

Practices and Pedagogies: A Qualitative Study of LGBTQ+ Representation in Physical Therapy



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Introduction

- U.S. LGBTQ+ community represents 4.5% of the total population.¹
- MN LGBTQ+ community represents ~4% of total population.²
- Unclear what percentage of LGBTQ+ are represented in PT/PTA professions.
- APTA/MNPTA are attempting efforts to improve diversity in PT/PTA professions.³

Objective

- Aim to understand the successes, barriers, and shared experiences of under-represented who established careers as PTs or PTAs.

Methods

Subjects

- PT/PTA clinicians and students from the LGBTQ+ community

Four Focus Groups

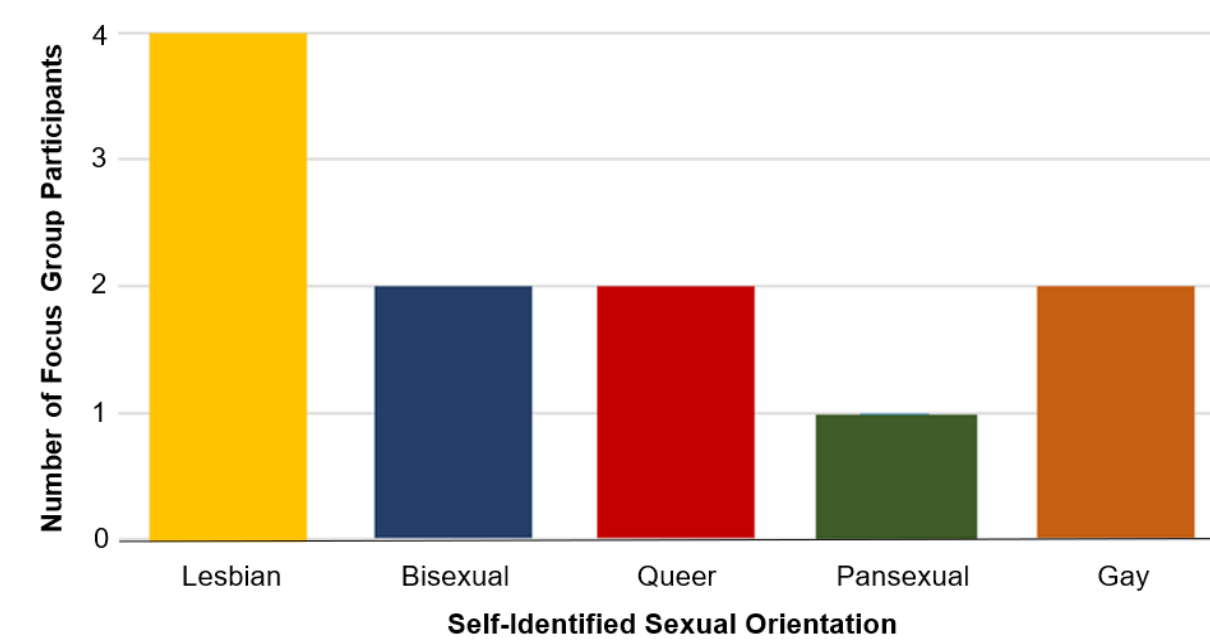
- Recruitment through flyers and PT/PTA programs in MN
- Virtual 90-minute focus groups
- 2-4 participants with 2 PIs and 2 trained students

