-sex sexual attraction found across a multitude of cultural contexts. Writers in the field of sexuality studies have contended that labelling of non-heteronormative sexual behaviour is shaped by discourses that are culturally and historically bound and have thus cautioned that any culturally specific term or label may not be universally applied (Katz 1976; Turner 2000).

Several examples exist to illustrate the potential inadequacy of the terms "LGB" in appropriately describing same-sex sexual attraction, particularly in non-Western contexts. For instance, Wong (2011) has argued that although the term "gay" was first created by self-identifying homosexual groups in the United States for the purpose of celebrating an otherwise marginalized expression of sexuality, its introduction into the culture of Hong Kong took place in an entirely different context. She has demonstrated, specifically, that since the term "*gei*" was initially discussed in mainstream Hong Kong media in the

1970s when a police officer was suspected of “deviant” homosexual behaviour, the term became laden with pejorative connotations and did not align itself with the grassroots sentiments of “gay” activism developed in the West. Instead of the term “gay,” another word (“tongzhi” or “comrade”) was created by self-identifying non-heterosexuals in Hong Kong to refer more positively to persons with same-sex attraction. Similarly, Shannahan (2010) has warned that the meanings often associated with the terms “LGB” may not necessarily translate appropriately to Muslim notions of non-heterosexuality and that alternate (and theologically based) interpretations of sexuality may therefore be necessary to account for queer visibility in Islamic contexts.

In light of the above caveats, we use the terms “LGB” without assuming that these terms apply equally across all dimensions of sexual attraction and orientation found in varying cultural realms of reality. Rather, we employ this language cautiously for the purpose of convenience, not only to attempt to describe complex sexual phenomena, but also to invoke these issues in words that may be familiar to readers of the English language. It is important to note, however, that we did not use these terms during the process of recruiting participants for this study, particularly in order to include respondents not identifying with “LGB” terminology within the scope of this study. During this phase of the study, we instead relied on descriptors such as “same-sex attracted.”

## METHODS

The primary objective of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) newcomers in the province of British Columbia and, in turn, to provide insight into the settlement needs of this population. Participants included LGB newcomers, service providers employed

at settlement agencies, as well as representatives of community-based LGB organizations: They were recruited from three urban centres in the province (small, medium, and large, as defined by Statistics Canada<sup>1</sup>) to take into account possible differences in settlement experiences across cities of varying sizes. All respondents participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews or focus groups designed to gain insight into the experiences and potential needs of LGB newcomers. A qualitative descriptive approach (Sandelowski 2000), loosely informed by tenets of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998), was used to gather and analyze data, the contents of which were in turn situated within the limited body of existing literature on LGB immigration already described. In this section, we further describe the design of the study and outline methodological issues that arose in the process of inquiry.

### *Participants*

A total of 87 participants took part in the study, 22 of whom were LGB newcomers or relatives of non-heterosexual immigrants (three fell in the latter category), 40 of whom were service providers associated with settlement agencies, and 25 of whom were members of LGB-specific community organizations. In order to meet eligibility criteria for participation in the study, newcomers were required to be adults, to have some degree of same-sex sexual attraction (or to be related to a newcomer with same-sex sexual attraction), to have relative command of the English language, to identify as newcomers (regardless of current immigration, refugee, or citizenship status), and to have been born in a country other than Canada. Individuals belonging to the two other respondent groups were required to be adults employed at immigrant settlement agencies, or associated with LGB organizations at the

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<sup>1</sup> Small population centres: one thousand to thirty thousand, medium population centres: thirty thousand to one hundred thousand; large populations centres: over one hundred thousand.

time of their participation in the study, respectively, in addition to having adequate command of the English language. Though a large proportion of the participants was based in a large urban centre, all respondent groups contained representatives from each of the three settings being examined (urban, semi-urban, and smaller centre). LGB immigrants and refugees participating in the study had come to Canada from an array of countries, including Iran, Mexico, Ukraine, China, Malaysia, and Israel.

Given specific eligibility criteria outlined for participation in the study, the recruitment process was based on a purposeful approach to sampling. This method, which is often described as a deliberate selection of respondents who possess defined characteristics (Maxwell, 2013), enabled the recruitment of population groups who would offer particular insight into the settlement needs and experiences of LGB newcomers. Participants meeting eligibility criteria were recruited primarily with assistance from settlement agencies, LGB organizations, and our personal contacts. Snowball sampling was used to supplement this method, particularly in order to encourage participation of LGB newcomers with little experience accessing formal support services, as well as those who would likely not acknowledge their identification with non-heterosexuality in agency settings supporting the recruitment process. Indeed, given issues of stigma often affecting sexual minority newcomers (Lee and Brotman 2011), the use of snowball sampling was, in part, intended to address the need for discretion and confidentiality among newcomer participants with concerns of having their same-sex sexual attraction publicly revealed.

### *Data Collection*

While newcomer participants took part in individual semi-structured interviews intended to explore the experiences and needs of LGB immigrants and refugees, most respondents associated with settlement agencies and LGB organizations (with the exception of one participant) were interviewed in focus groups, comprised of two to eleven participants (see interview guides in appendices A, B and C). In both individual and focus group interviews, issues specific to LGB newcomers were explored with questions addressing the following themes: meanings of same-sex sexual orientation and associated identifiers (e.g., "gay," "lesbian," and other terms) held by participants, issues and possible settlement needs of LGB newcomers, experiences either accessing or delivering settlement services in relation to issues of same-sex sexual orientation (depending on the participant group being interviewed), as well as aspects of settlement services that were either helpful or ineffective for LGB newcomers. In addition to the above, participants associated with settlement agencies and LGB organizations were asked to provide insight into the relevance of considering the interface of sexual and cultural diversity in the context of program planning and service delivery, the possible knowledge base and skill set required for serving LGB newcomers, organizational factors that either welcome or deter non-heterosexual newcomers in accessing services, and factors that may have historically affected responses to LGB immigrants and refugees in organizational settings.

As already noted, most participants associated with settlement agencies and LGB organizations participated in focus group versus individual interviews. Because focus groups each contained members of only one social service setting or organization at any given time, these interviews provided a means for

examining organizational perspectives on the experiences of LGB newcomers within agency contexts mandated to serve newcomers and sexuality minority groups. Indeed, although individual interviews are often considered an appropriate means of collecting rich, in-depth data relating to specific events or experiences, focus groups are favoured when interaction among members of a respondent group is likely to yield information best suited to addressing a particular research objective, including, for instance, the study of organizational context (Creswell 2013). Importantly, both focus group and individual interviews were transcribed, and copies of the transcripts were sent to all participants, primarily in order to enable respondents to review and clarify content. This process of verification, which is aligned with numerous approaches to qualitative research, constituted one strategy for strengthening the credibility of findings.

### *Data Analysis*

Qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) was used to examine and conceptualize the data. This method is characterized by identifying patterns and regularities that appear in a body of qualitative data, then summarizing the contents of this information in strictly descriptive terms; it is considered the least interpretive of approaches to analyzing data in qualitative research (Sandelowski 2000). In the context of this study, initial patterns were located by first categorizing raw data into response sets associated with each of the areas under investigation in the data collection process, as specified in the interview protocol, and then by re-reading these response sets continuously and identifying themes within these categories. The initial coding system (e.g., dividing data into response sets aligned with questions originally under study) was then modified, based on emergent themes, in order to iden-

tify and account for data that may not have easily been categorized using the questions investigated in the study. Sandelowski has specified that within qualitative descriptive research, pre-existing coding processes may initially be used to conceptualize raw data, on the condition that these systems of organization are then modified reflexively to account for emergent patterns in the data.

Though initially, themes were extrapolated from the full range of raw data, measures were then taken to separately analyze data associated with each of the three participant groups. First, themes that were common across all respondent groups were examined within the context of each participant category, in order to not only enable cross-comparison and triangulation between differently sourced (but similar) patterns of data, but also to account for subtle distinctions in the expression of common themes within each of the groups under study. Thereafter, bodies of raw data associated with each participant group were analyzed individually, in order to uncover patterns that were unique to the experiences or realities of the respondent category being examined and, therefore, not as pronounced in the body of themes recognized initially. This latter process was particularly used to explore potential contrasts between the experiences of newcomers accessing services as well as insights provided by organizations responsible for delivering them.

### *Ethical Issues*

A number of ethical concerns arising from the research process are worth noting, beginning with issues related to confidentiality. Given the severity of sexuality-related stigma often characterizing the lives of sexual minority newcomers (Lee and Brotman 2011), the need to protect the identities of participants was highlighted as a key concern in the preliminary stages of the study.

As already noted, snowball sampling was used as one means of recruiting participants, primarily in order to minimize respondents' real or perceived need to publicly reveal their sexualities to service providers involved in the recruitment process. Aside from this measure, participants were also given opportunities to review their transcribed interviews and request that any potentially revelatory information disclosed in the research process be withheld from use in the study.

Another notable ethical issue encountered in the research process included addressing the extent to which we, as researchers, would discuss our own social locations, including our sexualities, in response to participants' questions on these areas of concern. We purposely chose to openly reveal our sexual identities – as well as any other markers of identity such as cultural origin – whenever asked, in order to build rapport with participants and to inform them of our own social locations in relation to issues of race, culture, and sexuality. This measure was adopted on the basis of literature that has highlighted the suitability of researcher self-disclosure in the context of LGBT-related research specifically as a means of eliciting sensitive information from marginalized participants who would likely require adequate parameters of safety before discussing details of their lived experiences (Rooke 2009).

