LINKING SCHOLARLY LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN

OTD STUDENTS

By

Andrew Loc Ho

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Andrew Loc Ho

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Donnamarie Krause, Ph.D.
Graduate Coordinator

Jefferson Kinney, Ph.D.
Graduate Program Chair

Alyssa Crittenden, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate Education &
Dean of the Graduate College

Abstract

Professional identity formation is a critical aspect of education, training, and becoming an occupational therapist in Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) programs. This capstone study explores the potential influences of learning activities related to research and scholarly writing professional identity development amongst OTD students using a cross-sectional descriptive design. This research study involved 32 OTD students across six cohorts participating in focus groups from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and Kansas University Medical Center (KUMC). Through convenience sampling and latent content analysis managed with ATLAS.ti, the study identified categories underpinned by the Kawa Model to describe the dynamic interplay between learning activities and shaping identity. Three main categories emerged: (1) empowerment and challenge in the academic environment, focusing on overcoming and growth; (2) bridging theory and practice through curriculum, highlighting the influences of the learning environment; and (3) the odyssey of becoming: an embodied OT identity and scholarly professional, which attempts to trace the formation of identity of a scholarly professional from the focus group data. The study findings suggest that scholarly activities and engagements are crucial in fostering professional identity and evidence-informed practices. These insights underscore the significant role of OTD learning activities that support the growth of competent, reflective, and evidence-based practitioners.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to the current and future scholarly professionals who have generously contributed their time to this study. Your engagement and insights make the countless days and nights spent writing worthwhile.

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Introduction

Professional identity formation (PIF) plays a pivotal role in professional education, fostering not only a shared purpose but also a cohesive professional identity (PI) among its community of members (Ashby et al., 2016; Wenger, 1998). The PIF is a socialization process where members build a deeper connection and sense of sense self within a professional field through continuous interactions and experiences (Schell & Gillen, 2019). Professional education serves as a rite of passage for aspiring students to acquire the essential knowledge and skills for practice, deepen their understanding of their future role expectations, and earn membership linked with a professional status and identity (Adams et al., 2006).

As students elect to enter into a professional education program, they begin a transformative process heavily influenced by the learning environment to develop a new identity but also a transformational experience for students to gain a greater sense of self within one's emerging professional role and identity (Schell & Gillen, 2019). By understanding the significance of PIF in developing a PI, educational institutions can ensure a well-rounded approach to prepare students for future roles as leaders, scholars, and practitioners (Heeb et al., 2020; Krishnagiri et al., 2019; Mitcham, 2014).

The PI of a profession and its community of professionals (e.g., nurse, teacher, and medical doctor) reflect the collective behaviors, attitudes, and expectations externally shaped by the societal and historical context (Mak et al., 2022; Merton, 1960). Further, PIF involves internalizing the unique beliefs, values, and ways of being and doing distinctive to each profession (Barradell, 2022). This merging of internal elements (e.g., motive and perception of self) with external factors (e.g., standards and sociocultural dynamics) makes the PIF process

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complex and leads to a diverse understanding of how PI is defined and developed by professional communities.

Despite the varying perspectives on PI and its formation, professions can acknowledge how these concepts help maintain workforce effectiveness and readiness. Thus, a solid professional identity cannot exist without a deep-seated PIF weaving of professional philosophy (the warp) and professional values, beliefs, and principles (the weft) (Wood, 1995).

PIF and PI are not new concepts recognized in healthcare as it has provided a platform for professionals to demonstrate their unique contributions and distinctiveness to stakeholders and broader society (Merton, 1960; Stets & Burke, 2022). Extensive research has linked strong professional identity, quality of healthcare services, and client outcome but primarily in the fields of medicine and nursing health professions (Cornett et al., 2022; Mak et al., 2022; Snell et al., 2020). Many healthcare professions, including OT, acknowledge the central role developing PI to ensure to support growth and relevance in a competitive healthcare environment. Although it is widely agreed that building strong PIs is crucial across various professions, the differences in profession-specific roles, responsibilities, and culture make it difficult to establish a clear understanding of these concepts. The lack of consensus in defining these concepts results in a wide range of interpretations on how to promote PI development, which primarily begins during the professional education and training phase. Therefore, it is important to evaluate and assess how educational institutions are developing future professional identities.

This study aims to increase knowledge on the PIF process of OTD, specifically in scholarly aspects where knowledge is limited. The capstone study strived to answer the question of: "How do learning activities related to research and scholarly writing influence the development of identity as a scholarly professional in OTD students?"

Statement of Problem

The concept PI and the process of PIF were initially explored in sociology and psychology literature as a means to represent one's distinctive image or contribution to society (Becker & Carper, 1956; Cruess et., 2014). However, these concepts were associated with the term occupational identification that recognized the significant relationship between a personal and professional identity, giving meaning to things we are doing (Christiansen, 1999; Hitch, 2017). Early literature regarding the two phenomena revolved around how individuals would associate their identities to what they did for work to earn a living. This initial understanding empowered future research on forging stronger PI's, emphasizing the formation process.

The early concept of occupational identification eventually evolved into PI, which refers to how one defines oneself with a professional position or title, while PIF is the process of integrating oneself to the role or responsibilities of the professional group (Becker & Carper, 1956). Establishing a strong PI connection with a set of core principles ensures a collective ideology of the profession is articulated in practice. More notably, reinforces the professions value, purpose, and distinct contribution to society (Bayerl et al., 2018; Best et al., 2019). For this reason, professions began investing in the process of forming ideal workforces through various approaches, specifically effective organizational socialization (Schein, 1968) and professional socialization (Snell et al., 2020) strategies, to shape the thinking, acting, and feeling of the group (Cruess et al., 2014). Supporting this process enables professions to cultivate members who mirror and steer the mission, vision, and future of the organization.

Within the context of healthcare, PI reinforces the value, impact, and responsibility of each health profession to contribution to improving client health and meeting the societal needs in the field health (Snell et al., 2020; WHO, 2006). From this understanding, several health

professions such as pharmacy (Noble et al., 2014), physical therapy (PT) (Black et al., 2010), and medicine (Crump et al., 2019; Sharpless et al., 2015) have investigated the mechanisms influencing PIF. Acknowledging the need to generate strong PI's and value in a complex ever-evolving healthcare landscape, efforts to improve PIF have been prioritized toward education and professional preparation.

Significance of Study

Occupational therapy recognizes the value of occupations, such as being a student to become a professional, as it necessary to do, belong, and experience as occupational beings (Hitch, 2017; 2018). Participation and engagement in meaningful occupations contributes to our identity and life satisfaction (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020). Understanding the significant role of identity is essential for OT practice and an important concept for role transitioning associated with new expectations, responsibilities, and overall growth (Christiansen, 1999). The gradual progression from student to a clinician is a crucial process filled with opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills to become licensed OTs (Roberts et al., 2022). This process contains education, training, and clinical experiences that are essential to PIF, creating a new sense of self within the field (Heeb et al., 2020; Hooper et al., 2020).

Building a clearer understanding of what academic activities, experiences, and overall educative strategies that help facilitate PIF can enhance the professions commitment to support and prepare occupation-centered graduates entering the fast-changing healthcare system (Fortune, 2000; Hooper et al., 2015; Hooper et al., 2020; Pierce, 2001). Equally, recognizing the impactful teaching and learning strategies within OTD curriculum will validate best practices necessary for instilling scholarship, scholarly practices, and scholarly professional identities (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE], 2018; AOTA, 2022; Case-Smith et. al., 2014).

Promoting scholarship and shaping future scholarly professionals secures the professions unique role within healthcare (AOTA, 2022). Scholarship practices not only stimulated the growth of the profession, but mandated through OTD education accrediting bodies (ACOTE, 2018; Case-Smith et. al., 2014). Entry-level OTD graduates must be prepared and expected to reduce the research to practice gap by implementing evidence-based practice (EBP) and delivering high quality interventions as scholarly professionals (Landon et al., 2020). Despite this favorable goal of advancing the PI of the profession, graduates cannot achieve this scholarly identity alone and requires the disciplines community of scholars, educators, and education systems to guide and prioritize this process.

Definitions

Learning Activities

> **Conceptual Definition:** A range of carefully designed academic instructional tasks and materials (e.g., assignments, projects, papers) to facilitate the acquisition and integration of new knowledge that reflect the course's objectives and outcomes (AOTA, 2021).

> **Operational Definition:** Activities related to research and scholarly writing described by OTD students and identified by AOTA (2021) as essential components of OTD education for cultivating research competencies and proficiency in scholarly writing

Profession Identity

> **Conceptual Definition:** A form of identity an individual perceives, compares, and differentiates from other professional groups, which comprises of the specific practices, values, ethics within a profession (Adams et al., 2006).

Operational Definition: The OTD student's description of perceived alignment with the profession's values, skills, principles, and practices as a future practitioner through focus group discussions.

Professional Identity Formation

Conceptual Definition: A complex process influenced by many factors in developing and understanding one's role while internalizing the values, beliefs, and standards within a chosen profession (Schell & Gillen, 2019).

Operational Definition: The OTD student's description of becoming an OT practitioner and constructing a professional self-image and sense of self that integrates personal and professional values and behaviors (Adams et al., 2006). This process of becoming more aligned with professional core values will be assessed through focus group discussions.

Scholarly Identity

Conceptual Definition: How an individual perceives themselves as a contributing member to their profession-specific body of knowledge (Culpepper et al., 2020)

Operational Definition: An OTD student describes how they develop their scholarly aspects of professional identity through scholarly learning activities identified by AOTA (2021) in focus group discussions.

Scholarly Professional Identity Formation

Conceptual Definition: The individual's process of integrating evidence-informed practices into their professional roles and identity, embodying the skills, knowledge, standards of a scholarly professional (Hayes et al., 2021).

Operational Definition: The OTD student's description of developing a professional

identity as a scholarly professional with attributes identified by AOTA (2021) and

Fergusson et al. (2019) in focus group discussions.

