

4-14-2022

Exploring the Experience of Dating as a Surviving Partner and Impact on Occupational Therapy

Jessica Blum

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Susan MacDermott

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Karen McCarthy

Dominican University of California

Follow this and additional works at: <https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstones-spring2022>



Part of the [Occupational Therapy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Blum, J., MacDermott, S., & McCarthy, K. (2022, April 14). Exploring the Experience of Dating as a Surviving Partner and Impact on Occupational Therapy. Poster presented at the Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium, University of St Augustine for Health Sciences. Retrieved from <https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstones-spring2022/12>

This Poster/presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the OTD Capstone Symposia at SOAR @ USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2022 Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium by an authorized administrator of SOAR @ USA. For more information, please contact soar@usa.edu, erobinson@usa.edu.

Surviving Partner Dating Experience and Impact on OT

Jessica Blum, OTS; Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L; Karen McCarthy, OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

- Current research focuses on importance of social participation post-loss (Davies et al., 2016)
- Current research explores psychosocial impacts of bereavement (Utz et al., 2014; Streeter, 2020)
- Limited research explores dating experience of surviving partner population

PURPOSE

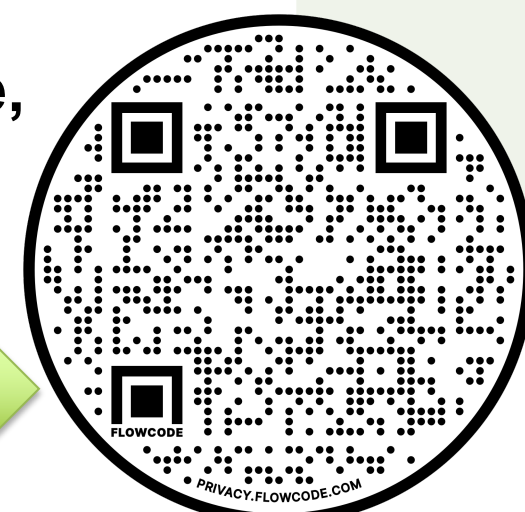
- Conduct a research study that explores the dating experience of surviving partners
- Add to OT and OS literature on the occupation of dating

METHODS

A qualitative, phenomenological research design was utilized to gather information from surviving partners about their dating experiences. Participants were recruited from the Dick Eardley Senior Center in Boise, ID, using a personal connection, and snowball sampling.

- 13 participants
- Completed interviews in-person or via Zoom lasting ~ 60 minutes
- Thematic analysis was completed (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Please scan code for References



RESULTS

Qualitative Outcomes and Themes

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Experience of pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to engage in dating • Pressure around timing • Pressure to find soulmate again 	<p>“...people at his funeral like maybe six days later were like so are you gonna date again?”</p> <p>“I felt so much pressure on you know everybody loved my late husband right like it was gonna be big shoes to fill, it was uh it was trying to meet everybody's expectations.”</p>
Experience of stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of societal awareness • Societal expectations • Judgment inside & outside community • Stigma from dating pool 	<p>“...he says I don't need no widow hanging off my my arm that needs money...”</p> <p>“...like his view of widowhood is someone that he would have to take care of and he was so surprised to hear how independent I was and that I do my own financials”</p>
Importance of honoring and remembering late partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity • Love doesn't end • Complexity of emotion • Future partner qualities 	<p>“anytime anything significant happens he will be a part of that in some way and you know from my end intentionally.”</p> <p>“I'm always gonna love this person, I'm open to love and it it's this you you literally straddling two worlds...”</p>

DISCUSSION

- Participants' dating experiences were impacted by their identity as a surviving partner
- The findings from this research are consistent with the Pierce, (2009) definition of co-occupation: “Co-occupations do not necessarily occur within shared space, time, meaning, affect, or intent” (Pierce, 2009, p.1)
- The findings from this research are also consistent with the research of McCarthy & Jackson, (in press) where participants used dating as an occupation to find a partner in occupation
- In this study, participants sought to find a partner to help in honoring late partner

IMPLICATIONS

- Future research should examine the effect that grief and the surviving partner identity has on other occupations
- Future research would also benefit from exploring whether these themes of stigma and pressure while dating translate to other populations
- Future research should examine the dating experience for surviving partners who are LGBTQIA+

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to both occupational therapy and occupational science by providing a better understanding of the dating experience for the surviving partner population as well the occupation of dating in general.

Acknowledgements: Special thanks to the Dick Eardley Senior Center in Boise, Idaho & the Soaring Spirits regional groups in Denver, Colorado, Ontario, Canada, and New Brunswick, Canada