

Experiences of LGBTQ+ Occupational Therapy Practitioners Within Work-related Occupations: A Reflective Thematic Analysis Approach

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Introduction

- ~ 5.5% of adults 18 years & older in the USA identify as LGBTQIA+, with each subsequent generation having a larger percentage of LGBTQIA+ identified individuals¹
- Disclosure of one's sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace is mediated by many factors, including interpersonal interactions & workplace climate²
- Healthcare spaces are harmful to LGBTQIA+ providers secondary to overt discrimination &/or construction of those spaces as hetero- and cis-normative³ Transgender & gender diverse practitioners face greatest stigma in workplace⁴
- Very little research conducted on experiences of LGBTQIA+ occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) as related to experiences in the workplace

Purpose

To understand & evaluate experiences & occupational impacts of being an LGBTQIA+ occupational therapy practitioner within the United States (US) working within healthcare & other health-related systems (e.g. education, academia, community, etc.)

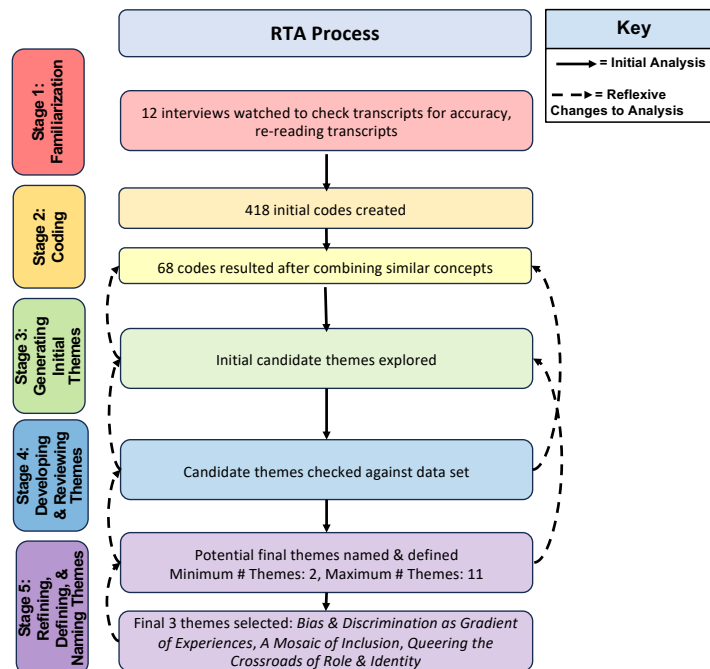
Aims

- To examine LGBTQIA+ occupational therapy practitioner's perceptions of workplace contexts with regards to intersection of their sexual orientation &/or gender identities
- To assess perceived impacts of holding sexual minority or gender diverse identities on work-related occupations of occupational therapy practitioners

Research Design & Methodology

- Recruitment:** Snowball & convenience sampling via multiple web-based entities: The Network for LGBTQIA+ Concerns in Occupational Therapy, Facebook groups, X postings, CommuOT, & State Occupational Therapy (OT) Association email listservs
- Inclusion Criteria:** Identify as sexual minority &/or gender diverse/transgender, speak, read English, hold an EL-degree as OT or OTA, worked as occupational therapy practitioner, worked in US in last 5 years, participated in Phase I of Study
- Exclusion Criteria:** Current OT/OTA students with no previous experience as practicing OTP
- Data Source:** Data analyzed collected during Phase II of larger study on experiences of LGBTQIA+ occupational therapy practitioners in workplace. Semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom; 10 uniform questions; Interviews ranged from 18-40 minutes
- Analytical Methods:** Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)^{5,6} conducted using NVIVO 14 Software
- Participants:** 12 participants; 10 OTs (1 previously an OTA), 1 OTA; 6 Cisgender participants (4 women, 2 men), 6 transgender or gender diverse participants (4 nonbinary, 1 trans man; 1 undisclosed gender diverse); All identified as sexual minorities (5 gay, 3 queer, 2 bisexual, 1 pansexual, 1 lesbian); 10 identified race/ethnicity as white (2 culturally Jewish), 2 did not identify race/ethnicity).

Results



Illustrative Quotes

Theme	Quote
Theme 1: Bias & Discrimination as Gradient of Experiences	<p>"The Title IX officer gave us a bunch of ideas for how to address [the homophobia] and we didn't do any of them because my boss... was afraid to rock the boat. So, we didn't do it." - Avery (she/they)</p> <p>"oh, wouldn't you rather dance with [my niece]?" - Steve (he/him) quoting a member of his leadership team</p>
Theme 2: A Mosaic of Inclusion	<p>"Feels like June 1st, you get all these pride flags in your email box and you're like, 'that's not what I want'..." - Eva (she/her)</p> <p>"...co-workers have corrected someone else to use the correct pronouns for me... those instances are not as abundant as I'd like them to be, but [are] also impactful." - Queenie (they/he)</p>
Theme 3: Queering the Crossroads of Role and Identity	<p>"I have a lot of clients I work with who are LGBTQ young people and... they've had questions about what it looks like to be a queer adult ... I'm able to share some of that personal experience" - Finn (she/her)</p> <p>"... my queerness impacts how I think about OT and occupations... in a way that I don't think other people [understand]" - Gwyn (She/They)</p>

Discussion

Theme	Main Elements of Theme
Theme 1: Bias & Discrimination as a Gradient of Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bias & discrimination-motivated events towards LGBTQIA+ peoples occur in almost every workplace Wide range of experiences, some explicitly clear & directed, others more subtle & effusive Includes employers, organizations, co-workers, clients, & other LGBTQIA+ people
Theme 2: A Mosaic of Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGBTQIA+ individuals have differing ideas of what support & inclusion look like No one method of support or attempt at inclusion is sufficient, multiple types must be worked together Support & inclusion can, [& should] come from interpersonal (colleagues & leadership), organizational (policies & representation), & systemic (profession, laws, cultural) levels
Theme 3: Queering the Crossroads of Role and Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique interaction between LGBTQIA+ identity & OTP role that impacts engagement/perception of work experiences Multiple factors influence interviewees' ability to be authentic self in workplace Identity may impact how LGBTQIA+ OTPs practice & relationship with OT profession LGBTQIA+ co-workers play an integral role in community building at work

Conclusion

- Results reflect similar findings in both the limited OT literature (Falzarano & Pizzi, 2015), & broader healthcare studies^{7,8,9,10}. Bias & discrimination remain a universal experience of LGBTQIA+ OTPs, though impact on work-related occupations is dependent on individual perception & context
- Holding a LGBTQIA+ identity may, directly or indirectly, impact a practitioner's perspective on practice in occupational therapy
- Workplaces should aim to practice multiple methods of inclusion for LGBTQIA+ OTPs, as practitioners hold many differing definitions of inclusive practices. Future research should continue to explore the unique perspectives & experiences of LGBTQIA+ OTPs, in particular relationship between LGBTQIA+ clients & providers.

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For references, follow QR code