Literature Review

The literature review investigates the existing literature surrounding professional identity and influencing a scholarly professional identity amongst OTD students. This section begins by examining identity and adult learning theories to build a foundation for understanding the flow of the PIF process. The following section will examine contextual and environmental factors in OT education and their influence on the OTD students' developmental journey to form new professional identities (i.e., occupational therapists). Next, the literature review will examine the challenges and barriers, supportive influences, and areas of opportunity related to OTD students and their development of PI. Finally, a literature synthesis will discuss the process of developing PI and scholarly attributes in OTD students, identify the various influences, and highlight a current gap in knowledge.

The Flow and Theory Behind Identity Formation and Learning

Healthcare professionals (e.g., OTs, PTs, and MDs) significantly shape their fields and impact on society through their distinct contributions, driven by PI. Professions serve as social structures where members share a common purpose and identity influenced by the collective values crucial for developing a strong PI and community belonging (Freidson, 1984; Wenger, 1998). This section explores theories such as Identity Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Communities of Practice to help understand PI, PIF, and the potential role learning activities contributing to PIF. Research on PI and PIF is extensive and evolving, offering unique insight across professions beyond the scope of this paper. Despite PI's complexity, health professions acknowledge the impact of PI on practice, member well-being, and client outcomes (Ong et al., 2019). Therefore, this overview aims to present foundational

literature regarding PI with a particular focus on its development (PIF) to address the research question.

Theories of Identity

Identity theory rooted in symbolic interactionism, suggests that individuals' identities are constructed by the roles they hold within their social structures (e.g., healthcare provider, parent, student) (Stets & Burke, 2022; Stryker, 1968). This theory emphasizes the importance of internal processes (e.g., fulfilling expectations) and shaping self-concept, where each role is associated with distinct identities and meanings that influence behavior in specific contexts. Identity Theory underscores that each role carries a unique set of expectations, standards, and norms, which guide behavior and impact an individual's self-concept. When individuals strongly identify with the values of their roles (salience), they prioritize the role's responsibilities (prominence), and strengthen their connection to these roles. This alignment leads to satisfaction (verification) and deepens their dedication (commitment) to the role. The development of salience, prominence, and commitment is a dynamic process, fluctuating with experiences and external feedback, such as social interactions and recognition.

Ong et al. (2019) explore the PIF process of clinician educators (CEs) in a qualitative study using interviews and focus groups conducted in Singapore. The researchers examined the experiences of balancing dual roles as clinician and educators of 23 OTs and 16 physical therapists. Through an Identity Theory lens, the findings highlight the complexities in CE PIF process, including challenges such as maintaining work-life balance, navigating competing workplace demands, and experiencing lack of support and recognition. These factors often led CEs to feel a misalignment between their professional roles. The findings revealed that training experiences, leveraging peer support systems (e.g., role models), and fostering

collaborative work cultures were enabling factors for CEs when navigating their roles. In academic context, these findings suggest that training experiences (i.e., learning activities) are crucial in building relevance (salience), coherence (prominence), and confidence in role responsibilities from application (commitment) (Stets & Burke, 2022). Additionally, the study reinforces the significant role of the organizational culture and support in CE identity formation, underscoring a general lack of awareness in organizations about this complex process. This understanding of the organizational influence on PIF aligns with the principles of Social Identity Theory, which emphasizes the significance of group affiliations, dynamics, and behaviors.

Social Identity Theory is grounded in cognitive psychology and social psychology, emphasizing the relationship identity development and group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The collective self-concept is derived from social affiliations, such as the AOTA, where individuals internalize the norms, beliefs, and characteristics of the group as part of one's self-concept. This theory of Identity emphasizes the influence of the group identity on the individual's PI that they are part of. This theory focuses on how the groups we belong to contribute to PI through the norms, values, and overall culture shared within the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Moreover, this theory sheds light on the concept of mobility, which recognizes how social structures can facilitate or inhibit the movement of individuals who can join or move aways from group. This notion is foundational for understanding things like social injustices, statuses, and transitions. This group-centric lens is crucial for offering insight into academic communities (e.g., educators and students) and how their collective values (i.e., research and scholarly writing) may influence their members, adding a layer of understanding beyond the individual.

Devery et al. (2018) examined the effects of working in an Australian OT emerging area of practice, eating disorders. The researcher employed a mixed methods sequential design using surveys and semi-structured interviews to explore the relationship between burnout, PI, and job satisfaction of ten female OTs working in eating disorder units, which equates to half the workforce working in this specialty at the time of the study. Interestingly, the findings indicated a significant correlation between higher exhaustion levels and stronger PI among therapists, contradicting the purpose of this proposed study. However, through the Social Identity Theory lens, this correlation can be explained by high levels of stress and pressure to adhere to group norms (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Although this this theory does not explicitly address overly strong PI, it can be implied that the demanding roles and low sense of belonging would make member mobility much more appealing when an opportunity arises. Some limitations to the study are questionable sample size to generalize findings despite rationale for specialty area. Additionally, the findings could benefit from further discussion and explanation of this unique finding, along with grounding the research using a theoretical framework. Despite the limitations, the findings offer insight into potential down fall of strong PI, highlighting challenges of burnout and role difficulties. The findings also support the need for supportive environments (i.e., supervision), which enabled a participant to recognize value of OT roots in the face of challenges.

Lave and Wenger 's (1991) concept of Communities of Practice (CoPs) brings Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory together by illustrating how the two theories can come together in action to form an identity and PI. CoPs emphasizes a strong connection between group membership and identity that gives meaning to the individuals actions (i.e., participation). While Identity and Social Identity theory offer insight into role-based and

group-based identity formation, CoPs adds the dynamic and participatory aspects of this process (Stets & Burke, 2022; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The CoPs framework emphasizes the becoming and belonging in communities such as a professional field (e.g., AOTA) where members learn and grow from the interactions and activities (Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that learning and identity are inseparatable processes that occur in CoPs, which are significantly driven by the community and its context. Additionally, members enter a community as newcomers and progressively development with increased participation and interaction. The researchers note CoPs are individually unique, offering different knowledge, experiences, and challenges. This understanding can suggest that learning, identity, and participation are essential to not only the development of its members but the level of engagement, influencing the community's overall health and longevity.

Chen et al. (2017) offers insight into a program initiative, based CoPs, to facilitate PIF in educational roles (i.e., clinician educators) at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) through a program development study design (Wenger, 1998). The Health Professions Education (HPE) Pathway served as a platform to support professional growth, mentorship roles, and essential health professional practices (e.g., reflection and scholarship). The researchers provided a comprehensive description of the strategies to employ CoPs principles, curriculum's design, and explicit emphasis on PIF throughout the program. The findings support the development of PI using CoPs framework. Some limitations of the study are lack of discussion regarding limitations to the study's findings, ethical considerations, and transparency to understand the researchers position within the research. Despite the limitations, the findings suggest application

of CoPs can be beneficial in developing PI and engagement in scholarly activities such as research and scholarly writing.

Taken together, the identity theories explained a logical progression for understanding the development of identity, PI, and PIF. By first looking at the individual aspect, Identity Theory begins with the main character or the professional who is the core of the PI (Stets & Burke, 2022). The individual and their actions are driven by the roles that the individual elects to have and perform, shaping their PI through the experiences of those choices. Thus, identity theory lays the groundwork for understanding identity at the individual level, emphasizing personal agency and responsibility, to expand into broader perspectives. After establishing the individual perspective, Social Identity Theory expands into social contextual influences of identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This shift focuses on how the group environment and dynamic influence the individual's PI along with the behaviors, engagements, and self-concept. Lave and Wenger 's (1991) CoPs framework brings both individual and social aspects together to highlight the interactions and experiences shared by the members. CoPs underscore how learning and growing professionally through participation and collaboration actively shapes PI. Therefore, CoPs are dynamic living systems where interaction and participation are necessary for the development of PI and survival of the community.

Identity theory and social identity theory provide a framework for understanding the importance and process of forming an identity within CoPs. While identity theory offers insight into the role and expectations within groups, social identity theory emphasizes the importance of group membership (i.e., belonging). Thus, understanding both theories is crucial to grasp as it intersects and interacts to form CoPs. Together, these theories highlight the inseparatable nature of learning and growing together to shape identity within and beyond the group or profession.

Adult Learning Theories

Within OT education, institutions and educators are tasked to prepared students to become future leaders, scholars, and practitioners through a multitude of teaching and learning strategies (Heeb et al., 2020; Krishnagiri et al., 2019; Mitcham, 2014).Understanding adult learning and underlying principles is imperative to develop curricula that promote optimal learning. Two learning theories are referenced and considered essential when acquiring knowledge in occupation-centered education (Ghul et al., 2013; Hooper et al., 2018; Krishnagiri et al., 2017; Price et al., 2017). As a theory driven profession, it is important to integrate adult learning theories in OT education as it enhances the students learning experience, retention of knowledge, and development of a professional identity. Although ACOTE will set the standards in OT education, institutions are not restricted by the teaching and learning methods used for education (AOTA, 2022). However, curriculum frameworks, education strategies, and academic position papers can be found in literature.

Adult learning in North America was introduced as andragogy by Malcom Knowles (1978) to differentiate the process of adult learning from child learning, pedagogy (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Knowles's andragogy principles is commonly referenced in OT education to guide and enhance the OT student learning process (Braveman, 2016; Russell, 2006). Knowles' andragogy theory emphasizes the importance of understanding and considering the characteristics, motivations, and experiences of adult learners to promote tailored learning experiences. Adult learning is optimized when there is learner autonomy, integration of past experiences, and applicability for future growth. The assessment of adult learning experiences can be effective tools to gauge how they are orienting and perceiving themselves in the material can help ensure learning is meaningful and engaging. In essence, adults require a level of self-

directed learning that enables the integration of current knowledge with new relevant ideas and information to enhance the learning experience and outcomes. Educators can facilitate intentional knowledge transfer by leveraging these principles to deliver engaging learning experiences and opportunities.

