Career Development Theories as they Relate to LGBT Individuals

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Savickas

Narrative Process Overview
• Goal to gain awareness of and like one’s personal story
• Invest identity capital and story to cope with uncertainties caused by work transitions and traumas
• Focus on: identity, adaptability, intentionality and stories, rather than: personality, maturity, decidedness, and assessment scores
• Emphasize subjective story about self – including personal life and work life

Positives for LGBT
- LGBT individuals’ subjective stories are valued and not discounted
- Allows for flexibility in disclosure of one’s LGBT identity
- Encouraged to find comfort and strength in their narrative

Challenges for LGBT
- May hold too tightly to negative narrative about self or the world of work
- Realities of homophobia may prevent LGBT individual from safely developing identity in personal or working life

Mary Sue Richardson

Counseling for Work and Relationships Overview
• Increase attention beyond the occupational domain to include multiple social contexts of work and relationship
• Theory is based on expansion and inclusion, likely supportive of LGBT individuals
• Development happens in interactions, not just a preprogrammed sequence. Therefore, diversity of developmental pathways is accepted and expected given the diversity of social context in which people participate
• This theory supports thinking about work as a context of development rather than career as an aspect of self

Positives for LGBT
- Holistic approach to development – based on relation to myriad of interrelated social contexts in which they participate
- Accounts for the cross-over of relationships and work and refuses to see the domains as separate entities
- Emphasizes de-gendering of work roles

Challenges for LGBT
- May be difficult to keep LGBT identity hidden based on overlapping domains

Krieshok, Black & McKay

Trilateral Model of Adaptive Career Decision-Making Overview
• Both rational and intuitive processes are dialectically intertwined in effective decision making
• Model is founded and balanced on occupational engagement
• All decision makers should be adaptable and recognize the limits of rational and intuitive processes
• Occupational engagement leads to evolving self-schemas which lead to more informed judgments and decisions about work and life matters in general

Positives for LGBT
- LGBT individuals may have previous experience transforming "seemingly threatening problems into opportunities” as suggested by this theory
- Support to follow intuitive (possibly “nonconforming”) interests

Challenges for LGBT
- May be difficult to "trust in the universe" because of previous experiences with homophobia
- Difficulty becoming engaged in an appropriate work environment (lack of LGBT role-models)
- Intuitive desires/interests may lead LGBT individuals to high-risk occupations

Super

Life-Span Approach Overview
• Internal and external conditions impact one’s self-concept
• Vocational self-concept is developmental and includes a progression through multiple stages
• Greater satisfaction results with greater implementation of self-concept

Positives for LGBT
- Developmental stages similar to sexual identity development
- Encouraged to implement their current self-concept
- Flexibility to change self-concept (could be change in LGBT status) in relation to career development

Challenges for LGBT
- Prejudiced work environments may prevent full realization of self-concept
- Vocational self-concept development may be delayed by focus on sexual identity development for LGBT individuals

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Krumboltz

Happenstance Overview
• Goal to create satisfying life, not just make a decision
• Engage in exploratory actions to generate unplanned events
• Embrace open-mindedness and maximize benefits of unplanned events
• On-going experience that can promote life-long learning

Positives for LGBT
- LGBT individuals encouraged to seek a satisfying life that is authentic
- Benefits of unplanned events might increase self-perception and perception of self in various vocations
- Happenstance experiences can reduce isolation felt by many LGBT people

Challenges for LGBT
- Negative perceptions may be reinforced if unplanned event is unpleasant
- LGBT individual may face rejection while engaging in exploratory activities

Social Cognitive

SCCT Overview
• Important components: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and barriers
• External forces (society, parents) encouraged gender-congruent activities → self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations
• Emphasis on identifying barriers and supports for various occupations

Positives for LGBT
- Re-evaluate impact of parental and societal reinforcement on interests and self-efficacy
- Specifically investigate both barriers and supports for desired occupation

Challenges for LGBT
- May be difficult to change long-held beliefs about interests and abilities
- Barriers such as homophobia and discrimination do exist

Conclusions

Each of these theories can help counselors conceptualize career development for LGBT individuals. No one theory serves as the “gold-standard” when working with LGBT clients; however, all of these theories are useful when providing occupational counseling with LGBT individuals. We recommend clinicians be mindful of sexual identity development and remain sensitive to the unique experiences of LGBT clients as they utilize any of these career development theories.