Finally, given that the issues under study would occasionally require participants (particularly newcomers) to discuss difficulties associated with their experiences of settlement, a salient ethical concern included addressing the risk of inflicting emotional harm on respondents during the interview process. Indeed, as some writers (James and Platzer, 1999; Lee and Brotman 2011; Rooke 2009) have noted, marginalized participants may encounter painful emotions in divulging details of their experiences with discrimination and marginalization and may require access to appropriate sources of support to miti-

gate these expressions of distress. In order to address any negative feelings that would potentially arise during the course of interviews with participants, information on counselling and support resources was made available to respondents, and opportunities for debriefing were provided to all interviewees.

### *Limitations*

Perhaps the most apparent limitation in this study is its lack of generalizability to the experiences of LGB newcomers in regions other than British Columbia. Though the relatively large sample drawn in the study enabled the collection and analysis of data that has likely provided adequate insight into the settlement realities of LGB newcomers within the province and of settlement service providers, it is not possible to determine the applicability of the findings to other jurisdictions. Another significant limitation of the study includes its lack of attention to the settlement concerns of transgender newcomers, some of whom may identify within the broader category of "LGBT" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) immigrants and refugees. Though the settlement needs and experiences of transgender newcomers were purposely excluded from the scope of this study, primarily in order to acknowledge the need to separately study such phenomena with adequate attention to the uniqueness of gender identity issues (Williams and Freeman 2005), it is important to acknowledge that the findings of the study may not be applicable to trans-identified immigrants and refugees. Finally, as already mentioned, while the terms "lesbian," "gay," and "bisexual" were used in the study for the purpose of adopting convenient and well-known frames of reference within the context of British Columbia, the use of such terms may have hindered attempts at adequately exploring the experiences of same-sex attracted newcomers not associating with such Western identifiers. This latter limitation,

however, was addressed during the recruitment process through the use of terms such as “same-sex attracted,” in an effort to encourage participation from those not identifying with “LGB” lexicon.

## FINDINGS

We begin our discussion on the study’s findings with an overview of themes that were prevalent across all participant groups and, in this process, focus on patterns of data that broadly provided insight into the experiences and needs of LGB newcomers. We start this segment by analyzing issues of identity that appeared to relate closely to the settlement process among LGB newcomers and then examine how these matters seemed to factor into the overall experiences and needs of this population. We conclude this section by exploring discrepancies among different categories of respondents (e.g., newcomers, LGB group members, and settlement workers), particularly to examine distinctions between the accounts of newcomers and those of service providers and to analyze these contrasts as bases for delineating possible service gaps.

### *“Mediating is Part of it”: Issues of Identity among LGB Newcomers*

*Same-Sex attraction across cultural contexts: recognizing variations.* A theme common among all participant groups included the acknowledgement that expressions and understandings of same-sex sexual attraction often vary across social and cultural contexts, and the recognition of this reality may be necessary in order to appropriately situate the experiences of sexual minority newcomers. Indeed, because alternate conceptions of same-sex sexuality were at times described by participants as distinct frames of reference for contextualizing the experiences of LGB newcomers, it may be important to begin

an analysis of the study's findings by first exploring these diverse interpretations of non-heterosexuality.

Perhaps the most common concern highlighted by participants discussing cultural variations in sexuality included the labelling of same-sex sexual attraction and orientation. For instance, one newcomer, in describing Western identifiers of sexual orientation (e.g., "gay"), indicated that these labels were laden with culturally specific connotations he did not associate with:

"Gay" is more ... focused on gay culture ... As a man, I like other men, but [that] doesn't mean that I have to be in the gay scene, you know? Like [implying] I have to do "gay" things [such as] going to bathhouses.

Another newcomer stated, more explicitly: "the minute you say 'gay,' it creates a particular image, usually very Western." Indeed, this sentiment of associating "LGB" terminology with Western concepts of sexuality was shared by other respondents, one of whom (a newcomer) particularly emphasized that such constructs were based in culturally bound expectations of compartmentalizing one's individual identity:

In North America, sexual orientation is seen as part of individual identity ... terms like gay and lesbian ... [put] it into a realm of separateness ... some communities have holistic [concepts] of identity.

Because the public labelling of non-heterosexuality as "LGB" was at times believed to be a Western phenomenon not consistent with the lived experiences of many same-sex attracted newcomers, some newcomers indicated a preference for maintaining issues of sexual orientation within the private realm and therefore opting not to "come out," or publicly identify, as members of a sexual minority. One participant for instance, discussed his reluctance to publicly label his sexual identity because he believed doing so would potentially compromise his ability to maintain relational ties with his family of origin:

It's all about personal choices. I don't think that everybody has to come out; it's not something that I personally want for myself ... I don't think that the possibility of losing your family or having some kind of dislocated family relationship is worth risking everything and saying: "this is who I am."

Interestingly, a number of service providers employed by settlement agencies discussed their experiences working with immigrant and refugee clients who would similarly choose not to label same-sex sexual orientation explicitly, even when describing same-sex relationships:

I had [an] experience with a young girl ... the whole time that we talked about her sexuality, she never identified as "gay," or anything. She never labeled herself, even though she talked about her partner; she talked about her girlfriend. So it was very clear that she definitely was [non-heterosexual], but wouldn't use that label.

Members of LGB organizations less noticeably made reference to the cultural specificity of the terms "lesbian," "gay," and "bisexual," and instead described the tendency for participants in their groups to typically use this language in describing non-heterosexuality. One member of an LGB organization, however, did note she perceived a reluctance on the part of some newcomers to identify with these terms and further suggested the likelihood that some same-sex attracted newcomers avoid mainstream LGB groups:

... in lots of cultures, that kind of identification [LGB] ... is seen as a Western thing ... if I am aware the ... member [does not identify with] the terms ... then I talk with them in a different way that accommodates [their preferences] according to the context. But, like I said, I've seen that very little here, so people who are accessing our services I think are identifying [their sexuality] more in a Western way, and maybe people who aren't, they're not coming in.

It is important to note, in spite of the above findings, that some newcomers recognized the terms "lesbian," "gay," and "bisexual" as descriptors of

same-sex sexual attraction, regardless of cultural context. For instance, one immigrant respondent described the term "gay" as a commonly agreed upon term for referencing same-sex sexuality:

I think "gay" is, by definition, same-sex attraction ... so male-to-male, or female-to-female ... [attraction] to the same gender; affection toward the same sex.

Another newcomer expressed her identification with "LGB" lexicon and clarified that she had chosen to label herself as a "lesbian." She also, however, indicated that the process of naming her sexuality had been a fluid one, based primarily on relational experience, and that her self-identification as a lesbian had therefore been largely context-dependent and not fixed:

I think sexuality is quite fluid and it can go forward; a little bit back and forth ... before I identified as bisexual... and then I identified as a "byke," "bisexual dyke," because I was involved with a guy at some point. Now I'm identifying as a lesbian.

One respondent, who had arrived in Canada as a refugee, indicated that although he considered himself gay, he believed that identifying with this label in his country of origin carried markedly different social implications than doing so in Canada. Accordingly, he noted that although his sexual identity had remained consistent across different social and geopolitical contexts, his lived experience of being a gay man had varied significantly and had resulted in constructions of this identifier that were unique to place:

The difference [between my country of origin and Canada] is the culture, the religion, [and] the law ... to have more freedom [here]; that's really, really different. When I was raised, as a gay person I had to hide everything from everybody around myself, and it was the worst torture. So that's really different [in Canada].

Of note, although members of LGB organizations did not overtly describe differences in the use of LGB identifiers across international jurisdictions, particularly in the manner suggested by the participant above, one individual associated with this respondent group indicated distinctions in identifying as “LGB” in a smaller community versus an urban area. Implicitly, he illustrated that even within Canada, an LGB-identified newcomer would potentially be affected by additional social and cultural differences in smaller communities, specifically in relation to issues of sexual orientation, that would in turn likely further impact her or his construction of sexual identity within a given place:

I grew up in small towns, and we always knew who the gay person was, and all the people who were in the closet would just hit on him ... that’s usually how I saw it working in small towns, until you went into bigger places where [meeting other men more publicly] kind of happened.

Overall, responses indicated that understandings and experiences of sexual orientation are likely to vary significantly depending on the array of social and cultural contexts in which such phenomena are situated, but they also highlighted that notable variability may exist within any given cultural context. Indeed, while the terms associated with “LGB” lexicon were at times rejected by a number of newcomers and by various service providers as “Western” constructions of non-heterosexuality, some chose to consciously adopt these identifiers in referring issues of same-sex sexual orientation among newcomers, and others appeared to draw on seemingly Western processes of naming non-heterosexuality within specific contexts of lived newcomer experience. Accordingly, these findings implied the need to consider interplays between sociocultural context and expressions of non-heterosexuality, together with the subjective construction of these two factors, in examining how newcomers might conceptualize same-sex sexuality and orientation within the realm of

individual lived experience. The data also suggested the need to acknowledge the tendency for conceptions of non-heterosexuality to change as functions of place and time, particularly in relation to issues of migration and therefore the need to recognize the fluidity of self-identification in understanding matters of same-sex sexual orientation among newcomers.