Feldhacker and Greiner (2022) evaluate the effectiveness of an OT course redesigned using active learning and andragogical principles combined with Fink's (2013) taxonomy of learning in a mixed methods explanatory sequential design study. The 15-week OTD redesigned course incorporated interactive activities (e.g. think-pair-share), self-directed learning, and Fink's (2013) framework that was offered in a blended learning format (i.e., in-person and online) where 116 students participated. The initial quantitative phase consisted of a pre- and post-survey with end-of-course evaluations, which was followed by a qualitative component involving focus group discussions to capture student experiences. The findings showed a statistically significant improvements according to pre- and post-survey results and positive remarks from focus groups, demonstrating effectiveness of active learning and adult learning principles in the courses design. Additionally, findings suggest real-world application learning was an essential component the participants learning. Some limitations noted by the researchers were the limited generalizability of findings due to narrowed population of one cohort at one OTD program and potential risk of response bias with direct faculty/researcher relationship with participants. Despite limitations, the findings offer valuable insight into student experiences regarding designing courses grounded in adult learning theories principles in a blended learning format, which the researchers noted to be one the first within the study's contexts. The researchers offer insight into OTD student experiences and essential teaching and learning strategies to enhance adult learning. Self-directed learning, theory with practical

application, active learning with critical thinking, and CoPs through online platforms (i.e., social media) are all crucial aspect of research and scholarly practice.

Another common theory cited in OT education is Jack Mezirow's (2002) notion of transformative learning, which holds a process-focused view on the learning that involves a shift in perspective (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Transformative learning occurs in situations that challenge the learner's current beliefs and triggers a realization. This sudden disruption causes a deep reflection and then results in a new understanding and worldview. This learning process is essential as students acquire knowledge, practice reflective, and integrate new knowledge into their beliefs, transforming their mindset in being and doing.

Fortune et al. (2019) examined the effects of an international project-based learning (PrBL) internship using a Students-as-Partners (SaP) approach on the development of global citizenship and intercultural competence of OT students. The qualitative research study involved 21 final year Australian OT students who volunteered for to participate in a 10-week internship in Vietnam where they provided healthcare assistance as their capstone experience. The researchers utilized focus groups and surveys to capture the perspectives of students and community partners regarding the program. Based on five returned surveys and a focus group of 13 participants, the findings indicate that the culturally immersive experience challenged students to adapt, collaborate, and develop new ways of practice to successfully navigate the unfamiliar environment. While the findings showed a positive influence and transformative learning potential for students, the researchers aim was to provide a comprehensive description of the program and context to account for some of the limitations, such as a small sample and unequal representation of participants. Despite the study's shortcomings, international capstone experiences appear to be an effective strategy to develop cultural and professional skills essential

for OT practice. These valuable skills can shape professional identity, contributing to the student's ability to be flexible and adaptable in unfamiliar environments. The findings support authentic and challenging yet supportive learning experiences in educational preparation for students to become competent clinicians for clients from diverse backgrounds. Challenging learning opportunities hold transformative potential as it allows students reflect on classroom knowledge to apply in different situations, which are important aspects of experiential learning theory illustrated next.

Experiential learning by David Kolb is another relevant learning theory OT education, which that can be applied to all learners and describes the learning process elicited by hands-on experiences (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Although sharing the importance of reflection with transformational theory, experimental learning occurs in continuous cycles starting with an experience, prompting reflection to build new understanding, and then applying increased understanding or skills to prior task that starts the process over (i.e., repetition and practice). The cyclic process emphasizes learning by doing where each experience builds on current skills and knowledge for application in other situations or contexts.

Kemp et al. (2022) builds on Fortune et al.'s (2019) understanding on transformative learning and its relationship with experiential learning by delving deeper into the impact of the doctoral capstone component for recent OTD graduates from three institutions. The researchers highlight the gap in understanding on the impact of the capstone component from a student perspective, forming the purpose of the descriptive study design utilizing virtual focus groups to capture the perceptions of 21 participants. The findings indicate an overall positive influence on professional development and readiness regarding the doctoral capstone component. The study suggests that the doctoral capstone increased employment marketability and opportunities for

graduates as it provides a competitive edge, leveraging advanced knowledge and skills in research to promote evidence-based practice. However, the researchers noted the potential bias in a self-selected convenience sampling method and the use of graduates to facilitate focus groups by excluding potential participants with negative experiences and risk of confirmation bias from researcher involvement. Despite the limitations, the study provides insight into the student perspectives on the advantages and challenges of the capstone component. The study underscores the ongoing need to support and prepare student learning due to the lack of clarity of the role of the capstone component, which is directly influences to the development of the professional identity of OTD students, encompassing the expectations and responsibilities. Inadequate support can lead to challenging capstone experiences, which are designed to develop future practitioners in scholarly roles and practices.

Taken Together, andragogy, transformative, and experiential learning theories provide a framework for understanding adult learning and also essential principles utilized in OT curriculum design (AOTA, 2021, Feldhacker & Greiner, 2022; Fortune et al., 2019; Kemp et al., 2022). OTD students Andragogy emphasizes self-directed learning with opportunities for learners to construct and apply their experiences with new knowledge relevant for practice. Drawing on these concepts to enhance learning encourages adult learners to transform their understanding and worldview through critical evaluation of current beliefs. Adult learners will engage in reflective practice to develop a deeper connection to new knowledge that can be applied to real-world experiences, furthering their understanding by doing.

These principles serve as crucial ingredients for enhancing the adult learning when embedded in professional education and training as it equips new members with the values, beliefs, and standards for practice of a profession. This process directly facilitate and influence

the development of a professional identity of new members, which is the underlying premise

and outcome of professional education that bridges the gap between professional identity and

adult learning in preparation for practice (Hooper et al., 2020). Although the professional

identity formation process is continuous throughout practice, professional education can be

instrumentally powerful in fostering sophisticated members who reflect the ideals of a

profession and reinforce its relevance and value to society. Therefore, it is essential to have a

foundational understandings of adult learning principles to ensure new members effectively

acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to become competent professionals to support the

growth of the profession. Attaining legitimacy and sustaining professional status has been a

long transformative journey for field of OT especially when ensuring effective preparation of

adult learners in OT education.

Occupational Therapy Education

The educational process encompassing the teaching and learning strategies is without

doubt instrumental components of becoming an occupational therapist. Equally, the institution

and learning environment also play a significant role in this developmental process. Institutions

must maintain compliance with ACOTE standards for adequate preparation of OT students

(ACOTE, 2020). Understanding the organizational structures and governing bodies will help

draw the link between the development of PI in graduates and their social environments (Stryker,

1968; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Wenger, 1998). Therefore, an understanding of the OTD

educational context will be explored before diving specific learning activities supporting

professional socialization.

The OTD Pathway

Around the early 2000's, the emergence of the entry-level doctorate in occupational therapy (OTD) became a relevant and necessary topic for discussion in OT education shortly after the passing of Resolution J, which moved the profession to a post-baccalaureate degree (Brown et al., 2015). This decision made by ACOTE aligned with the profession's goals of producing future clinicians who could effectively respond to the complex demands of healthcare. Nearly a decade later, the AOTA governing body announces an updated vision to enhance practice and quality of services by considering the transition to a single, entry-level doctorate level degree (OTD) as entry into the profession (Smallfield et al., 2019). The vision was to develop sophisticated graduates who are competing with other healthcare professions that have adopted clinical doctorates (e.g., physical therapy, medicine, and pharmacy) (Case-Smith et al., 2014). Despite the transition potentially benefiting OT services, concerns regarding readiness, empirical support, and accessibility into the profession have been voiced against this mandate.

The OTD mandate aimed to ensure OT graduates garner advanced knowledge and skills in leadership, advocacy, and scholarship necessary for responding to healthcare needs (Ozelie et al., 2020; Smallfield & Wood, 2019). However, concerns regarding the lack of evidence, readiness, and overall communication within the professional community generated little to no support to promote this mandate for making a transition (Brown et al., 2015b; Ozelie et al., 2020; Smallfield & Wood, 2019). Previous mandate attempts for transitioning into an entry-level OTD appear to fall short in fostering a collective vision, which elicits little incentive to produce the research or strategic planning for uncovering the potential benefits. The AOTA and ACOTE governing bodies are responsible for the guidance and support of its members while ensuring the

profession maintains its relevance and responsiveness consistent with healthcare trends

(ACOTE, 2018; AOTA, 2020c).

Occupation-Centered Education

The rising complexity of healthcare combined with societal influences has brought

significant attention on the education and training of aspiring OT practitioners. A large amount

of research has been generated throughout the professions development, consisting of

refinement of education standards for practice and exploration of effective teaching and

learning strategies to prepare OT students. Throughout the vast amount of research

surrounding OT education best, the profession recognizes the need to ensure students develop a

deep value and understanding of occupation and should be integrated into educational content

(Krishnagiri et al., 2017). However, a study by Krishnagiri et al. (2017) surveying 25 U.S. OT

programs identifies underdeveloped strategies to center occupation within curricula to ensure

course material is linked the profession's core philosophy. The findings indicate inconsistency of

approaches that explicitly centralize occupation across education programs for students to learn

and see how occupation promotes health. Additionally, the researchers note a continuing

challenge of effectively teaching OT taxonomy and proper use of terminology (e.g., occupation

and purposeful activities), which directly impacts the profession's need for clear and consistent

communication and unified vision across all platforms (e.g., research and workplace).

Occupation-centered education is a framework developed to support educational

practices to enhance the learners understanding of the fundamental ideas of the profession

through six principles grounded in adult learning theories (Hooper et al., 2020). This framework

fosters a comprehensive learning experience by tailoring education to the student's needs,

promoting practical experiences, and connecting all learning back to professional practices

rooted in OT. Additionally, this subject-centered approach not only encourages students to link learned knowledge to OT concepts but also develop essential lifelong learning skills, such as reflective practice.

