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Laurier doctoral student in community psychology wins prestigious Vanier Scholarship

WATERLOO – A Wilfrid Laurier University doctoral student has been awarded a prestigious [Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship](#). [Ellis Furman](#), who is in the [Community Psychology](#) PhD program, will receive \$150,000 over three years.

Furman's award was one of [166 new Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships](#) announced by **Kirsty Duncan**, federal minister of science and sport, on May 16. In total, three federal research funding agencies are spending nearly \$35 million on Vanier scholarships and Bating Postdoctoral Fellowships. Furman's award is through the **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)**.

Furman's research focuses on gender-based violence affecting people in the LGBTQ2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two spirit or other gender or sexual minority) community. Furman, who identifies as trans masculine (identifies more with the masculine side of the gender spectrum), has been researching gender-based violence since their undergraduate studies.

Furman came to Laurier for a master's degree in community psychology under the mentorship of Assistant Professor [Ciann Wilson](#), who is now their doctoral supervisor. Furman's master's research focused on gender-non-binary students and their experiences of discrimination on university campuses. Furman's current research focuses on LGBTQ2S+ people as both victims and perpetrators of violence, particularly within the context of families and intimate partnerships.

Research has demonstrated that members of the LGBTQ2S+ community are just as or more likely to be victims of gender-based violence as people who are straight and cisgender (identifying with the gender assigned at birth). However, many of the resources available to victims of violence, whether informational resources or facilities such as shelters, do not adequately take LGBTQ2S+ needs and realities into account.

"I came into this work because I was noticing a problem in my community," said Furman. "I started looking into queer and trans experiences of violence and service access and I really saw it impacting people close to me. Research has uncovered that there are major gaps in service provision to support these communities."

Furman plans to research the use of **transformative justice** approaches, which hold people accountable for the harm they do to others and help individuals heal from being harmed. These approaches may include mediation or programs involving community members helping community members.

"What I'm trying to do is look at how transformative justice theory and trauma-informed approaches can be incorporated into existing gender-based violence supports in Canada," said Furman. "I want to examine the work being done within communities that is not necessarily being funded or recognized, and figure out if and how these creative approaches can be incorporated into existing programs that address violence."

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Vanier Scholar/Page 2

“Ellis's scholarship to date has implications for providing us insight into the lived experience of gender non-binary communities – work of great importance at this juncture in our society,” said Wilson. “Ellis is a student who has gone above and beyond not only in their course work, but in seeking out opportunities to gain further research experience. This scholarship is a testament to the timeliness, impact, and relevance of their work.”

Laurier is also home to another current Vanier Scholar, [Bianca Dreyer, who received a Vanier Scholarship in 2017](#). The 2019/20 competition will launch in mid-June. Laurier students considering applying should contact the [Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#).

- 30 -