*The Context of Marginalization: Intersections in Race, Culture, Gender, and Sexuality.* The three respondent groups interviewed all referred to an array of structural factors influencing the experiences of LGB immigrants and refugees. A significant proportion of participants discussed the realities of discrimination, as well as other expressions of marginalization, in describing the process of settlement among sexual minority newcomers. Despite the relative commonality of this theme, however, accounts of oppression were often found to vary based on complex relationships between subjective experience and structural context. Accordingly, lived experiences of marginalization largely appeared to be contingent on intersecting factors of race, culture, gender, and sexuality specific to individual social locations of LGB newcomers.

Regardless of variations in experiences of marginalization, some participants described the likely tendency for non-heterosexual immigrants and refugees to experience greater disadvantage than either heterosexual newcomers or non-newcomer LGB Canadians. One newcomer, for instance, indicated that association with same-sex sexuality, alongside identification with a racial or cultural minority group, would likely predispose some sexual minority immigrants and refugees to experience greater difficulty in the settlement process, specifically by virtue of experiencing discrimination on multiple bases, namely surrounding issues of race and sexuality:

The closer to the norm you are in society, the easier it is for you to settle. If you have different marginalizations and challenges, whether you're gay or a

minority or whatever, you're less likely to be accepted by your own community and by the larger community. So you face double discrimination, triple discrimination, whatever. And, you know, a lot of people are closeted for those reasons.

This newcomer discussed the effects of sexuality-based discrimination on his own subjective experience as an immigrant, including impacts on his mental health, which he believed he was able to address by accessing support for issues surrounding his self-identification as a gay man:

I didn't feel supported by my culture, my community, and I was really depressed and suicidal when I was younger. I've come to a stage in my life through meeting people and through advocacy and support, where I have come to accept myself, and I feel blessed by being a gay person.

The participant further disclosed that while he had been able to receive support aimed at mitigating his experiences of discrimination as a gay man, he had continued to observe prejudice on other bases, most notably on the grounds of his racial-cultural identity as a South Asian. Interestingly, he indicated that he had encountered these expressions of racism in mainstream social contexts at large, but also more explicitly within LGB communities, particularly when South Asians would seemingly be stereotyped as intolerant in relation to issues of sexual orientation:

I've noticed that there's a – I don't know if it's racism, or intolerance, or lack of education or understanding – but I think the mainstream gay community, the mainstream community at large in Canada, they have a tendency to blame South Asians or any [other minorities]. If there's a gay bashing and the person responsible is a South Asian, they blame all South Asians for being intolerant and they say "send them back home," right?

It is important to note that service providers highlighted the tendency for newcomers to experience multiple bases of discrimination, including both members of settlement agencies and LGB organizations. A settlement worker

at an immigrant-serving agency, for instance, discussed the possibility that identification with a sexual minority group would likely render the settlement process, which is already laden with cultural and practical barriers to integration, even more complex on the basis of added stigma surrounding same-sex sexuality:

I can imagine that for some immigrant families, when they come to Canada ..., and the wife or the husband feel differently about their sexual orientation, it could be even more problematic, because then it's just seen as an additional problem on top of everything else. But then even just if one comes by themselves, you know, integrating is already hard enough. Finding a job and finding a place in society is already hard enough without actually having to disclose, or even talk about, sexual orientation.

A member of an LGB organization also discussed the likely co-existence of varying sources of marginalization among LGB-identified people (including newcomers) accessing the organization's programs, which prompted another member of the organization to highlight evidence of racism within this setting. Similar to the experiences of racism described by the newcomer above, this participant identified race-based prejudice related to the scapegoating of visible minority groups perceived to be intolerant of LGBs. Though in this example, participants did not note the co-occurrence of racism and homophobia in describing the experiences of LGB newcomers specifically, they implied the likely presence of this reality by acknowledging the prevalence of racism in an organization serving LGB populations of varying cultural and racial backgrounds:

[One participant]: There's stuff around the political reality of living in Canada as an Indigenous, or a person of colour, or an immigrant with no status. There's so many things going on, and these groups themselves, people of colour, are just so diverse ... But we all know that racism exists; we know that heterosexism exists, and homophobia exists, so this is a group that gets together because we know we live in those intersections.

[Another participant]: Yeah, racism even exists within the youth that we work with, like in reaction to [a media event in which a religious group was opposing an anti-homophobia school board policy]. Some of our youth would say, "oh, they're just angry because they're Asian," and then we're like, "okay, we need to have a dialogue about this," [because] it's not about race.

Newcomers, settlement workers, and members of LGB organizations, who described LGB newcomers' experiences of discrimination on the bases of sexuality and race, often emphasized particular themes in discussing such phenomena. Namely, while these respondents consistently described issues of sexuality-based stigma as underpinning the experiences of homophobia/heterosexism among LGB newcomers, they regularly acknowledged the tendency for racism (particularly as expressed within mainstream LGB communities) to be located in processes of scapegoating ethnic minority groups as sources of homophobic/heterosexist intolerance. Regardless of these themes, however, a significant proportion of respondents who described mechanisms of marginalization among LGB newcomers appeared to conceptualize this reality by attending to varying bases of discrimination, most commonly those related to race and sexuality.

Besides recognizing racism and homophobia/heterosexism as the primary bases of discrimination, some respondents emphasized that experiences of marginalization among LGB newcomers could relate to several other factors, depending on the unique social location of each immigrant and refugee. One newcomer, for instance, indicated that the discrimination she encountered within her own ethnic community was interwoven with manifestations of sexism and heteronormativity. She specified that her lesbian identity was often rendered invisible, primarily since same-sex relationships with women

were defined as non-existent within her cultural context and since her identity as a woman was often constructed based on her relational status with men:

My mother told me one time, she told me lesbians don't exist ... the lesbian thing is not even talked about, [not like] being gay ... I think when you're just getting into a new country [and] integrating yourself into a new culture this changes, but [not] with my parents ... People ask "does she have a boyfriend?" and so she makes up big boyfriends to tell her friends.

Another newcomer indicated that the geopolitical context of LGB immigrants and refugees often plays a key role in constructing experiences of marginalization. He clarified that although sexuality-related and race-based barriers exist in larger urban centres, discrimination may be more pronounced in smaller cities with fewer resources and support networks for sexual minorities and/or newcomers:

[Large urban centres are] definitely more open. So for a guy of let's say 15 years, it will definitely be more open in [a large Canadian city] than in a little town, and vice versa.

In essence, although race and sexuality appeared to be primary factors in shaping the circumstances of marginalization for newcomers involved in the study, other dimensions of experience, including gender and physical location, also appeared to play a role in determining the social contexts of LGB immigrants and refugees, particularly in relation to the realities of discrimination. It was also evident, as in the example of the lesbian who encountered marginalization at the intersection of gender and sexuality, that each of these factors often interplayed uniquely based on the social location and subjective experience of each individual immigrant or refugee.

In highlighting the role of subjectivity as a significant factor shaping the lived experiences of marginalization among LGB newcomers, it is important

to recognize that some newcomers recounted experiences of stigma and discrimination by describing the personal distress of mediating between identities often deemed incompatible with one another, thereby discussing their circumstances in largely subjective terms. One newcomer, for instance, described his private struggle in identifying communities of support, primarily because he had withheld information on his sexual orientation from his family in order to avoid rejection and had simultaneously continued experiencing his life as a same-sex attracted man with no self-identification as "LGB":

When you have same-sex attraction it's kind of like, who do you label your community, and what kind of levels of interaction should you have with different people?... I didn't recognize that I was specifically attracted to men on kind of a permanent basis [until I came to Canada]. It was kind of a curiosity that I felt I had and that I was trying to suppress, until I had actually come to Canada and was able to have enough space from my own family to delve deeper into that one issue ... mediating is part of it, and also ... finding out who you are as a person when you try to suppress so many things ... When people go through an identity crisis there's always some sort of stress associated with that.

Accordingly, in describing issues of marginalization among LGB newcomers, it may be important to acknowledge that the manifestation of identity-related oppression may lie in the realm of the personal/private, even when the issue is related closely to a systemic factor such as stigma or discrimination. Indeed, although this respondent discussed his identity-based crisis as constituting personal distress, his experience was related to his struggle of locating a community of support appropriate to his needs as a non-heterosexual newcomer. It is possible, in light of this finding, that some newcomers may experience the realities of discrimination and disadvantage without explicitly identifying these circumstances as being systemic in nature and instead discuss these factors as comprising elements of personal or private experience.

To conclude our analysis on the array of structural issues affecting LGB newcomers, we wish to emphasize the importance of considering the complex interaction of subjective experience and structural context in constructing experiences of marginalization in this population. As already noted, it is also important to acknowledge the multitude of identity-based factors, be they related to race, sexuality, gender, or other dimensions, that often uniquely comprise the context of individual LGB newcomers who each occupy distinct social locations and who may therefore encounter differences in their experiences of marginalization. Lastly, given that some newcomers in the study at times described their experiences of stigma and discrimination in personal terms, attention to personal/private experiences may be necessary in understanding processes of marginalization among some LGB newcomers who struggle with issues of identity.