Using an occupation-centered education approach ensures learning content aligned with the profession's core philosophies while fostering active learning experiences (doing) and reflection (Hooper et al., 2020). Through reflection, students begin to critically assess knowledge and experiences of occupations as a therapeutic tool, developing their occupational perspective and lens (Lee Bunting, 2023). An occupational perspective is an essential skill for practitioners to view and understand human doing as it relates to occupation (Njelesani et al., 2014). This perspective enables the integration of the profession's core philosophies into practice, reinforcing an occupation-centered approach and professional identity. As students deepen their understanding and value of occupations for human life, they can embrace an occupational perspective to apply this understanding in their learning experiences and contexts. Thus, it is essential to ensure students are engaging in occupation-centered learning and doing in their educational and training environments to cultivate graduates the profession and society needs them to be and become.

Scholarly Learning Activities

Occupational therapy practitioners recognize the importance of research, EBPs, and continued advancement but may not have the capacity and access to do so in their practice settings (Landon et al., 2020). However, OTD have the ability to mitigate this gap in research-to-practice gap and lack of access to EBP knowledge. OTD students require plenty of opportunities to learn, practice, and build the necessary abilities to bridge this existing gap of research-informed practice.

Smallfield et al. (2019) conducted a survey study to explore the perceptions of MSOT and OTD graduates from one institution regarding their post-education experiences and professional outcomes. The research findings indicate that OTD students were more likely to become educators, implement EBPs, and perform scholarly activities. Conversely, MSOT students were more interested in clinical practice and express less interest in pursuing an OTD due to a perceived lack of benefits. Both groups of participants reported the cost of obtaining an OTD degree as a disadvantage where there were no significant differences between career titles, pay, or perceived preparedness. However, the findings regarding the entry-level OT degrees are limited to one academic program, which may not be generalizable across educational institutions. Despite this limitation, the findings are important as it sheds light on the evolving profession and increasing demands of healthcare. The findings may indicate a larger concern regarding the lack of incentive in pursuing an OTD degree as it does not illustrate a conductive environment for investing potential, yet OTD graduates are engaging and contributing more to the body of knowledge, profession, and healthcare profession.

Summary and Discussion

The literature review examines the current knowledge on identity and adult learning theories and how they influence the professional identity formation process of OTD students in higher education. These professional educational environments resemble CoPs, which utilize principles of adult learning and identity theories to emphasize the complex nature of the PIF process. CoPs thrive on the active participation of members to support their collective growth and identity, highlighting the importance of fostering a sense of belonging among members and learners. By understanding the vast yet interconnected influences of constructing professional identity, educators and professional communities can develop effective strategies to facilitate this

process. Healthcare professions recognize the essential role of their professional members in maintaining the field's relevance, collective identity, and contribution to society (Freidson, 1984; Merton, 1960; Wenger, 1998). Each profession holds a distinct body knowledge for their ways of practice, encompassing the values and beliefs that shape the norms and standards of members. These components are essential to establishing a collective identity and unified vision, which are crucial for attaining the profession's goals and growth (Kielhofner et al., 2001). Therefore, it is important for professional communities to understand theories behind identity to support the profession's overall effectiveness.

Identity Theory emphasizes how an individual's role (e.g., student) influences the actions and behaviors to fulfill the expectations of that role within a specific context, such as in an academic setting (Stets & Burke, 2022; Stryker, 1968). This theory also highlights that the value an individual places on a specific role will influence the identity construction process. The higher the value placed in a role, the greater the investment and commitment is made by the individual. Social Identity Theory underscores the influence of social group affiliations on shaping an individual's identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The individual becomes more aligned with the expectations and norms of the group through collective interactions, emphasizing the sense of belonging among members. This sense of belonging and connection promotes the adoption of standards and values of members, supporting the collective identity. Communities of Practice highlights the importance of fostering supportive learning environments to enable active participation and mentorship among members (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). CoPs encourage members to share knowledge and skills through social interaction and networking opportunities. This continuous interaction between members builds a sense of community that ensures collaborative lifelong learning and growth of current and incoming members. CoPs are

relevant to education settings, reflecting the interaction between incoming members, field experts, and the overall profession. Therefore, it is essential to understand the learner and their learning processes.

Malcolm Knowles (1978) helped shape adult learning education and introduced the term andragogy, which recognizes the value of centering the learning process around the learner's needs (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Andragogy posits that adult learners are more receptive to learning when topics encompass autonomy to connect the learning content and their professional aspirations driven by internal motives. Self-directed learning encourages adult learners to reflect on learning experiences to reshape and deepen understanding, which are also essential principles of Jack Mezirow's (2002) concept of transformative learning. Mezirow's transformative learning theory supports challenging learning experiences by allowing learners to critically analyze their current understanding and viewpoints to enable new ways of knowing. This notion of confronting internal conflicts, such as questioning one's assumptions, to prompt reflective practices is also an essential component of David Kolb's concept of Experiential Learning Theory (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Experiential learning emphasizes real-world or authentic learning experiences for adult learners to see and apply learned knowledge, supporting principles of andragogy for establishing relevance. The learning process is optimized when learning content is relevant and paired with the opportunity to apply and reflect on it. Each adult learning theory mentioned supports one another and fosters an engaging learning environment for student-centered growth. Given that OTD students are predominantly adult learners, adult learning theories are relevant to learning experiences within OTD education.

Research across professions acknowledges the crucial role of professional education in preparing learners for professional practice through effective teaching and learning strategies (Heeb et al., 2020; Krishnagiri et al., 2019; Mitcham, 2014). In OT education, preparing adult learners to become effective practitioners has undergone significant growth influenced by societal pressures and paradigm shifts (Brown et al., 2016; Howard, 1991). Historical events shape the healthcare landscape, prompting the demand for advanced healthcare professionals to address the increasingly complex medical challenges (Case-Smith et al., 2014). In response to healthcare trends, OT refined practice and education standards, reflected by the transition to post-baccalaureate requirements for entry-level practice. More recent literature highlights an ongoing debate regarding transitioning into an OTD degree as a new standard for practice to align more with healthcare demands other professions have already adopted (Black et al., 2010; Noble et al., 2014). Despite the potential benefits of an OTD transition, more support from OT governing bodies is needed to generate more research for the profession to make an informed decision. This conversation is necessary due to the expected shift from a predominantly Master's level to an OTD-level profession (Harvison, 2022).

To support the advancement of the profession, OT education maintains a clear vision for deepening the value of occupation through teaching and learning strategies (ACOTE, 2018; AOTA, 2021). However, a study by Kirshnagiri et al. (2017) highlights an inconsistent approach across OT education programs for teaching occupation as the core philosophy. This lack of consistency or absence of teaching the core concept of occupation poses a significant problem as it impacts the distinctive element of the profession's identity. Without a distinctive value and unique contribution in a competitive healthcare market, the profession's collective identity and role security is put at risk as other disciplines attempt to replicate and integrate daily activities as

part of their treatments (Ikiugu & Rosso, 2003). Recent literature highlight challenges potentially stemming from a deficit in occupation-centered understanding where OT graduates report feeling underprepared, undervalued, and disconnected from their professional role and identity (Cho et al., 2023; Di Tommaso et. al., 2019; Fortune, 2000; Opuku et al., 2022). Graduates and practitioners commonly struggle with role confusion and a lack of confidence to advocate the value of occupation in practice, which can lead to additional stress and burnout (Costa, 2018; Popova et al., 2023). These challenges are counterintuitive to developing a strong PI as a profession. The difficulties encountered by new graduates and current practitioners support the need to assess educational strategies for opportunities to enhance the preparation of future OT practitioners.

One strategy introduced in OT education is the concept of occupation-centered education, which links all learning content back to the profession's core concept and distinctive contribution of occupation (Fisher, 2013; Hooper et al., 2020; Kielhofner et al., 2001). Occupation-centered education emphasizes the integration of OT philosophy for fundamental understanding, core concepts for effective articulation, and consistent linking between learning and occupation through effective teaching strategies underpinned by adult learning theories. The approach ensures learning content is relevant and student-centered as it aligns with the learners professional goals. These are essential components of a sophisticated OT graduate who are prepared to promote the value of occupation to society (Pierce, 2001). Furthermore, when graduates can overcome and grasp the challenging concept of occupation, they begin to harness transformative thinking and seeing in a new occupational way (Fortune & Kennedy-Jones, 2014). This development in OT graduates emphasizes the importance of incorporating effective teaching and learning strategies intertwined with the professionals values, beliefs, and core

principles to help ensure future practitioners can fulfill the roles and responsibilities expected by the society. As healthcare becomes more complex and demands more from healthcare professionals, it is through education and curriculum that will prepare graduates to walk this path.

The literature demonstrates the value of effectively preparing OT graduates for practice through strategies, such as occupation-centered education, that integrate the profession's core values into learning content. This approach ensures graduates have a solid foundational understanding of OT practice to continue promoting health, well-being, and engagement through their occupations. Despite recent efforts to instill the profession's and beliefs into graduates, there continue to be challenges with articulation, preparation, and sense of confidence expressed by graduates and practitioners (Cho et al., 2023; Di Tommaso et al., 2019; Fortune 2000; Opuku et al., 2022). Therefore, it prompts exploring other opportunities for enhancing the preparation process of OT graduates, specifically within PI development through scholarly learning activities. This study examines the perspectives on learning activities related to research and academic writing, assessing the potential relationship between these activities and their OTD professional identity as scholarly professionals.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to capture student perceptions to answer the research question, "how do learning activities related to research and scholarly writing influence the development of identity as a scholarly professional in OTD students?" The study's objective was to understand and describe how these learning activities related to research and scholarly writing potentially influence the development of a professional identity as a scholarly professional. The findings from the study can be utilized by OT educational institutions to gain insight into student development and help determine future strategies for supporting future practitioners.