Data Analysis

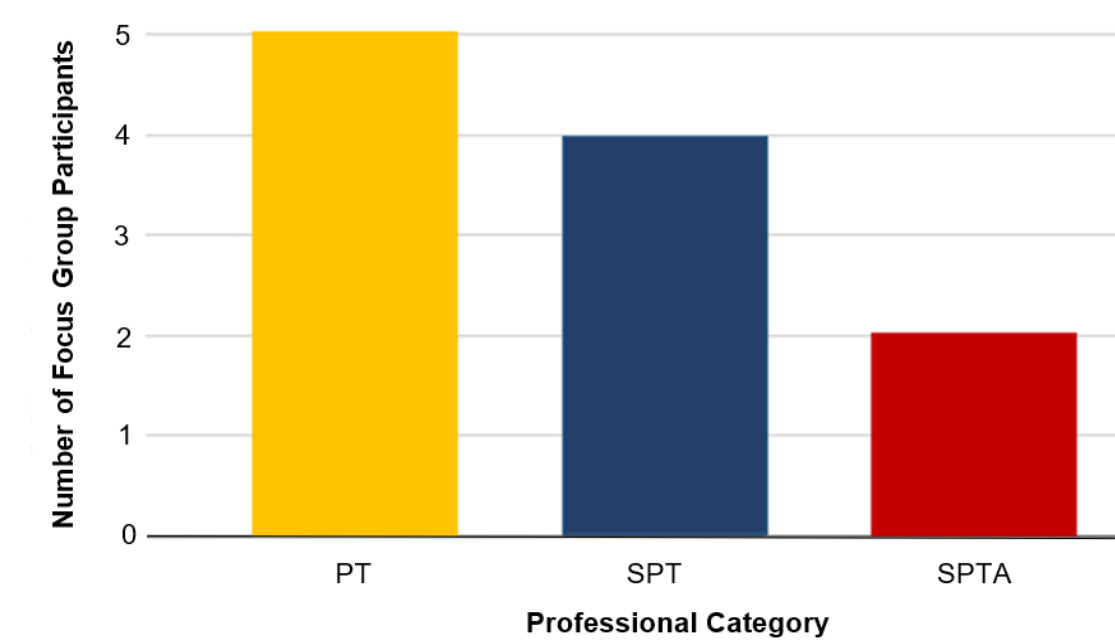
- Audio recorded, transcribed and de-identified using Temi.com
- Coding and analysis using NVIVO12

Results

Self-Identified Sexual Orientation Distribution of Focus Groups



Professional Category Distribution of Focus Groups



Major Themes

Illustrative Quotes

Major Theme 1: Belonging

A sense of being approved of and accepted by society in general.⁴

“When I came to PT school, I felt instantly like I didn't belong... I did not feel safe and welcome”

Major Theme 2: Insufficiencies

Something that is insufficient or falls short of expectations.⁴

“We need to make sure that they [PT/PTA] students actually get the education that they need to have going out into the clinic to interact with a diverse patient population. If they go to the clinic and we haven't taught them the proper ways to use pronouns, we are preventing inclusiveness.”

“When my partner was pregnant with our oldest, I was in grad school at that time. I remember having to talk to my advisor and he said, ‘Are you worried about people?’ And I said ‘Yeah... I don't know what people are going to feel. I took some like paternity leave, but I was still nervous.’”

Major Theme 3: Microaggressions

Actions that often unconsciously expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a marginalized group.⁴

“A student [in my class] asked one of the faculty members, ‘So this form that we're supposed to fill out while we're doing our eval, it only has male female on it.’ I kid you not, this faculty member said ‘well, you should be able to tell when they walk in the room.’ Are you kidding me?”

Major Theme 4: Potential Solutions

Something that is used or done to deal with and end a problem.⁴

“Some sort of indication... whether it be like a value statement or a sticker or something that says that we do accept you... that you are welcome here”

Conclusion

- Lacking feeling of belonging/support
- Invisible minority
- “Insufficiencies”
- All types of diversity
- “Solutions”

Clinical Relevance

- Need to address microaggressions in the class/clinic
- Promoting LGBTQ+ acceptance and visibility in PT/PTA education
- Improve representation and understanding in the clinic to increase comfort and safety of LGBTQ+ clinicians, students and patients
 - Use of preferred pronouns
 - Multiple options for gender and sexual identity in forms
 - Education for clinicians regarding LGBTQ+ issues
 - Welcoming pamphlets and signage

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- MNPTA

References

1. Conron et al. (2020) The Williams Institute, UCLA.
2. LGBTQ. Culture Care Connection. Accessed January 13, 2022. <https://culturecareconnection.org/cultural-responsiveness/lgbtq/>
3. Nivet MA. (2011) *Acad Med*. 2011;86(12):1487-1489.
4. Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Merriam-webster.com. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