*"A Lot of Roadblocks": Settlement Experiences and Needs of LGB Newcomers*

In the preceding section, we examined issues of identity and marginalization as they appeared to relate specifically to the lived experiences of LGB newcomers in British Columbia. In this segment, we explore, more tangibly, how LGB immigrants and refugees involved in the study often described experiencing these realities in the context of settlement and how such identity-based factors at times appeared to influence their access and use of immigration and refugee services. In outlining each theme associated with the settlement experiences of LGB newcomers, we also discuss needs that were either explicitly named or implicated in these accounts.

*Navigating the Unknown in Isolation.* Perhaps a theme prevalent in all newcomers' descriptions of settlement was a perceived lack of resource-specific knowledge on entering Canada and, more specifically, on arriving in British

Columbia. Indeed, most LGB immigrants and refugees interviewed remarked that they remained largely unaware of support services appropriate to their needs until after the initial period of settling into Canada. One newcomer, for instance, stated that immigrants and refugees often encounter significant sources of stress due to the practical and emotional implications of relocating to Canada and that appropriate information could serve to mitigate some of these challenges:

For a new immigrant already going through quite a few stresses, anxieties, and worries ... this is where resources or information can make a real difference, and even just having a mentor program or a buddy program, where you have someone that you can talk to about things.

Though the experience of lacking information may be considered universal among immigrants and refugees, regardless of one's identification with a sexual minority group, several participants indicated that this phenomenon is often made more complicated for same-sex attracted newcomers due to the challenges of locating information on LGB-friendly settlement support. One newcomer, for instance, explained that it is particularly difficult for LGB immigrants and refugees to find information on meeting other same-sex attracted newcomers during the settlement process, which at times results in feelings of isolation, and also a lack of informal guidance on issues such as finding housing in LGB-friendly neighbourhoods:

There is a very important thing we need when we come here. It's to see groups of gays and lesbians who are friendly people ... the worst thing, when we come here, is being alone ... [The workers at the settlement agency I used to access were] very nice, but the only thing is they didn't have a special [resource] person for gays and lesbians ... my belief is gay people understand gay people, and somehow straight people cannot understand [some things] ... [a gay person] could tell me "if you live in this part of the city, it's better for you, don't go somewhere else."

Some newcomer participants, including the following woman, explained that the difficulty of locating LGB-specific settlement information (including information on informal support groups or networks) could be even greater in the presence of language barriers:

If [a newcomer arrives from] an English-speaking country, some parts of Europe, the United States, or Australia/New Zealand, then they can have access to information on groups or whatever's available. For other countries, where you can't speak English and there's a huge amount of homophobia ... it's harder.

Another participant discussed her experience of struggling to find any sexuality-specific resources whatsoever within the small town she had settled in as a newcomer, implying the potential for additional impediments to exist in more remote regions:

I was trying to find information on the gay community in [the town I had come to]. Very, very hard to find information on anything ... [The local LGB student association] doesn't [even] have a website.

Interestingly, a member of an LGB organization corroborated the above remarks by indicating that the relatively small number of immigrants and refugees accessing the group had primarily done so to seek information on LGB-friendly sources of support in the past, further adding that they had searched for these resources in order to alleviate feelings of isolation:

[Newcomers are] a small number of people compared to all the [members] that I've dealt with, but I have dealt with a number of people from the Middle East, Asia, I think those two areas normally ... some of the things they were looking for were to get connected to the service, start getting the calendar every month, to find out what's going on, to meet more people, and get involved, because they were feeling isolated.

Accordingly, it is possible to suggest that the experience of lacking information on LGB-friendly settlement resources may be pervasive among same-sex attracted newcomers, and there may therefore exist a need for enhancing this population's access to such information. Interestingly, because a lack of knowledge on LGB-specific support networks appeared related to feelings of loneliness among newcomers, the need for information specifically surrounding informal groups may be particularly relevant to highlight in these findings. This population's varying experiences with marginalization, as mentioned earlier in the paper, may particularly legitimize the need to enhance their access to appropriate support, as such resources could serve to alleviate feelings of isolation often accompanying these experiences.

*Elements of Danger and Safety: Negotiating the Realm of Settlement.* Given the context of marginalization surrounding the overall experiences of LGB immigrants and refugees, it may not be surprising that several newcomers discussed matters of danger and safety in the course of recounting their stories of settlement. In particular, a significant proportion of newcomers discussed fears of encountering sexuality-based stigmatization in their search for settlement-related support surrounding issues of sexual orientation, including (as mentioned above) practical information on LGB resources and informal LGB community groups.

Several newcomers perceived risk in discussing issues of sexual orientation within the context of immigrant and refugee service agencies. Most of these respondents reported fearing that their access to support would somehow be impacted if they were to reveal their same-sex sexualities within these organizations, particularly as they felt that such disclosure could expose them to discrimination by service providers. One immigrant, for instance, noted that he prevented himself from seeking information on sexuality-related resources

at a settlement organization, primarily because he feared being rejected by agency staff:

At that time, they [settlement workers] were specifically not focusing on sexual orientation, so I wasn't feeling comfortable because I wasn't sure; well, my biggest fear was - if I speak up - having to wonder if there would be a rejection. That's why I kind of pulled back from revealing my sexuality.

Interestingly, though a number of newcomers indicated that they had gained an awareness of LGB resources early in the process of settling in Canada, a proportion of these respondents stated also feeling unsafe accessing these support services. Specifically, some explained that they feared having their sexualities revealed in the course of seeking support for issues surrounding sexual orientation, and in turn, experiencing stigmatization and rejection by their cultural communities and their families of origin. One newcomer stated, in fact, that he had avoided support and resources affiliated in any way with a gay-friendly neighbourhood in his geographic area, due to such fears of being "outed":

When I first moved here, I wouldn't even want to be seen [in a gay-friendly neighbourhood in my city] or anything like that ... I guess I was worried that somebody in my family would see that, or a friend of my family would see me [in that area] and they would make [all the] connections or whatever.

Another newcomer participant corroborated the above by emphasizing the relevance of acknowledging safety issues in relation to stigmatization among LGB newcomers and suggesting the need for LGB-friendly settlement services that would minimize these risks for immigrants and refugees with same-sex attraction:

Stigma attached to labelling yourself [is a big concern], because you basically have to disclose your sexuality to get help. If they're going to provide services to immigrant LGBs, they have to provide it in a way that is confi-

dential, is discreet, and [ensures] that people don't necessarily have to disclose their sexuality to get services.

Importantly, a settlement worker located in a small urban centre indicated that safety issues were particularly pronounced for LGB individuals in his region, regardless of immigration or refugee status, and that sexual minorities would likely encounter additional safety concerns in smaller towns as a result:

Here in [small city] ... there's still some gay bashing going on ... some rural communities are not very receptive to the gay population.

This reality may be important to recognize, as LGB newcomers are likely to experience a heightened fear of accessing sexuality-related resources in small urban centres when these regions are perceived as less receptive to sexual minorities as a whole.

It is possible to suggest, based on the above accounts, that issues of danger and safety were significant in constructing LGB newcomers' experiences of settlement, particularly in relation to concerns surrounding discrimination and stigmatization. Though several participants discussed fearing rejection in revealing their same-sex sexualities within the context of settlement services, a number of others indicated the presence of these safety concerns within the realm of LGB-specific organizations, particularly since many perceived the latter to require LGB self-identification or self-labelling as a condition of access. Newcomers' apparent lack of information surrounding sexuality-related resources, which was highlighted earlier as a theme associated with the study's findings, seemed to be closely related to issues of danger and safety, as immigrants and refugees perceived risk in seeking these resources within both settlement agencies and LGB organizations.

*Lacking Access to Services: Health Risks and Socioeconomic Impacts.*

Given that several of the participating LGB immigrants and refugees commented on a lack of information related to sexuality-related resources and also discussed concerns of safety in accessing services specific to issues of sexual orientation, it is not surprising that a large number of these respondents referenced implications and consequences of lacking access to appropriate support. Indeed, a significant portion of LGB newcomers noted health concerns and socioeconomic issues associated with the reality of not receiving settlement services specific to their needs as sexual minorities.

In describing the social impacts of lacking access to support, a broad area of concern highlighted by several newcomer participants included the reality of encountering a heightened level of vulnerability by virtue of being disconnected from sexuality-specific information and support services. One immigrant, for instance, described the experiences of a friend (also a newcomer) whose same-sex sexuality was accidentally revealed to his family and, as a result, was subsequently forced into a circumstance of significant vulnerability that could have been somewhat addressed through the provision of appropriate resources:

I had a friend whose parents found out that he was gay ... they kicked him out of the house, and he had nowhere to go. He didn't have any kind of [access to] support services, and I just felt like ... [he] might try something drastic, like kill himself, or he might ... prostitute himself because he'd have nowhere to go, and he'd have nowhere to stay, no money for food; he was relying on his parents.