Theoretical Framework

The guiding theoretical framework used for this capstone project is the Kawa "river" Model (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). The Kawa Model provided a culturally sensitive and holistic framework to understand the PIF process of OTD students. The model emphasizes the inseparable nature between the individual, environment, and contextual influences to foster a holistic view. Integrating the metaphoric river elements offered a lens to help understand the OTD student experiences as they navigate the academic environment and develop their professional identities as future practitioners.

The Kawa Model encourages an client-centered interpretation utilized during the literature review and data analysis to recognize how each perspective shared similarities and differences while maintaining a neutral position through reflective thinking (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). Through metaphoric representation, the OTD student journey and PIF process represented the "river flow" to be examined from the participants viewpoint. The model identifies stakeholder challenges (rocks), denotes opportunities to shift energy (spaces), and reflects on potential barriers and facilitators (driftwood) within this complex process. This illustrative approach was helpful for understanding the educational context (riverbanks) and student experiences that are inseparable components for developing professional identity.

The student researcher and overall professional body have a shared role and responsibility for promoting harmony in and around our professional communities. The Kawa Model can be an effective framework for identifying opportunities to enhance flow in clients and communities (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). Therefore, the river framework was appropriate for understanding the OTD student flow in developing their professional identity.

Methodology

This study is a component of a larger project examining the importance of research and scholarly writing in OTD programs, focusing on preparing graduates for both practice and scholarly roles. This section will outline the research design and approach, the target population, sampling design, data collection materials and procedures, a pilot focus group study, and strategies for data management and analysis. Central to this study is the research question, "How do learning activities related to research and scholarly writing influence the development of identity as a scholarly professional in OTD students?"

Research Site

The research was conducted at the OTD programs of KUMC and UNLV where each campus is recognized for their emphasis on research (KUMC, n.d.; UNLV, 2022). Each institution has its own unique history enriched by their geographic locations and student populations that contributes to each program's philosophy. The OT program at KUMC is located in Kansas City, Kansas, and a part of the School of Health Professions. This institution offers an OTD program and a Ph.D. pathway into therapeutic science. The KUMC student population consists of 3,000, of which 1,130 are minorities and 2,400 are graduate students. In contrast, UNLV's OT programs is part of the School of Integrated Health Sciences and recently launch their OTD and post-professional doctorate programs during the pandemic. UNLV holds a larger enrollment of 30,000 students, including 21,000 minority and 4,200 graduate students. The distinctive qualities of each program offered a valuable perspective for the study.

The student researcher gained access to the research sites through communication with the OT program directors. The OTDE program director at KUMC, Dr. Janis Davis, guided the student researcher as the site one mentor who provided training in facilitating focus groups. The

OTD program director at UNLV, Dr. Donnamarie Krause, also assisted the research study as site mentor two who guided the student researcher throughout the study. The program directors are involved in a larger research project to examine the influence of scholarly writing and research in OTD students. This enabled the opportunity for the student researcher to facilitate a small portion of their research project by facilitating focus groups to capture data from OTD students. This opportunity aligned with the student researcher's personal interest of exploring the development of professional identity, which was incorporated into the current study.

The Capstone Student, Project, and Experience

The student researcher embarking on this capstone journey is a third-year student attending the UNLV OTD program who will be responsible for planning, organizing, and facilitating the proposed study. The capstone project encompasses the planning and organizing, while the capstone experience (i.e., site visit, training, and application) will be the experiential component (DeIuliis & Bednarski, 2019). The student researcher aims to uncover the essential experiences influencing the professional journey to gain a deeper understanding. As a result, the student researcher can strengthen personal and professional self and potentially the development of others.

Study Design

A descriptive cross-sectional study design utilizing focus groups was adopted to describe the experiences of OTD students engaging in research and scholarly writing at different stages of their journey. This research design was appropriate for the study's objectives to capture a current snapshot of the phenomenon (Taylor, 2017). Descriptive research is well-suited for providing a detailed account of events, experiences, and attitudes as they naturally unfold. While this design accurately represents data, it does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship. Instead, it reveals

potential connections and associations limited to the study's context. The cross-sectional design was utilized to gain a comprehensive view of the influence of research and scholarly writing by examining the experiences of three distinct cohorts across two separate OTD programs at a single point in time during the Spring 2024 semester. The inclusion of six distinct cohorts from different programs enriched the diversity and representation of data. A cross-sectional descriptive study design has its strengths and limitations in research.

Descriptive research can be valuable for establishing baseline knowledge in under-researched areas, laying the foundation for more rigorous research designs (Taylor, 2017). However, descriptive research may not generate actionable insights to elicit change in educational practices as compared to experimental designs that can establish causal relationships. Additionally, cross-sectional research contributes knowledge that is limited to one moment of time whereas longitudinal studies can provide insight from multiple points in time to see changes over time. Some additional disadvantages of descriptive research relate to issues in the trustworthiness of the study findings.

To address some of these drawbacks, the research team incorporated several strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Polit & Beck, 2021; Taylor, 2017). For instance, triangulation, member checks, and research protocols were implemented to support the credibility and dependability of study. The research team analyzed data individually, compared findings, and collaborated to form a consensus for conclusions. The student researcher also facilitated random member-checks by allowing participants to review and verify the accuracy of data and initial emergent themes. Furthermore, the study's dependability was enhanced through the development of protocols for facilitating focus group, data management, and data analysis.

These procedural strategies ensured a level consistency throughout the study, which was also documented in the student researcher fields notes to ensure transparency in research procedures.

Data Collection

In this study, focus groups were the primary qualitative method to gather data regarding the OTD students' experience with research and scholarly writing and its potential impact on their development as scholarly professionals. This method aligns with the larger project's objective of collecting student perspectives on research and scholarly writing while supporting the student researcher's interest in how these activities can contribute to their identity as scholarly professionals. The use of focus groups was advantageous for eliciting the students' diverse perspectives through small group open discussions, offering a deeper understanding of their unique experiences around research and scholarly writing (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014).

The student researcher utilized information from the literature review and guidance of faculty and site mentors to develop a focus group protocol (see Appendix A) to ensure a systematic approach in facilitating focus group discussion which would contribute to the research question (Hu, 2023; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Rosenthal, 2016; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). The semi-structured interview questions included ten open-ended questions and a series of probe questions to prompt deeper participant perspectives.

The student researcher received focus group facilitation training from site one mentor with extensive experience in qualitative research methodologies, providing strategies to promote participant engagement. To effectively capture observations and document researcher reflections, a student researcher-created field note template was implemented, as suggested by site mentor two. Post-session debriefs with site mentors were opportunities to reflect on focus group

outcomes and receive constructive feedback to refine the facilitation process to ensure trustworthiness and alignment with the research aims.

The preparation phase was crucial for ensuring the success of the focus group to capture rich insight from participants, which required the student researcher to maintain flexibility and adaptability for the inherent challenges of qualitative approaches (Hu, 2023; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Rosenthal, 2016; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Despite rigorous planning, the student researcher considered the challenges related to group dynamics, participant engagement levels, and potential bias from both the moderator and participants. The focus group protocol employed a systematic approach to consider these challenges as the student researcher moderated each session to minimize the potential disadvantages of running focus groups, enhancing the quality of collected data. The focus group discussions were facilitated by the student researcher, lasted approximately between 44 to 80 minutes, and recorded using a standalone audio recorder.

Participants, Sampling, and Recruitment Strategy

The target population of this study were OTD students from KUMC and UNLV. The research team set out to conduct a total of six in-person focus group sessions, consisting of seven participants grouped by their respective academic year within the program. This plan captured a broad spectrum of student experiences from three academic stages at each program between January and March 2024.

A convenience sampling design was utilized due to the access to research sites and the accessibility of the population provided by the program directors. The study utilized a non-probability sampling design with snowball techniques to maximize cost-effectiveness and participation by leveraging both access and social networks for recruitment (Knis-Matthews et al., 2021; Polit & Beck, 2021; Taylor, 2017). Additionally, the study offered a ten-dollar gift

card as incentive for completing a focus group discussion. Some disadvantages of this sampling approach are the potential risks of bias, lack of diversity, and challenges to predict sample size. However, incorporating these approaches assisted with reaching participants who were less accessible due to fieldwork or capstone off-campus assignments.

Recruitment was facilitated with three strategies and initiated with an email invitation (see Appendix B) containing of a digital flyer and information on the capstone study (Appendix C). Interested participants were directed to sign-up using the provided QR code or Google Forms link. The online survey collected contact information, academic standing, and basic demographic information (i.e., gender identity and year of birth) from potential participants (see Appendix D). This information assisted the student researcher in screening and identifying potential gaps in sample representation to shift recruitment efforts to underrepresented groups. Following the email invitations, the student researcher was granted permission by campus faculty to recruit participants before or after lectures by providing a five-minute scripted presentation regarding the capstone study opportunity (see Appendix E). The student researcher highlighted voluntary nature of the study and encouraged word-of-mouth of the study at each encounter with potential participants, which was beneficial for reaching unavailable participants, such as the site one second-year students who were out on level two fieldwork.

The student researcher emphasized that participation in the study was voluntary and urged potential participants to spread the word to their social networks. This approach helped reach individuals unavailable for a presentation, such as the second-year students on level two fieldwork. After completing the interest survey and screening process, the student researcher contacted the participants to discuss their voluntary participation, the consent form process, and the scheduling of the focus group (see Appendix F). Upon arrival at the focus group, the student

researcher addressed concerns, reviewed the consent form, and provided each participant with a hard copy for their records.

Pilot Focus Group

A pilot focus group was conducted to assess the overall effectiveness and clarity of the interview questions, recording equipment, and discussion flow (Taylor, 2017). The pilot focus group was conducted via Zoom with two participants due to inclement weather at site one. The virtual focus group was not originally planned or advised, but it was essential for the initial assessment and refinement of the focus group facilitation process. Feedback from participant also contributed to the overall quality of focus groups.

