

Isaac Wright - University of Calgary

Project: Stories of Suicidality: Exploring Experiences of Peer Support Among Suicidal Trans People

Background:



Suicidal ideation and behaviour are prevalent among transgender(trans) individuals, with common prevention tactics often using involuntary psychiatric holds or police intervention. Trans communities have proposed that these prevention tactics to reduce suicides carry a high burden of potential harms to suicidal people, especially racialized and/or disabled trans people. This nonconsensual involvement of services revokes individual autonomy, can expose people to police brutality, and often compromises access to gender-affirming medical care. Each of these outcomes – including violence, denial of gender

affirming care, removal of autonomy- are likely to increase the risk of suicidal behaviour and may exacerbate the crisis they intended to resolve. Community-based peer support models, wherein peers with lived experience of mental health concerns and/or marginalized identities support others, may be less likely to rely on the use of non- consensual intervention and other harmful prevention tactics. Instead, they focus on mutual understanding, mutual aid, and consent-based support strategies which preserve autonomy: strategies which address the source of distress, while mitigating unnecessary harms.

This study is a narrative inquiry, through which I will explore the experiences of TGNC people who access community-based peer supports while suicidal. The research will be informed by theories about suicidism (systemic discrimination against suicidal people), queer theory, and abolitionist social work praxis. These stories of support by and for suicidal trans people will constitute invaluable knowledge for mental healthcare providers and policymakers, with knowledge translation efforts focused on sharing findings with community members, peer support services, and service providers at diverse settings across Canada.

BIO

Isaac Wright (RSW; he/him) is a graduate student in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, where his research focuses on peer support by and for trans people living with suicidality. He also works as a social worker in a postsecondary setting, providing case management services. His other research interests include addiction and recovery, 2SLGBTQIA+ health policy, transgender health, and postsecondary students.