Although some newcomers did not explicitly name the issue of social vulnerability as a product of inaccessibility to resources, others discussed more specific socioeconomic implications of this reality. One newcomer, for instance, implied that the economic integration of LGB immigrants and refugees is ad-

versely affected by the inaccessibility of resources, primarily by indicating that this population would experience greater success in the labour market if settlement services were rendered more appropriate to their needs, and therefore more accessible:

Gay immigrants, we need, we have a cultural shock with language, we have a cultural shock trying to make our own resumes, trying to apply for jobs ... if we go to a gay [immigrant and refugee] centre or something, they can provide [help with resumes and jobs], with specific resources for our community. Maybe we would feel more comfortable with our own community, and maybe we can be more successful, right?

Aside from socioeconomic issues associated with resource inaccessibility, a number of LGB immigrants and refugees highlighted health issues related to this reality. In particular, several newcomers emphasized a relationship between this population's lack of exposure to health care services that are sensitive to the needs of LGB newcomers (who often fear stigmatization) and their seemingly higher risk for experiencing sexual health concerns. One immigrant, for instance, indicated that newcomers may feel reluctant to disclose matters of sexuality to health professionals, particularly when these service providers are not informed of safety issues related to stigmatization, which in turn results in an under-use of sexual health services and possibly a heightened risk of sexually transmitted infections among sexual minority immigrants and refugees:

If someone gets an HIV test, they shouldn't be asked "are you gay?," or "are you having sex with men?" ... A lot of people may not want to admit to [same-sex sexuality], so that's not effective. But do you see how a lot of people, a lot of doctors, ask you these questions? They ask "have you had sex with men?" What are closeted gay guys going to do there? ... A lot of [immigrants] get married ... and then they have sex with men and ... give STDs to their wives.

Issues surrounding health, and specifically concerns related to sexual health, were also raised by several members of LGB organizations. For example, one participant stated that he had noticed reluctance from some non-heterosexual newcomers to access medical testing for sexually transmitted infections because they feared sexuality-related stigmatization, which he thought contributed to a higher incidence of illnesses such as HIV among this population:

... In the [sexual health] clinic, you hardly find Latino [gay] guys ... they kind of disappear ... we [also] had somebody from India ... he said it was really difficult to find [a setting] that he could've felt safe enough to get tested ...

Based on the above, it could be that a significant aspect of the settlement experiences of gay and bisexual male newcomers is encountering impediments in accessing sexuality-specific support services. The most notable implications of this reality may include concerns related to the socioeconomic well-being, as well as the physical health, of sexual minority immigrants and refugees. Given the context of marginalization underpinning the experiences of LGB newcomers, as already discussed in this paper, it is important to recognize these findings as possible products of systemic disadvantage. In the sections that follow, we discuss participants' perceptions of how such realities, as well as the overall context of marginalization, could be mitigated to better address the needs of sexual minority immigrants and refugees.

*Enhancing Safety: Universalizing Access to Appropriate Settlement Services.* Given the prevalent theme of safety invoked by a number of newcomers in the study, it may be understandable that several respondents discussed the need for LGB immigrants and refugees to experience safer access to appropriate services. Many participants discussed, in particular, the universalization of sexuality-related resources as constituting a primary means of

enhancing safety in newcomers' access to such support. Specifically, a large proportion of non-heterosexual immigrants and refugees explained that if information and services for sexual minorities were made available to all newcomers, regardless of their self-identification as "LGB," there would be less fear associated with accessing these resources.

One newcomer, for instance, indicated his belief that having all immigrants and refugees oriented to Canadian society would ensure they were exposed to information on LGB issues and resources. He added that this strategy would enhance sexual minority newcomers' access to appropriate services without necessitating their self-identification as non-heterosexual, which would in turn minimize their risk of experiencing stigmatization in their search for relevant support:

I think all citizens who come to Canada should get an orientation to Canadian society. Maybe language training or something, but I also think as a part of that there should be LGBT training, and human rights for minorities ... If everyone had to take [this orientation], and part of the training was LGBT information, then the people who need it would get it, and the people who don't would just skip out. But it would be there, and they have to take it, so it wouldn't discriminate against anyone ... It would be universal, right? You only start stigmatizing people if you start providing services that are designed for LGBT people, and they have to disclose they're LGBT to go there.

Another respondent, also a newcomer, similarly expressed a preference for universalized access to LGB-friendly information and support, specifically by commenting on the likely suitability of a "multipurpose" organization whose mandate would include both the delivery of settlement services and sexuality-related resources. This participant indicated that the presence of such programming, which would likely consist of counselling and other forms of support appropriate to the needs of sexual minorities, would likely minimize

health risks and socioeconomic impacts associated with service inaccessibility, namely those noted earlier in this section of the paper:

[A suitable setting] has to be kind of like a multipurpose kind of thing ... It would have to be something where everybody who would actually be physically present in that building at any given moment would be non-judgmental, and they wouldn't be very intrusive ... I think they should probably offer some kind of counselling services [in such a setting], because I feel like immigrants, they can make mistakes that cost the government a lot of money ... Like HIV medicines, they're very expensive, and I'm sure over the year, the costs of those medicines are more than the cost of bi-weekly counselling services.

Interestingly, this theme was touched on by service providers associated with both settlement agencies and LGB organizations. For instance, one settlement worker explained that his organization did not actively address issues of sexual orientation in its general delivery of settlement services, and further stated that newcomer clients seldom requested information on sexuality-related resources, thereby indirectly suggesting the relevance of universalizing access to these resources for sexual minority immigrants and refugees with reluctance to specifically seek them:

The type[s] of services that we provide at [our organization] are related to settlement adaptation, integration, language services and...employment services. So it's very seldom that we encounter someone who might openly share that they're gay and looking for resources of gay and lesbian services, or gay and lesbian contacts in the community.

A member of an LGB organization based in a smaller town supported the notion of universalizing access to information more explicitly, claiming that such a process could orient newcomers at large to sexuality-specific services within a geopolitical context considered to be less safe for sexual minorities:

Something that might actually be pretty helpful, not only for newcomers to the country, but newcomers here in general, even people who've been here for a while [and] don't know about us, [would be to have] posters around, like other organizations have posters around ... I would say 80 per cent of [our local community] doesn't know we exist.

It is important to note, in spite of the above, that a small number of participants highlighted the possible need to designate specific information and resources for LGB newcomers, instead of universalizing these services. However, such preferences were often expressed by respondents who had claimed refugee status in Canada on the grounds of fleeing sexuality-based persecution in their countries of origin, and who had therefore already self-identified as members of a sexual minority on their arrival. One of these refugee participants for instance, noted the following:

We need specific agencies for us [LGB newcomers], okay? ... Where we feel safe ... Gay Chinese, gay Vietnamese, or gay guys from somewhere very far in the planet, [when] they arrive in Canada ... we can help them; that would be very, very cool.

Indeed, the theme of universalizing services appeared to apply less to the experiences of LGB newcomers with strong self-identification as "LGB" or other non-heterosexual orientations. Some of these immigrants and refugees may have, as a result of their alignment with sexual minority communities, desired to be more explicitly connected with either LGB organizations or more LGB-focused settlement services, though the presence of universalized information would not have necessarily limited this subcategory's access to such resources.

Regardless, a large proportion of participants in all three respondent groups indicated the relevance of universalization in mitigating issues of danger and safety, as well as concerns of resource inaccessibility among LGB newcomers.

Many in particular noted that universalizing sexuality-specific information and support would likely reduce the perceived need among many immigrants and refugees to identify as “LGB” as a condition of access and, therefore, would minimize their risk of experiencing stigmatization on the basis of sexual orientation. As already noted, some participants discussed the potential for such service integration to begin addressing some of the health risks and socioeconomic impacts associated with this population’s lack of access to appropriate services, particularly by increasing this population’s exposure to information and resources specific to their needs.

*The Role of Education and Cross-Service Collaboration in Addressing Settlement Needs.*

Participants in all three respondent groups consistently highlighted the importance of better-informed and collaborative practice, particularly among service providers, in ensuring that LGB newcomers’ settlement needs are appropriately met. In discussing education needs specifically, many participants emphasized the need for settlement workers and members of LGB organizations to possess a combined knowledge of issues surrounding race, culture, and same-sex sexuality, as it might relate to the lives of LGB newcomers. Cross-service collaboration was most commonly described as including the development of partnerships that would foster formal information-sharing and referral mechanisms, particularly between settlement agencies and LGB community organizations.

Newcomer participants, aside from service providers, were among those who advocated strongly for settlement workers and members of LGB organizations receiving education on issues pertaining to sexual minority immigrants and refugees. For instance, one immigrant family member of a non-hetero-

sexual newcomer, who had also previously trained to become employed at a settlement agency, recounted her perception of encountering homophobic attitudes in this setting as a prospective employee and, based on this experience, emphasized the need for settlement workers to be trained on issues specific to sexual minorities:

It was shocking to me that the [settlement] workers who really wanted to help people were so resistant to the idea of homosexuality and had so much lacking [in terms of] knowledge about homosexuality ... In all immigrant settlement agencies, there should be regular presentations and regular workshops to have all workers involved and discover, because for many it is a discovery of what homosexuality is.

Interestingly, a supervisor of an immigrant and refugee-serving agency in a smaller urban centre corroborated the above observation by remarking that the settlement workers at his organization would likely benefit from further education on issues pertaining to sexual minorities. He specified that this would perhaps constitute one means of improving the capacity of the agency to meet the needs of LGB immigrants and refugees:

[Settlement workers] are aware of gay and lesbian issues. Whether they are as deeply educated, or as educated as they could be ... that, I'm not sure. It might be something of interest for us to start exploring.