Procedures

Preparation Phase:

1. Conduct one focus group to test all equipment, procedures, and discussion questions to receive feedback and refine process before facilitating operational focus groups.

2. Send recruit emails and provide research presentation to potential participants.

3. Direct potential participants to online interest form to sign up for focus groups.

4. Screen potential participants to ensure they meet eligibility criteria.

5. Contact participants after screening to discuss consent form and scheduling of focus group.

Pre-Focus Group Setup:

6. Arrive early to prepare focus group setting to ensure a comfortable and confidential meeting space for discussion.

7. Prepare any necessary materials, such as discussion guide, technology, snacks, refreshments, and consent forms.

Execution Phase:

8. Begin with a brief introduction of the study's purpose and the focus group's objectives.

9. Remind participants about confidentiality and the importance of open and honest discussion.

10. Guide the discussion, ensuring all participants have the opportunity to speak.

Data Collection:

11. Use a recording device to capture the discussion.

12. Take brief notes to capture key participant responses.

Post-Session Phase:

13. Gather feedback from participants on their experience.

Documentation and Reporting:

14. Keep a record of the focus group procedure and outcomes.

15. Prepare for debriefing with research team regarding focus group's findings and overall experience to received feedback and refine as needed.

Data Analysis and Management

Audio files were transferred from the audio device to a password-protected UNLV Google Drive to prepare for verbatim transcription services (Rev.com). The audio files were then imported into the secure transcription service database to begin transcribing the audio files. At the conclusion of the final focus group session, the student researcher began listening and reading the completed transcripts to verify the accuracy of the transcripts against the audio recordings on the transcription platform. During this process, the student researcher removed any sensitive data and corrected errors to ensure readability. Upon completion of the review, the transcript file was exported back onto the password-protected Google Share Drive to prepare for

data analysis using ATLAS.ti software (Version 23.3.0; Scientific Software Development, Berlin, Germany). The data management software was helpful in organizing the large amount of focus group data while enabling collaboration between the student researcher and two site mentors as they performed a content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018).

The research team maintained a copy of all records in a secure facility at UNLV or stored electronically in a password-protected UNLV Google Drive. Access to all files was restricted to the research team only and regularly assessed for sensitive data, de-identifying sensitive data to ensure the confidentiality of participants. The research team will delete any unrelated research data immediately, and all collected data from the study three years after the study's conclusion.

Latent content analysis was selected to analyze the data in order to gain a more in-depth interpretation of the focus group data as opposed to a manifest approach that produces a more surface-level understanding (Krippendorff, 2018). A four-stage content analysis framework described by Bengtsson (2016) was used to systematically break down the focus group content to uncover the underlying meanings. The framework enabled the research team to generate the sub-codes, code groups, and categories emerging from the data through inductive reasoning. This reasoning approach challenged the research team to maintain a neutral position to minimize bias as they formed interpretations of data, which was enabled through constant reflective practices and deep discussions throughout the data analysis process that kept the research question at the forefront. The research team procedures for conducting the stages of analysis through Atlas.to are described in the following:

- **Stage 1: Decontextualization**. The research team independently familiarized themselves with the initial transcript by repeatedly reading the data to develop preliminary codes. The research team noted their coding thought processes directly on the ATLAS.ti

application through its memo feature or directly on the code. Additionally, the student researcher created a codebook to document code definitions, providing an accessible and transparent guide for the research team to reference for analysis and debriefing discussions (see Appendix G). The researchers debriefed together before completing a full analysis of the initial transcript to discuss and establish a consensus on the direction of the coding process. Additionally, the team implemented a bi-weekly debrief plan to present, discuss, and compare their individual findings, facilitating triangulation and focused analysis to answer the research question.

- **Stage 2: Recontextualization.** At this stage, the research team revisited the coded transcripts during debriefings to discuss further connections between codes and ensure a level of consistency was maintained throughout the analysis process. The regular check-ins were crucial for enabling the student researcher to maintain objectivity by distancing themself from the data and avoid losing sight of their research objectives. The research team debriefings focused on evaluating the codes with contextual information to ensure the accuracy of code meanings among the researchers and adjusting or condensing the codes as needed. The research team took note of emerging coding patterns and themes, which became more apparent and applied to subsequent transcripts. This process was repeated to ensure all relevant content was reviewed and unnecessary data was removed.

- **Stage 3: Categorization**. This stage was initiated after coding all transcripts where the research team began grouping the initial codes as sub-codes under code groups based on similar underlying themes and patterns. The student researcher was responsible for the initial grouping of codes and presented their findings to site mentor two for further analysis, refining code groups to ensure accuracy. Once code groups were created and

validated by site mentor two, they were reviewed again by site mentor one to ensure their

accurately captured the essence of the sub-codes. This process was repeated until a

complete agreement was reached to proceed with generating categories, which followed

the same steps as forming the code groups. Categories encompassed the code groups to

begin forming a broader theme and narrative that is described in the results section.

- **Stage 4: Compilation**: In the final stage of data analysis, the research team combined the

  categorization and theme-generation process due to time constraints. However, this did

  not deviate far from the four-stage process they planned. The student researcher began

  shaping a narrative using the categories to capture the underlying meanings that

  connected the sub-codes and code groups to the categorizing theme. Direct and

  paraphrased quotes were then selected from the transcripts to support the interpretations

  and reviewed by the research team, which can be reviewed in the research team's Master

  Code Book Table (see Appendix H).

Ethical and Legal Considerations

Approval from the UNLV Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted for the research study. All data was treated as sensitive and handled with the utmost care. A copy of all records was regularly be updated and kept with the primary investigator, which was stored in a locked facility at UNLV and secured in an encrypted and password-protected computer until the completion of the study. Sensitive information was kept in a secured/password-protected database for electronic data, while physical data (e.g., papers and master code books) was locked in cabinets/drawers with the primary investigator. Data from non-participants was destroyed immediately after confirming withdrawal or within five days of non-participation (i.e., no communication and no show), consisting of deleting electronic files, deleting electronic files from trash, and shredding any hard copy information. Retaining data from participants was only be kept from participants who completed the study, which will be destroyed seven years after the study's conclusion. The student researcher facilitated weekly reviews and audits to ensure the security of sensitive data. The student researcher maintained a secure log to document procedures to annotate data and methods for data destruction.

Results

This section contains the results from the data analysis described in the previous section. It will describe the sample characteristics from both research sites and the data analysis results. The categoric themes are briefly introduced and followed by a table that breaks down each category by its code groups, sub-codes, definitions, and direct quotations.

Characteristics of the Sample

To ensure the confidentiality of participants, characteristics will be described as population groups. Thirty-two participants in Table 1 engaged in the focus groups from both OTD programs. This sample size was ten fewer participants than anticipated. The site availability of participants may have been impacted by Level II fieldwork rotations and capstone experiences, contributing to the lower participation rates. The population group at site one was dominantly female (n=16), with participants in the 20-24 and 25-29 age brackets. In contrast, the population group at site two included seven males in their group of 16, with participants ranging from the 20-24 to 45+ age brackets. Furthermore, seven participants from both population groups indicated having prior focus group or research-related experience.

The two sites showed a noticeable contrast when comparing the population characteristics of participant groups from each OTD program. The population group at site one was mainly homogeneous regarding age and gender, whereas, at site two, there was greater diversity among participants. Although ethnic background data was not collected, the student researcher observed that most participants at site one were white. This contrast between population groups may indicate potential differences in program appeal or recruitment strategies.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Item		Number
Site	KUMC	16
	UNLV	16
Year in School	One	16
	Two	7
	Three	9
Gender	Male	7
	Female	25
Age	20-24	13
	25-29	12
	30-34	3
	35-39	2
	40-44	0
	45+	2
Prior Experience	Yes	7
	No	25

Note. n=32 for sample size; KUMC = Kansas University Medical Center; UNLV = University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Category One: Empowerment and Challenge in the Academic Environment

Category one captures students' experiences as they navigate, overcome, and experience academic hurdles while highlighting their growth during this process. This category has two code groups: academic challenges (with three sub-codes) and student growth (with two sub-codes) listed in Table 2 (see Appendix H). The academic difficulties code group consists of three sub-codes. The first pair of quotes is assigned to the emotional and motivational challenges sub-code, capturing some of the difficulties OTD students face that impact their performance. The second pair of quotes highlights issues with balancing academic demand experienced by participants, which falls under the expectations and workload balance sub-code. The final sub-code under the academic challenges code group, understanding and applying knowledge challenges, sheds light on student challenges by generating relevance to retain academic knowledge. The student growth code group includes two subcodes. The first sub-code, confidence and resilience, captures participant reflections of moments as they experience growth and validation through the application. Participants expressed transformation and learning-related development in the second pair of quotes, which fall under the learning and emotional growth sub-code.

Category Two: Bridging Theory and Practice through Curriculum

Category two highlights the importance of the learning environment, curriculum design, and student understanding assessment. This category brings attention to the external influences and contains one code group, influences on learning, with four sub-codes listed in Table 2 master codebook (see Appendix H). The first sub-code, application, and integration of practical knowledge, capture student perspectives on specific learning experiences that enhanced their understanding of OT practice. The learning environment, identified as the second sub-code, emphasizes a nurturing learning environment through effective educator practices. Next, the teaching strategies sub-code underscores the importance of providing students with ample practical application opportunities, enhancing their understanding. The last sub-code recognizes the role of supportive learning networks, emphasizing a sense of community for members to interact and share knowledge.

Category Three: The Odyssey of Becoming: An Embodied OT Identity and Scholarly Professional

Category three encapsulates professional identity development and scholarly aspects, highlighting reflective practice, challenges, and the integration of research skills for evidence-informed practice. This category has one code group, scholarly engagement, professional development, and PIF, with three sub-codes listed in Table 2 master codebook (see Appendix H).

