Becoming an occupational therapist: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

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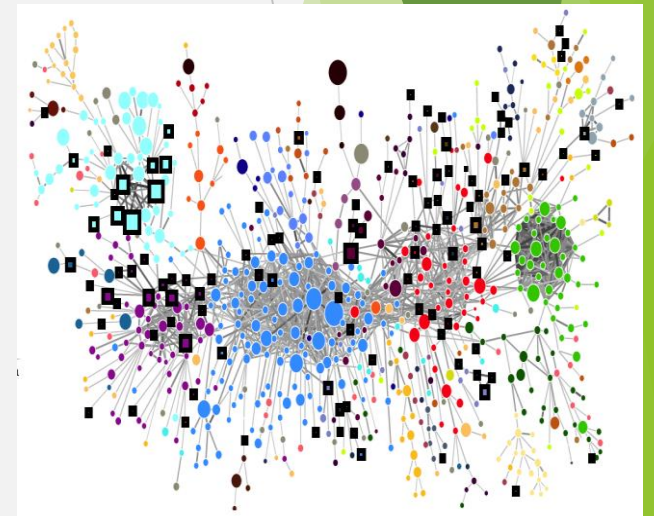University of HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

Why

What

▶ To explore the journey that the student occupational therapist undertakes throughout their undergraduate occupational therapy professional education programme

▶ To explore how the student's professional identity develops during their undergraduate education

Professional identity: Why is this still an issue for Occupational Therapists?

▶ **Struggle to manage the dichotomy between medically driven epistemology and person-centred ontology (Clouston & Whitcombe, 2008)**

▶ **Moving beyond statutory services**

▶ **Generic working**

▶ **Commercialisation of health care**
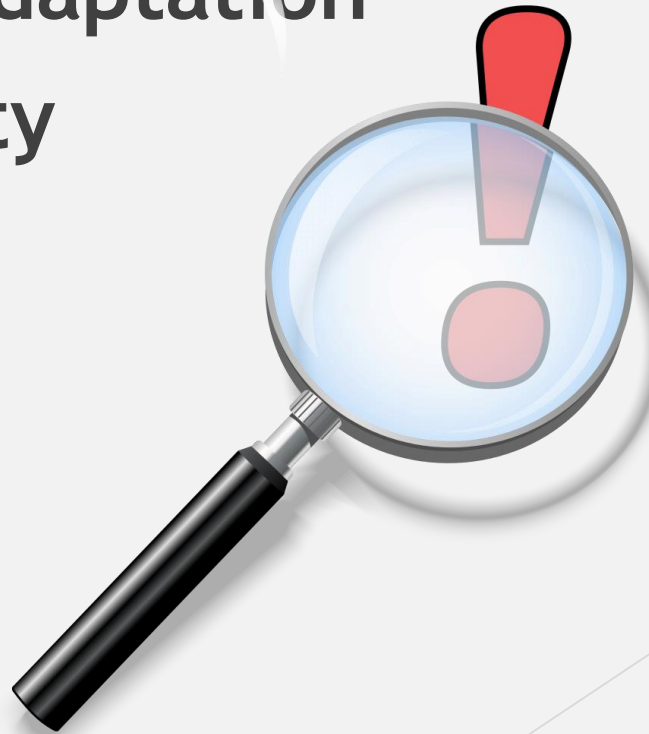
▶ *Complex especially for newcomers*

How

- **Longitudinal analysis of one undergraduate student from enrolment through to graduation**

- **Interviewed five times throughout the journey**

- **Situated the narrative against focus groups at end of each year**

Using an occupational perspective to understand professional identity formation

▶ **Occupational identity: "becoming who we are through what we do" (Christiansen & Townsend, 2014)**

▶ **"Doing, being, becoming and belonging are essential to survival and health. Or d+b3=sh" (Wilcock, 2007 p.5.)**

Themes

▶ **Establishing occupational coherence**

▶ **Managing occupational adaptation**

▶ **Developing a new identity**

Establishing occupational coherence

▶ **Develop occupational coherence over time**

But I just feel as though my whole life fulfilment is complete now whereas before I felt that there was always something missing and this has now bridged that gap, you know, so….

(Betsy, focus group 1, lines 333-335).

Establishing occupational coherence

▶ **Making sense of occupational history**

I still think the, there's no, people still don't understand how powerful occupation is and I think that's our key...that's what we are, that's our identity, occupation how can we use that and I still think that needs more promotion

(Mark, focus grp.3, lines 480-484)

Managing occupational adaptation

▶ **Dealing with many challenges**

everything's sort of coming together but at the same time I'm feeling very daunt, daunted about everything

(Lizzie, 2.1, line 395)

Managing occupational adaptation

▶ **Adapting to a changing sense of self agency and competence.**

I think at first it's terrifying because you don't think, you know, I don't, I didn't feel like I knew enough to do it, but then when you actually get given it and you have to do it, you realise that you do know

(Eva, focus grp. 3, Lines, 611-613).

Developing a new identity

▶ **Occupational identity was congruent their own personal values**

it's just the differences that you can make……to somebody's life are like really important

(Lizzie, 2:1, line 496)

When I see someone progress or something, that we've done, I just get so excited, I can like hardly contain meself… and I think that's more than money…. and to me that's a good job

(Elaine, focus gr. 3 1232-1244)

Developing a new identity

▶ **Belonging to the cohort**

But I think, when, if you're struggling there's always gonna be someone else struggling as well and I think the more open you are the more support you get. (Ellie, focus grp3. line 1072

▶ **Belonging to the team**

it's really good when you're out on placement ….and somebody actually says you're gonna be a fab OT …..(Betsy, Focus grp 1. line 454-458)

▶ **Belonging to the profession**

I had no idea that that was, that was out there when I started so I think it's just building, you know your awareness of it as a, as like a community (Ellie, focus grp.1, lines 1137-1142)

Developing a new identity

I am an Occupational Therapist !

It's been amazing and it's been hard and brilliant and we've got a job out of it, well not a job, but we've got a profession out of it

(Eva, focus grp.3. lines 1910-1911).

So what ?

▶ Using our own concepts

▶ Occupational perspective throughout

▶ Developing occupational coherence: increase reflection, understand transitions

▶ Impact of occupational experiences: role in terms of consistency and resilience

▶ Congruency in terms of values

▶ Understanding the transition: explore possible selves

▶ Autonomy on practice placements

▶ Belonging

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