It is important to note, in addition to the above, that a number of participants from LGB community organizations similarly highlighted the need for education to be made available within the organizations, but commented on the relevance of training on anti-racism and cultural awareness instead. One member of an LGB organization indicated that she would be receptive to engaging in a "trade" of skills training, specifically in collaboration with settlement agencies. She explained that LGB organizations could provide education on issues affecting sexual minorities, while immigrant and refugee-serving

agencies could then offer training on areas of expertise related to their work with newcomers:

A skills training trade [would be useful], 'cause I think that some [settlement] agencies, most of them that I'm aware of, could really use some queer competency training for staff, and then, you could do vice versa and have them come in.

As already noted, several participants commented on cross-service collaboration, specifically between immigrant and refugee-serving agencies and LGB organizations, as a strategy for better serving LGB newcomers. A member of an LGB group, for instance, explicitly identified the need for both categories of organizations to "connect" or engage in formal partnerships, acknowledging simultaneously that such linkages are currently limited:

More connections with settlement agencies [are needed] ... For many [settlement] agencies, there's a need for them to make connections with queer service agencies, and conversely for us, we need to be building relationships with settlement workers. I guess organizationally, it doesn't happen as much as it needs to, but it's starting.

More specifically, service providers associated with both types of agencies identified opportunities for working together to disseminate information on sexuality-specific resources to a broad range of newcomer populations in ways that would be appropriate to their needs. One member of an LGB organization, for instance, indicated her receptiveness to partnering with a local immigrant-serving agency in her region in order to distribute written material to sexual minority newcomers on LGB resources in the area:

[We can] talk with whatever immigrant services [our town] has as a whole. Try to get a flyer, have them mention us, anything like that. [For example,] a pamphlet that they can hand out.

Similarly, a settlement worker stated that it would be helpful for LGB organizations to create such information in various languages and enable settlement agencies to distribute it, since the material would assist LGB newcomers to connect with supportive resources in a manner that would be non-intrusive and culturally appropriate:

[It] might be nice if you're working with organizations that serve LGBT populations to put their advertising in languages other than English. I mean, that's very blatantly welcoming to the immigrant community, but it's not saying, "hey, you, gay immigrant." It's quite gentle, I think.

Another notion discussed in the realm of cross-service collaboration included the need for referrals to take place consistently between settlement agencies and LGB organizations. In fact, one worker at an immigrant-serving organization discussed the relevance of strengthening referrals between these two categories of organizations, primarily by indicating his willingness to make referrals to LGB groups he had already made connections with, in order to enhance the experience of non-heterosexual newcomers:

I do know some people who belong to [the local LGB organization] ... As far as connecting [LGB newcomers], what I would like is like a third-person connection. I would say, "Okay, how about if I get a hold of someone, and they can communicate with you?" and then sort of a referral, yeah.

Accordingly, a prevalent theme evident in the data included the need for education geared at service providers, as well as cross-service collaboration among settlement agencies and LGB groups, specifically with the aim of enhancing LGB newcomers' settlement experiences. Given issues of danger and safety invoked earlier, as well as the notion of universalization as a means of addressing these concerns, the prospects of education and cross-service collaboration among organizations may indeed constitute pertinent points, as such developments would likely broaden the reach of services applicable to

the needs of sexual minority immigrants and refugees relatively non-intrusively, and therefore begin addressing concerns of inaccessibility.

*Newcomers and Service Providers: Exploring Differences in Perceptions of Experience and Need*

It is important to note a number of inconsistencies between service providers' perceptions of newcomers' experiences and needs and newcomer participants' own accounts of these factors. Perhaps the greatest source of discrepancy was found in the tendency for some service providers to ascribe singular importance to either sexuality, or culture/race, as factors relevant to program development and service delivery, and the reality that most participating immigrants and refugees expressed service needs relevant to both dimensions of identity.

As already noted earlier in this paper's findings, most newcomer participants appeared to base their identities on a unique interplay of factors related to culture, race, sexuality, gender, and other dimensions. Due to this reality, a significant proportion of these respondents seemed to encounter barriers to accessing services intended broadly for immigrants and refugees or, conversely, resources aimed at serving members of the LGB community at large. Findings of the study, for instance, indicated that LGB newcomers often experienced a reluctance to seek support for sexuality-related issues in settlement agencies for fear of being rejected or discriminated against, but were also hesitant to approach mainstream LGB organizations due to their perceptions of having to disclose or label their same-sex sexuality as a condition of access and, thereby, risk experiencing stigmatization. As a result of these accounts, a large number of immigrants and refugees interviewed indicated their preferences for universalized access to sexuality-related information and

resources for newcomers, in order for them to experience less risk in seeking suitable support and, therefore, improved access to services appropriate to their needs. In other words, participating LGB newcomers largely favoured an approach that appeared to address the unique confluence of identity-based factors that influenced their experiences and therefore implicitly indicated the relevance of having multiple dimensions of identity recognized in assessing their service needs.

Conversely, a number of service providers perceived the likelihood that newcomers would place greater singular importance on either elements of sexuality, or culture/race, in their search for relevant resources or services. Interestingly, while some members of LGB organizations believed that newcomers would experience their sexual orientation or identity as most salient in their quest for appropriate support, a small number of workers at settlement agencies believed that the needs of sexual minority immigrants and refugees would relate more closely to overcoming cultural issues and language barriers associated with the settlement process, rather than involving matters of sexuality. One member of an LGB organization, for instance, indicated that issues of same-sex sexuality would likely take precedence in a newcomer's search for appropriate resources, primarily because lesser stigma is attached to racialized or non-Western ethnic identity:

At the very beginning, when [clients] are accessing our services, it's largely the gay identity that's on the outside. I think it's much easier if you're looking for services as an ethnic person; there's less stigma ... the real taboo is being gay. I'm not trying to say this is the hardest part, but stigma is much stronger [for issues of sexuality], largely, than is expressed against race or ethnicity.

A worker at a settlement organization, in contrast, indicated his belief that LGB organizations often seem to assign greater importance to matters of

sexual orientation than newcomers do, remarking that newcomers often believe same-sex sexuality to constitute only a small dimension of identity, and questioning the suitability of referrals to LGB organizations as a result:

The people associated with [a local LGB group]... their sexual orientation is their whole identity, and that's who they are, and that's it. That's all they're interested in talking about. And for our clients, or the clients that I see, that's a small part of their identity, so ... it's not a match.

Based on the above comments, as well as newcomers' perceptions of experiencing challenges based on the confluence of factors relating to multiple dimensions of identity, it is possible to conclude that there may at times exist discrepancies between service providers' and LGB newcomers' understandings of settlement needs. Though these distinctions were highlighted in this section of the paper primarily to draw attention to the possible relevance of reassessing service needs specific to LGB immigrants and refugees, it is important to note that several service providers did recognize the complex interplay of identity-based factors that together appear to define settlement experiences and needs in the population under study. Indeed, given that a number of workers in both LGB organizations and settlement agencies commented on the need for cross-service collaboration, it is possible to suggest that a notable number of service providers recognized the likely futility of basing service needs on singular dimensions of identity.

Regardless, in discussing identity-related issues that appeared to underlie discrepancies between the accounts of service providers and newcomers, we wish to emphasize the ubiquity of matters related to identity throughout the findings of this paper as a whole. Not only did such factors seem to define the overall context of marginalization situating the experiences of LGB newcomers, but they also played a significant role in specifically delineating ser-

vice accessibility barriers among this population; and based on these barriers, the possible settlement needs of sexual minority immigrants and refugees. Accordingly, we begin the next section of the paper with a brief summary of these findings and with an attempt to conceptualize identity-related issues raised in the study for the purpose of informing policy development, program planning, direct service delivery, and possible future direction in research, specifically in relation to LGB newcomers' settlement experiences and needs.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore settlement experiences and needs of LGB newcomers in British Columbia across three urban centres of varying sizes. Thus far, we have provided an overview of relevant literature to provide a frame of reference for studying this area of inquiry, we have specified and justified the design of this qualitative study, and we have outlined findings obtained through the research process. In this section, we wish to examine the study's findings at further length by situating them in the limited body of existing related literature, by particularly highlighting intersectionality as an applicable lens with which to conceptualize these accounts, and by using this level of analysis as a basis for delineating implications of the findings on policy, practice at various levels, as well as research. To start, however, we wish to summarize the study's findings in order to emphasize particular themes that might serve as grounds for more substantive analysis.