The first sub-code, building research proficiency for professional practice, consists of student reflections on the role of learning activities related to research in their development and future practice. Next, difficulties that arise during or around the research process are captured under a sub-code to highlight barriers participants face with research engagement. The final sub-

code, scholarly engagement, and lifelong learning reflects participants' integration of evidence-informed practices to demonstrate academic growth.

The study results encompass a diverse sample of participants and offer insight into their experiences. Of the 32 participants, a majority were females in the younger age ranges. Site two participants had a more significant gender and age diversity, while site one had a more homogeneous sample of participants. This variation may indicate potential differences between OTD programs regarding program appeal and recruitment. The data analysis revealed three thematic categories, encompassing code groups that comprise sub-codes to capture the meaning behind the data. Category one, empowerment and challenge in the academic environment, highlights growth experiences from overcoming challenges. The second category, bridging theory and practice through curriculum, focuses on the participants' demonstration of enhanced knowledge through learning. The last thematic category, the odyssey of becoming an embodied OT identity and scholarly professional, captures the essence of developing an evidence-informed reflective professional identity. The data-driven and emergent findings provide a comprehensive interpretation, which will be discussed in the next section.

Discussion

This section will discuss and interpret the findings described in the results section from the student researcher's perspective, which will be followed by summary of the interpretations and an implications section. The discussion will draw on the Kawa Model to analyze the emerging themes from the focus group data, aiming to build an understanding of the OTD student experiences (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). The Kawa Model lens will focus on interpreting the challenges (rocks), contextual influences (riverbank), facilitators and inhibitors (driftwood), and overall academic journey of becoming practitioners (river flow).

River Flow

The river's flow represents one component of the PIF process: OTD student educational preparation (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). The participant's narrative captured through the focus group discussions will help illustrate this process for interpretation. Although the river metaphor can depict a comprehensive view of the students experience, this study focuses on experiences with learning activities related to research and scholarly writing. It is important to note that the PIF process is multifaceted and ongoing throughout one's career but heavily influenced and initiated during education and training (Adams et al., 2006). It is through the academic environment and encompassing learning experiences where students begin to develop a deeper understanding and connection to a chosen professional field. These components are important to assess how An assessment of the students' academic experience can provide insight develop the essential skills for implementing evidence-informed practices expected from OTD students.

Rocks (Challenges)

The challenges that student face are represented as rocks, which can impede the river's flow (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). Participants identified many personal and professional challenges they faced during their academic journey, which impact various aspects of their individual river's river flow. Participants described feelings such as being overwhelmed, underprepared, and frustrated as they navigate challenges and overcome obstacles. Rocks encompass the challenges of seeing and understanding the relevance, application, and connection between their learning experiences and future roles. For instance, participants noted a heavy academic obligation to learn a vast number of topics, which impacts their ability to engage in meaningful activities due to limited time outside of the classroom. Additionally, participants expressed a lack of clarity and preparation to successfully integrate complex concepts and topics. These rocks can narrow or restrict the river's flow and act as barriers in development.

Driftwood (Resources and Assets)

The student's personal traits, beliefs, and access to resources can either hinder or facilitate progress, representing the river's driftwood that can block or move rocks to influence flow (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). Student responses highlight educator mentorship, peer collaboration, and practical learning experiences as most beneficial to their developmental journey. A synergy between educator guidance and peer-to-peer support systems enables student to over challenges.

Riverbanks (External Factors)

The learning environment teaching and learning strategies represent the riverbank that guides the student's academic journey (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). Students identify fieldwork and service-learning settings as influential learning experiences for personal

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and professional development as it enables students see the relevance and practical application of classroom knowledge. Additionally, participants report that competency-based and clinical-simulated learning experiences promote engagement and empower students to facilitate evidence-informed practices to support their clinical reasoning and approach.

Spaces (Opportunities)

The spaces in the river's flow highlight areas that could be optimized to enhance flow or create new streams for water to flow (Iwama et al., 2009; Teoh & Iwama, 2015). The opportunities for enhancing student growth and readiness highlight experiential learning experiences underpinned by real-world relevance and beyond. Participant responses reflect a shared level of uncertainty and confusion in establishing the purpose and meaning behind certain learning content, which can delay understanding and increase academic stress. In addition to increased stress from having to backtrack on course content in a demanding program, the students are less likely to acquire and retain essential knowledge and skills for their professional roles.

The discussion section enabled an interpretation of the findings through a Kawa Model lens to understand the OTD professional development journey through the student's perspective. This river interpretation highlights the multifaceted process of professional identity formation in OTD students, providing understanding through river elements. The elements represent student challenges, resources, and external influences impacting their learning experience. In summary, the findings provide preliminary data for educators and researchers to expand knowledge in OTD student development and potentially shape the profession's future.

Implications for Research

This study underscores the need for further research on developing professional identity in OT education as it provides preliminary insight into how learning activities related to research and scholarly writing may influence this process from the OTD student perspective. More research assessing the student perspective can ensure a student-centered approach in educational preparation. Longitudinal research can extend the understanding of OTD student PIF process by measuring their development in the long-term, shaping the direction of education practices. Further research should evaluate the impact of specific learning activities to determine efficacy of strategies.

Implication for Practice

This study highlights the importance of integrating experiential learning, effective mentorship, and reflective practices to optimize the development of students, which is relevant for OT educators and potential fieldwork supervisors. The findings highlight the challenges students face during their educational journey as they shape their professional identities. This insight should be considered when designing or promoting the development of professionals to ensure adequate support and preparation.

Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations

- Restricted to KUMC and UNLV OTD students, impacting the ability to generalize to other OTD Students

- Audio recording and limited notetaking may have resulted in missed nuanced interactions.

- Differences between research sites could affect participant responses.

Assumptions

- Assumes active and honest engagement in discussions by participants.

- Presumes participants have a clear understanding of research procedures and goals.

- Trustworthiness in the research processes and practices by the research team.

Conclusion

This capstone project utilizing the Kawa Model as a theoretical lens provides insight into how learning activities related to research and scholarly writing influence the development of professional identity of OTD students. The findings illustrate the interplay between the challenges (rocks), supportive resources (driftwood), educational environment (riverbank), and opportunities for further growth (spaces) that collectively influence the student's flow in the academic journey. These illustrative elements were created based on the OTD student perspectives shared during focus group discussions. The findings demonstrate how various factors, such as challenges (rocks), supportive resources (driftwood), educational environment (riverbank), and opportunities for further growth (spaces), interact and affect a student's academic journey. These elements were created based on the perspectives of OTD students and aligned with the findings of across OT literature regarding the challenges faced in practice. This study advocates for the continuing refinement of educational practices and incorporating the student perspective in designing education to optimize future practitioners' preparation. Further research on developing professional identity should be explored to reflect the profession's commitment to excellence.

UNLV

Research & Focus Group Overview

Research Question:
"How do learning activities related to research and scholarly writing influence the development of identity as a scholarly professional in OTD students?"

Study Details:
- **IRB Status:** Approved (UNLV-2023-449)
- **Duration:** 14-week capstone project
- **Locations:** UNLV and KUMC
- **Design:** Descriptive study using focus groups for data collection
- **Anticipated Participants:** 42 OTD students (Year 1, 2, and 3)
- **Data Analysis:** Content analysis managed through ATLAS.ti

1. Preparing for Focus Groups:
- **Group Composition:**
  - Select groups from 42 OTD students, ensuring a mix of Year 1, 2, and 3 students.
- **Session Length:**
  - Limit discussions to 60-90 minutes.
- **Recruitment:**
  - Over-recruit by 20-50% to ensure enough participants despite any dropouts.
- **Discussion Guide:**
  - Develop a guide with questions tied to understanding how scholarly activities shape professional identity.

2. Conducting the Focus Group:
- **Stay on Topic:**
  - Discuss how research and scholarly writing influence students' professional identity in OTD programs.
- **Balance and Diversity:**
  - Ensure a comfortable environment while encouraging diverse viewpoints.
- **Structure:**
  - Use a semi-structured format to guide discussion but allow for natural, in-depth conversation.

3. Moderating the Group:

- **Neutral Facilitation:**
  - Encourage participation from all without leading the conversation or allowing domination by some.
- **Manage Dynamics:**
  - Keep the conversation on track, making sure all questions are addressed.

4. Data Saturation and Analysis:
- **Recognizing Saturation:**
  - Monitor for repetition in responses, indicating all viewpoints are thoroughly explored.
- **Post-Session:**
  - Transcribe and analyze data using ATLAS.ti, focusing on how scholarly activities contribute to professional identity.

