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Queering digital mental health for Australian LGBTQ+ youth: Reflections on self-care interventions

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INTRODUCTION

Australian LGBTQ+ youth experience significant mental health inequities [1], including added service access barriers [2] and higher demand for professional support (76%) compared to heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (69%) [3]. Digital mental health self-care interventions can improve health outcomes, literacy, information-seeking, and service experience for the broader population [4].

But ‘designing for everyone’ risks excluding LGBTQ+ youth, exacerbating inequities [5]. Further ‘queering’ via stakeholder engagement and value sensitivity is needed to reduce bias risk and to advance LGBTQ+ inclusivity in self-care intervention design [5].

METHODS

This formative research applies value sensitive design (VSD) [6] to conduct a retrospective analysis of the use and design of digital mental health self-care interventions that may benefit Australian LGBTQ+ youth.

To that end, brief *value scenarios* [7] are used to reflect on key stakeholders, stakeholder values (found in the literature), and value tensions in the intervention context.

RESULTS: VALUE SCENARIOS

Self-care mobile app (with free and paid features)



Stakeholders: Australian LGBTQ+ youth, app developer, and the public.

Values and tensions:

- + Non-discrimination [9]** Avoids risk of discrimination at in-person services.
- + Fluid identity [10]** Can be supported with customised gender, sex, and sexuality diversity options on apps.
- Ease of information access [8]** Paid features incur user costs, affecting access.

LGBTQ+ service navigation video guide on YouTube

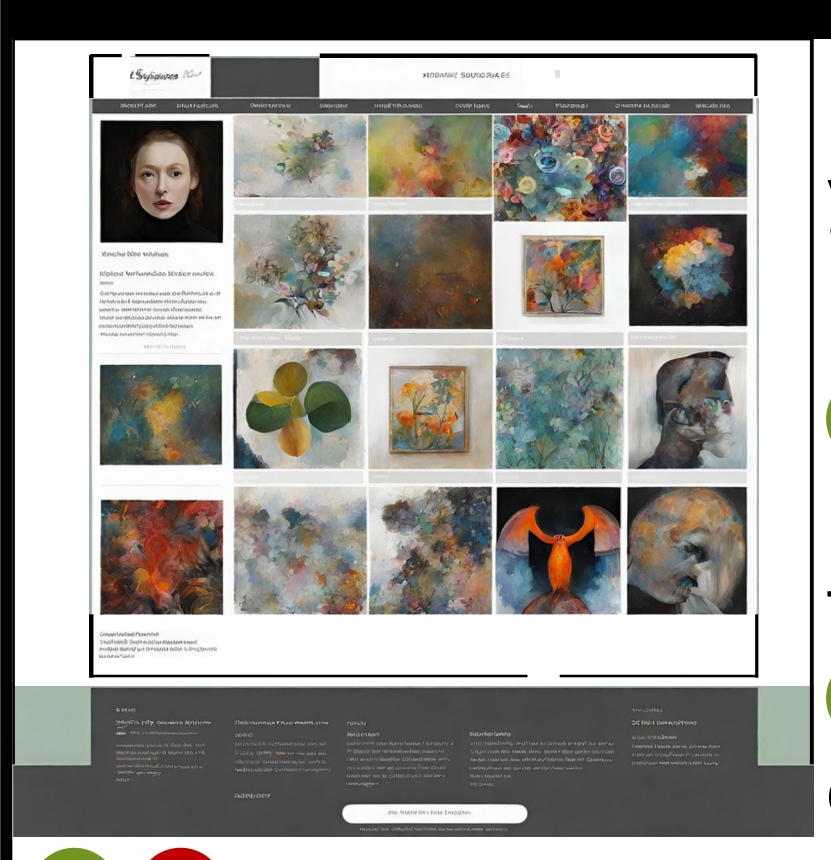


Stakeholders: Australian LGBTQ+ youth, service provider, YouTube, content developer, and the public.

Values and tensions:

- + LGBTQ-inclusive care [8]** Targeted interventions are a determining factor for many in this community.
- + - Acceptance [9]** User comments on YouTube may be either positive (improving acceptance) or negative (harming acceptance).

Online art showcase for those with lived experience



Stakeholders: Australian LGBTQ+ youth, service provider, and the public.

Values and tensions:

- + Activism [8]** Enables users to participate in activism by expressing their experience to the public.
- + Liberty [9]** A public-facing solution enables significant social freedom.
- + - Acceptance [9]** May advance acceptance, or expose persisting intolerance, within the public.

Digital storytelling on social media (in a closed group)



Stakeholders: Australian LGBTQ+ youth, group administrators, social media company, content developer.

Values and tensions:

- + - Belonging [9]** This is highly valued by this group, but the impact of social media on belonging can be either positive or negative [11,12].
- + Ease of information access [8]** Makes health information freely available in online spaces users already utilise.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Following the **BMC Youth Model of Care** which emphasises ensuring personalised and measurement-based care, additional **VSD work** could focus on *personalisation as a value* and aim to draw out what personalisation means to Australian LGBTQ+ youth in the self-care intervention socio-technical context.

Additionally, **co-design work and pre- and post-intervention trials** could be the next step to best:

1. Understand the values of Australian LGBTQ+ youth.
2. Inform the value-driven design, implementation, and evaluation of interventions.
3. Measure intervention impacts on mental health outcomes, literacy, information-seeking behaviour, and service experience.

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