Issues of identity appeared to form a particularly pronounced framework for understanding settlement experiences and needs among sexual minority immigrants and refugees. We began our overview of the study's findings, in fact, by outlining different meanings surrounding same-sex sexuality, orientation, and identity that were particularly invoked by LGB newcomers in

the process of conducting this study. We followed this examination with a related analysis of experiences of marginalization in this population and attended closely to how varying dimensions of identity, including race and sexuality, appeared to specifically construct the realities of disadvantage for LGB newcomer participants. In exploring both the diversity in meanings of same-sex sexuality and the confluence of identity-based factors shaping the lives of sexual minority newcomers, we gained insight into not only the highly variable identification of this population with the Western constructs of "lesbian," "gay," and "bisexual," but also the reality of marginalization among LGB newcomers as a complex product of subjective experience and structural context that could interface with multiple dimensions of identity such as sexuality, culture, geopolitical context, race, and gender. Importantly, we acknowledged that along with subjective experience, issues of identity, whether related to varying meanings of same-sex sexuality or marginalization on diverse bases, appeared to be prominent factors in constructing the lives of LGB newcomers. For instance, several newcomers indicated experiencing not only racism within mainstream LGB communities, but also a general lack of connection with these social networks if they did not affiliate with the constructs of "LGB" as markers of identity. On the other hand, a large number of immigrants and refugees additionally reported fearing or experiencing rejection and sexuality-based discrimination within their cultural or ethnic communities, thereby diminishing their identification with these networks.

Given the salience of identity-related issues in overall accounts of LGB newcomers, it is no surprise that settlement experiences of this population appeared to be primarily based on these factors. Indeed, in examining phenomena related to settlement, we found that a large proportion of newcomers experienced significant isolation, as well as disconnection from information

on applicable resources, seemingly as a consequence of neither fully identifying with their linguistic/ethnocultural communities, nor wholly with sexual minority social networks. We further discovered that many feared accessing appropriate sources of support that could mitigate issues of isolation related to same-sex sexual orientation, primarily because a significant proportion feared (or had experienced) that doing so would expose them to expressions of sexuality-based stigmatization unique to their social locations as newcomers with multifaceted and intersecting identities. Indeed, while a number of newcomers indicated feeling reluctant to seek support for sexuality-related issues within settlement agencies they perceived as potentially discriminatory to sexual minorities, others also discussed the apparent dangers of accessing mainstream LGB support due to perceptions of having to publicly self-identify as LGB and therefore risk experiencing stigmatization as a condition of access. Of note, these safety issues appeared to be more pronounced in smaller centres, particularly since stigmatization against sexual minorities was perceived to be greater in these contexts.

Settlement needs were largely based on identity-based factors, similar to the above. Namely, given that a large proportion of newcomers reported concerns of safety and danger in accessing settlement support relevant to their unique realities as sexual minority newcomers with multifaceted identities, many provided insight into mechanisms for addressing these barriers in discussing their settlement needs. Many newcomers specifically indicated their preferences for the universalization of the provision of information and support surrounding issues of same-sex sexuality among all newcomers, regardless of self-identification with LGB communities, in order to minimize the need to publicly label same-sex sexuality, and therefore lower the risk of experiencing stigmatization, in pursuing relevant support. Some newcomers,

for instance, acknowledged the relevance of orientation and print material aimed at all immigrants and refugees arriving in Canada that would not only be affirming of same-sex sexual orientation, but would also provide practical information on accessing support services that would respect confidentiality and the possible need for discretion. One way to provide access to such information in a private way would be to post it on the publicly accessible web sites of local settlement agencies and of the Canadian Council for Refugees. It is important to note, despite the many immigrant respondents' preference that information and support be made universally available, refugee participants appeared to prefer specialized services for LGB newcomers; our analysis of this phenomenon included the possibility that members of this population had already experienced public disclosure of same-sex sexuality by virtue of having claimed refugee status in Canada on the basis of sexual orientation and, therefore, may have communicated greater receptiveness to services specified exclusively for sexual minorities. Aside from universalization, another participant-identified means of reducing accessibility barriers to relevant support services included the notion of cross-service education and collaboration among settlement agencies and LGB organizations, specifically with the intent of ensuring the availability of quality services for LGB newcomers across the range of settings accessed by this population.

Importantly, we found one notable area of discrepancy between the accounts of newcomers and those of service providers. While participating immigrants and refugees consistently referred to the salience of multiple identity-based factors in discussing their settlement experiences and needs, a number of settlement service providers and LGB organization members perceived the likelihood that newcomers would base their needs either primarily on cultural factors related to their settlement experiences, or conversely, on

issues related to same-sex sexuality. Not surprisingly, while some settlement workers emphasized race, culture, and ethnicity as constituting more relevant dimensions of identity, a number of participants associated with LGB organizations placed greater significance on sexuality-related components of identity in discussing LGB newcomers' experiences. This finding indicated the possibility that settlement agencies and LGB organizations may at times lack recognition of the complex realities underpinning the lived experiences of sexual minority immigrants and refugees and, consequently, highlighted the need to base the service needs of this population on their own subjective accounts of these factors.

As noted in earlier sections of this paper, the body of literature relevant to the experiences of LGB newcomers is limited. Nonetheless, it is possible to begin situating some of the study's findings within related areas of inquiry, beginning with research on the circumstances and experiences of other diverse categories of newcomers. Literature in this area has illustrated distinctions in settlement experiences and needs among populations such as women and youth and has highlighted the importance of recognizing these significant differences as bases for developing settlement services unique to diverse groups of newcomers (Dyck and McLaren 2004; Omidvar and Richmond 2005; Waters 2011). The current study's findings have arguably contributed to this body of literature by illustrating the uniqueness of LGB immigrants and refugees as groups with distinct settlement needs, some of which appear to include protection from sexuality-related stigmatization.

Literature that has addressed issues specific to LGB refugees is particularly worth considering. As already discussed, some writers (Jordan 2010; Lee and Brotman 2011) in this field of inquiry have highlighted that the experiences of sexual minority refugees are often marked by complex interactions between

structural contexts involving marginalization at the intersection of race, sexuality, and other dimensions, together with asylum seekers' subjective constructions of these realities. Given the centrality of intersecting identity-based concerns in constructing LGB newcomers' circumstances and needs in this study, the nature of which appeared to vary depending on subjective experience and individual social location, literature on phenomena of intersecting oppressions among LGB refugees may be highly applicable in conceptualizing the study's findings for the purpose of delineating possible implications of this research. Indeed, such a frame of reference, if used to analyze the contents of this study, would for instance highlight the need for service providers to recognize LGB newcomers' settlement experiences and needs as functions of multiple identity-based factors, when in fact (as discovered in the findings) members of LGB organizations and settlement agencies sometimes overlook the intersectionality of these realities among sexual minority immigrants and refugees.

In order to more closely examine how the notion of intersectionality, as discussed in some of the literature on LGB asylum seekers (Lee and Brotman 2011), could be used to appropriately conceptualize the study's findings, it may be necessary to first fully define this construct. Using a framework of intersectionality, each person is seen as having a complex identity, encompassing multiple facets that intersect at the interface of personal narrative and social context; each individual is therefore said to develop a complex and ever-changing subjectivity that is in part shaped by both personal and political dimensions of the self (Cronin and King 2010; Yuval-Davis 2006). Applied to the findings of the current study, this lens may provide a basis for understanding the multidimensional context of marginalization invoked by participants, as well as identity-related settlement experiences and needs discussed

by newcomer respondents, including most significantly those related to issues of danger and safety.

First, employing a lens of intersectionality necessitates an analysis of how multiple structural issues might interact together to construct particular subjective realities and therefore negates the assumption of marginalization as a product of a single dimension of identity that is more salient than other facets of the self in underlying experiences of oppression (Yuval-Davis 2006). Accordingly, this frame of reference accounts for the unique context of marginalization among many LGB newcomers who, as discussed in the study's findings, can neither fully identify with their ethnocultural communities nor with mainstream LGB communities on the basis of encountering discrimination in both of these networks, and whose experiences of oppression can therefore only be understood by acknowledging the confluence of factors related to both same-sex sexuality and "othered" racial/cultural identity. In addition, because a framework of intersectionality highlights the need to examine subjective accounts of multifaceted oppression as grounds for understanding implications of marginalization on lived experience and for addressing related social injustices (Yuval-Davis 2006), this lens may explain the relationship between newcomer participants' descriptions of marginalization on multiple bases and the prominent role of these factors in informing both settlement experiences and needs in this population. Indeed, given the centrality of intersecting identity-based factors underlying many LGB newcomers' experiences of danger and their consequent need for greater safety within the context of settlement, the lens of intersectionality arguably holds relevance in relation to these findings.

Using a framework of intersectionality to conceptualize the study's findings, particularly for the purpose of determining ramifications of the research for policy, service delivery and future inquiry, may then entail a recognition

of intersecting identity-based factors, alongside subjective experience, as grounds for more concretely defining the settlement needs of LGB newcomers at various levels. Beginning at the policy level, an acknowledgement and understanding of intersectionality in relation to the settlement experiences of LGB newcomers, would translate into formal mechanisms for enhancing access to appropriate resources, support, and services, primarily to mitigate safety concerns related to this population's experiences of isolation, discrimination, and stigmatization on multiple grounds. For instance, government-sponsored literature geared at immigrants and refugees could be revised to include more substantive information on issues of sexual orientation in Canada, as well as resources for immigrants and refugees with same-sex sexuality. Several participants in the study, indeed, discussed the usefulness of a universalized "orientation" to Canadian society, geared at all newcomers, which would contain information on issues of same-sex sexual orientation, and would minimize safety concerns by eliminating the need for immigrants and refugees to self-identify as "LGB" in order to access such information. Another policy-related implication is the need to amend existing "best practices" documents intended for settlement service providers, primarily those created by federal government agencies (Parliament of Canada 2010), so that they reflect the need for settlement agencies to incorporate the provision of general sexuality-related information and resources within the scope of their services. The implementation of this standard would encourage the development of support for immigrants and refugees with same-sex sexuality, particularly in settings that serve newcomer populations as a whole, and would therefore address some of the safety concerns associated with accessing support among a population with intersecting cultural and sexuality-related barriers. More importantly, however, both a universalized "orientation" process, as well as the incorporation

of sexuality-specific issues in settlement-related “best practices” documents, would serve to recognize the existence of multiple identity-based factors, including those related to sexual orientation, as holding potential relevance in the settlement experiences of immigrants and refugees.

A framework of intersectionality, when applied to the study’s findings, would also assist in identifying implications of these accounts for program planning and direct service delivery within agencies mandated to serve LGB newcomers. Within the realm of program planning, as already mentioned, this lens would highlight the need for service providers to recognize the salience of multiple identity-based factors in influencing the experiences and needs of LGB newcomers, instead of encouraging them to assume the relevance of singular dimensions of identity as bases for assessing service needs among this population. Indeed, a recognition of intersecting issues among LGB newcomers, be they related to race, culture, sexuality, or gender, would provide grounds for both settlement agencies and LGB organizations to not only include programming suited to sexual minority newcomers, including for instance health services that address sexuality-related concerns non-intrusively and confidentially, but also to link with one another for cross-service collaboration, exchanges in skills and competency-based training, and routine referrals to ensure the provision of appropriate services in both settings. Since a number of service providers, in fact, acknowledged the need for the formation of alliances between settlement agencies and LGB organizations, based on the multitude of cultural, racial, and sexuality-related factors influencing the settlement experiences of LGB immigrants and refugees potentially accessing either or types of organizations, this implication may be important to note.

Given however, that employing a lens of intersectionality would also necessitate attention to variability in subjective experience (in this case, among

subgroups of LGB newcomers), using this framework to conceptualize implications of the study's findings for program planning also highlights more specific ramifications. For instance, given that refugees appeared to prefer specialized services intended specifically for sexual minority newcomers, primarily since those participating in the study seemed to fear stigmatization less by virtue of having already disclosed same-sex sexuality in the process of making refugee claims, a framework of intersectionality would attend to this distinction as justification for creating programs specific to LGB asylum seekers, whose needs would likely differ from those of other sexual minority newcomer groups favouring the universalization of services. In addition, since issues of danger and safety appeared to be far more pronounced in smaller urban centres, a lens of intersectionality would underscore the uniqueness of recognizing this geopolitical context in understanding the needs of LGB newcomers located in these regions and would therefore highlight the heightened need for service providers in these settings to design programming appropriate to this population that is especially confidential, non-intrusive, and safe.

Intersectionality, as a frame of reference, may additionally assist in conceptualizing implications of the study for direct service delivery. Perhaps most importantly, given the apparent reluctance of many participating newcomers to raise sexuality-related concerns within social service settings, particularly on the grounds of fearing stigmatization or rejection at the intersection of cultural context and same-sex sexuality, conceptualizing this reality through the lens of intersectionality highlights the need for service providers to address these barriers as interrelated expressions of oppression on multiple grounds. Settlement workers or members of LGB organizations could, for instance, overtly inform newcomers of confidentiality and safety in relation to matters of same-sex sexuality (regardless of clients' self-disclosure as "LGB") and

could additionally use gender-neutral language (e.g., “partner”) in discussing relationship concerns with immigrants and refugees. The latter strategy, in particular, would likely provide an implicit level of assurance to LGB newcomer clients that service providers are open to addressing issues related to diverse sexual orientations. Recognizing the need for some sexual minority newcomers to maintain discretion surrounding issues of same-sex sexuality, neither strategy entails asking direct questions related to newcomers’ sexual orientation, thus addressing fears of stigmatization and contributing to the safety newcomers need in order to discuss sexuality-related concerns.

Lastly, aside from assisting in determining implications of the study’s findings on the settlement needs of LGB newcomers in domains of policy and service provision, using a lens of intersectionality allows recognition of issues arising from this study that could also inform future inquiry. Perhaps most significantly, given distinctions in the accounts of lesbians and refugees interviewed in this study, primarily due to the unique social contexts that differentiate the experiences of these groups from other categories of LGB newcomers under study, these findings suggest a need for future research aimed at specifically analyzing the settlement experiences and needs of these populations. Further, since transgender individuals were not included in the scope of this study, an intersectionality-informed critique of this limitation would likely highlight the need for future research into the unique contexts, circumstances, and service needs of trans-identified newcomers. Lastly, given recommendations for changes in policy and service provision that have arisen from the study’s findings, all of which were also arguably based on an intersectionality-based conceptualization of the research, another implication is the need to evaluate initiatives or projects aimed at implementing any of the measures discussed in this paper.

The pursuit of this study, whose purpose was to examine the settlement needs and experiences of LGB newcomers, was justified on the basis of the need to gain insight into potentially unique settlement issues pertaining to the circumstances of this subcategory of immigrants and refugees. Interestingly, findings of the study revealed that sexual minority newcomers appeared to undergo the process of settlement distinctly from other groups of immigrants and refugees studied previously, namely due to the role of entwined identity-based factors specific to their social locations in shaping this population's settlement experiences and needs. Some of the unique settlement needs pertaining to sexual minority newcomers, among others, included addressing perceived and experienced safety concerns relating to stigmatization and discrimination, as well as more generally ensuring a recognition, among service providers and LGB organizations, of multiple identity-based factors that together saliently seemed to influence settlement service needs among LGB immigrants and refugees. As already noted earlier, we wish to highlight the need for further research aimed at specifically examining settlement issues within subcategories of LGB newcomers involved in this study, including same-sex attracted women and refugees, as well as future inquiry into the realities of settlement among trans-identified individuals. Such research, we believe, would serve to enhance an understanding of intersectionality as a frame of reference for delineating settlement needs among diverse groups of newcomers and, in so doing, would provide additional bases for creating diversified settlement services specific to the needs of immigrants and refugees often facing multiple barriers.

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## APPENDIX A: GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH LGB NEWCOMERS AND FAMILY PARTICIPANTS

When individuals respond to the recruitment flyer, I will invite them to identify their age, gender, education, ethnicity, sexual orientation, any disability, and length of time in Canada.

Prior to the interview, consent provisions will be discussed, and an opportunity to sign the consent form will be offered.

To begin the interview, the purpose of the study will be outlined briefly. The following questions will guide the interviews:

1. Could you tell me the meaning to you of identifying as LGB, having same-sex sexual orientation, or same-sex sexual experience.
2. Could you please describe issues newcomers who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual and their families may encounter in settling in Canada.
3. What help might LGB newcomers and their families need that is in some way related to sexual orientation.
4. Could you describe any experiences you have had with services for immigrants and refugees.
5. What do you perceive could be helpful for LGB newcomers and their families?
6. What do you perceive could impede LGB newcomers and their families in accessing services?

## APPENDIX B: GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH SETTLEMENT AGENCY WORKERS

Prior to the beginning of the interview, consent provisions will be discussed, and an opportunity to sign the consent form will be offered.

To begin the interview, the purpose of the study will be outlined briefly. Then the participant will be guided in sharing his experiences as a service provider.

1. Could you tell me the meaning to you of identifying as LGB, having same-sex sexual orientation, or same-sex sexual experience
2. Could you please tell me about any experiences you have had as a service provider working with LGB newcomers and/or their families.

Probes that will be used in exploring the participant's experiences:

- What was your role (e.g., intake and assessment, counsellor, service manager ....)?
  - When did you have this experience?
3. How might issues related to sexual orientation be relevant to serving clients of your agency?
  4. How prepared do you feel you are in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills to help LGB clients and their families?
  5. Tell me about any aspect of the agency that makes it better or worse for LGB clients and/or their families.
    - policies
    - procedures – for example, do you gather data re: the sexual orientation of clients?
    - public relations, program descriptions, advertisements
    - forms

- professional education
  - other aspects
5. What is your analysis/explanation of the response of your agency to LGB people?
  6. How would you change the service to make it better?
  7. What are supports and impediments in making services more responsive to LGB people and their families?
  8. What is your age, education, ethnicity, sexual orientation, any disability, and years of experience in settlement services?

## APPENDIX C: GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS OF LGB ORGANIZATIONS

Prior to the beginning of the focus group, consent provisions will be discussed, and an opportunity to sign the consent form will be offered.

To begin the interview, the purpose of the study will be outlined briefly. Then participants will be guided in discussing the following topics

1. Could you tell me the meaning to you of identifying as LGB, having same-sex sexual orientation or same-sex sexual experience.
2. Experiences with immigrant and refugee newcomers in your group.
3. How might differences of culture and ethnicity be relevant in your group?
4. What are aspects of your group that may be welcoming of newcomers?
5. What are aspects of your group that may be unreceptive toward newcomers?
6. What is your analysis/explanation of the response of your group to newcomers?
7. How would you change the group to make it more welcoming?
8. What are supports and impediments in making your group more inclusive of newcomers?

Participants will be invited to identify in writing their age, gender, sexual orientation, education, ethnicity, and any disability.