5. Reflecting on the Process:
- **Self-Evaluation:**
  - As an OTD student with no prior experience, regularly reflect on your role as a moderator and researcher.
- **Adjusting Approach:**
  - Be open to refining your discussion guide and methods based on initial findings and feedback.
- **Considerations:**
  - Conduct focus groups with a clear structure and purpose
  - Maintaining a flexible and inclusive environment
  - Enhance the depth and relevance of the collected data though strategic planning and preparation

Participant Selection

- **Purpose-Driven Participant Selection**:
  - The purpose of the study is to collect specific information from OTD students

- **Refinement of Participant Criteria**:
  - OTD year one, two, and three students to capture a wide range of experiences and perspective across the academic journey

- **Homogeneity of Participants**:
  - OTD Students are a homogeneous group of participants
  - Academic year, year of birth, gender identity, and previous experience in research studies

- **Budget Considerations**:
  - Limited resources (time and money) requires prioritizing certain participants/groups
    - Example: Might want to conduct Focus Group with Capstone first due to availability – be flexible

- **Avoiding Overgeneralization**:
    - o Take caution when working with diverse participants
    - o Each person speaks for themselves and has a unique view

- **Considerations:**
    - o **Sufficient Representation**:
        - ▪ Capture the opinions of a specific category of people (cohorts) and appropriate amount of participants
    - o **Strategic Budget**:
        - ▪ Costs of conducting the focus groups and account for time
            - • Space (school office space = free but must reserve
            - • Snacks / drinks
            - • Incentives ($10 Gift Card)
        - ▪ Scale research need to available resources

- **Variation of Participants (consider and balance)**
    - o Academic experiences
    - o Age – may have different generation perspective
    - o Gender – any signs of dominance within groups or societal influences

Screening

- **Step 1: Set Exact Specifications (The Screens)**
    1. **Define Demographic and Observable Characteristics**:
        - o OTD Students at KUMC or UNLV
        - o Seven from each academic year

- **Step 2: Carefully Design the Recruiting Process**
    - • **Outline the Recruiting Process**:
        - o Recruitment email/flyer
        - o To include interest survey for signing up
        - o Mention Incentive ($10 gift card) for participation
        - o Presentation (present flyer info)
        - o Promote participation with group networks (student networks)
        - o Screen with set criteria

    - • **Understanding of Purpose and Strategy**:
        - o Reflect on the study's purpose to guide research process

    - • **Recruiters Considerations**:
        - o Selecting participants
        - o Contacting participants
        - o Managing confirmations, consent, and reminders.
        - o Screen completed interest survey for eligibility

- Contact with information provided
- Discuss schedule/availability
- Send electronic informed consent form
- Reminder of session and completion of focus group prior to session

- **Step 3: Generate a Pool of Names of Potential Participants**
  - **Create a List of Participants**
  - Met the criteria?
  - De-identify
  - Add to list of participants
  - Schedule participant with de-identifiable data (Secured Google Forms/Sheets)
  - Properly Destroy (delete) unnecessary PII within 3 days after deemed unnecessary

- **Step 4: Randomize to reduce bias when possible**
  - Use nonbiased and equal of being selected.
  - Example: Large pool of participants may elicit randomization selection process

- **General Considerations**
  - Acknowledge the limitations of selection process, influenced by resource constraints and capabilities

Moderator (Student Researcher)

1. Importance of Respect
- Respect for/to all participants
- Demonstrate active listening and interest in participant's engagement in discussion

2. Understanding of Study Purpose
- Prepare and be well-versed in the study's purpose
- Adequate knowledge of the topic is crucial (review literature)

3. Communication Skills
- Clarity in communication and questions
- Avoid additional confusion by complex rephrasing or over-explaining

4. Openness and Non-Defensiveness
- Listening without bias, inserting their personal opinions, or becoming defensive.

5. Balancing Comfort and Challenge
- Ensure participants are comfortable in a safe environment to share openly and have deep discussion

6. Consideration of Homogeneity
- Consider the characteristics (gender, race, age, etc.) that can influence the group's openness and comfort

7. Sensitivity to Topic
- Be aware of sensitive topics
- Observe informal communication signs (discomfort, withdrawal, tone, body language)

8. Cultural and Language Considerations
- Consider potential language preferences and barriers

9. Moderator's Natural Affinity
- Learn to connect with group members
- Build a sense of trust with participants
- Value participant contributions

10. Moderator's Skill Level
- Consider complexity of questions
- Transitioning appropriately
- Effective use of time to collect rich data
- PILOT!
  - Questions, Equipment, Challenges, Environment
  - Receive Feedback
  - Take notes throughout focus group process

Environment Considerations

1. Creating a Welcoming Environment
- Greet and treat participants like guests
- Offering snacks or drinks to create a comfortable setting
- Engage in small talk to help make comfortable environment

2. Handling Sign-in and Setup
- Preparation! Arrive early to ensure everything is ready before participant arrival
  - Space (reserve), equipment (table, chairs, recording devices), and privacy
- Sign-in process
  - Great
  - Small talk (avoid focus group topic questions)
  - Sign-in
  - Provide participant a copy of informed consent form
  - Address any questions
  - Ask participant to have some refreshment and relax before the session begins

4. Observing Participant Dynamics
- Observe and make note of participant characteristics/qualities (dominate, experts, shy, etc.)
- Arrange seating to manage group dynamics

    o Considerations:
      ▪ Dominant placement near the moderator
      ▪ Shy participants across for better engagement

5. Using "Identifiers"
- Prepare identifiers for each participant for easy identifying (A, B, C, etc.) during discussion and in data analysis process
  - o De-identifies participants, allowing them to feel more comfortable to share perspectives openly

6. Incorporating Food
- Offer snacks and light refreshments
  - o Individual bottles of water and trail mix types of snacks
    - ▪ Consider timing of session to inform snack selection (light or more heavy snacks or small meals) and the noise level of snacks for audio***

7. Adjusting to Group Arrival Times
- Maintain a welcoming environment as participants arrive at different times.
- Avoid any discouragement for arriving early or late
- Comfortable and warm environment!

8. Dealing with the Unexpected
- Unexpected guests (fits the focus group criteria? Have them join and sign informed consent)
  - o Keep additional Consent Forms
- Small Children (communicate the purpose of the study)
  - o Assess the child's activity level to make informed decision regarding potential disruption to session
  - o Consider having small activities in nearby room (puzzles, books, game – determine feasibility)
- Authority figures / Uninvited guests (unexpected faculty/staff)
  - o Communicate and clarify the nature of session/study
  - o Offer alternatives (post-group discussion and written reports)

9. Minimize Disruption
- Make decisions that will ensure the focus group discussion remains productive and undisturbed.
- Consider the use of signs **Focus Group in Session** to avoid disturbance

10. Remain Flexible and Adapt
- Be prepared for:
  - o unexpected events
  - o unexpected attendees
  - o unexpected difficulties (technology/equipment)
- Maintain the integrity of the focus group session
  - o Review the purpose of the focus group and research study

Focus Group Planned Structure, Tools/Space, and Handling Sensitive Information

Focus Group Layout:
- Focus **Group 1** (year 1):
  - Members (A through G)
  - N=7
- Focus **Group 2** (year 2):
  - Members (A through G)
  - N=7
- Focus **Group 3** (year 3):
  - Members (A through G)
  - N=7

Focus Group Tools & Materials
- Reserving a private, comfortable, and safe environment for discussions with minimal distractions and disruptions
- Prepare and test audio recording devices and microphone capabilities prior to session
- Plan for backup (Plan B) options for unforeseen circumstances and difficulties
- Consider note taking assistance

Example of De-Identifying Strategy for Group 1 (up to 7 participants):
- First participants to sign up:
  - Participant 1 = A and assigned to Group 1 = G1 = "G1A"
  - Participant 2 = B and assigned to Group 1 = G1 = "G1B
  - Participant 3 = C and assigned to Group 1 = G1 = "G1C"
  - Participant 4 = D and assigned to Group 1 = G1 = "G1D"
  - Participant 5 = E and assigned to Group 1 = G1 = "G1E"
  - Participant 6 = F and assigned to Group 1 = G1 = "G1F"
  - Participant 7 = G and assigned to Group 1 = G1 = "G1G"
- This process will be repeated for the rest of the groups but carry a different code

Handling Data:
- Secured/Password protected Google Share Drive tools (Sheets or Docs)
- Locked office/storage within facilities with limited access
- Regularly assess PII and Confidentiality process/procedures throughout study

Capturing Focus Group Data

- **Notes to Remember**
  - Moderator guides discussion
  - Maintain atmosphere of respect and safety
  - Keep the objective of the study at the forefront

- **Audio Recording & Laptop Computer Transcriptions**

- o Real-time transcription devices and software
  - ▪ Digital recorder audio recorder
  - ▪ Third-party services or applications
    - • Notability
- o Review transcripts by listening to the audio recording

- **General Considerations**
  - o Explain confidentiality assurance of recordings and participant data
    - ▪ How data will be used
    - ▪ Who will have access
    - ▪ How it is managed with care to ensure privacy and protection
  - o Strategic placement of recording devices for quality data
  - o Prepare back-up devices, be flexible to unexpected situations and participants needs
  - o Avoid:
    - ▪ Overemphasizing the recording process (uncomfortable)
    - ▪ Bias / leading questions

- **Discussion Flow**
  - o Questions will be open-ended, developed before the focus group, and reviewed by the research team to ensure flow and relevance to the research objective.
  - o Each question may be followed by probing questions to encourage participant thinking while being aware of the time.
  - o Encourage in-depth discussions, build on the ideas of participant insight

- **Before beginning the focus group, a simple introduction and explanation of the ground rules will be presented:**
  - o Thanking participants for engagement
  - o Provide brief description of the purpose and direction of the focus group
  - o Remind audio recording, explain confidentiality and non-identification procedures
  - o Remind participants of their voluntary engagement
  - o Establish the safety, respect, and appreciation of the diverse viewpoints
  - o Identify disruptive behaviors or negative responses may cause dismissal of participant
  - o Remind participants to relax and have a casual conversation
  - o There are no right or wrong answers, and each response valuable

CHECKLISTS: Opening & Closing Focus Group

Opening Focus Group			
Phase	**Step**	**Details**	**Status**
Introduction	Welcome Participants	Greet warmly and express appreciation for their attendance.	"check"
	Discuss Purpose	Briefly restate the focus group's objective and expected outcomes.	
	Ensure Confidentiality	Assure confidentiality and explain the non-identification procedures.	

	Confirm Voluntary Participation	Remind that participation is voluntary and they can leave at any time.	
	Set Respectful Tone	Emphasize the importance of respect and safety in dialogue.	
	Casual Conversation	Encourage a natural and relaxed discussion atmosphere.	
	Inform about Audio Recording	Explain the purpose and handling of audio recording for data accuracy.	

Closing Focus Group			
Phase	**Step**	**Details**	**Status**
Closing	Invite Final Thoughts	Offer the chance to share any last comments or questions.	
	Discuss Next Steps	Clarify the next steps and how the results will be utilized or shared.	
	Express Gratitude	Thank participants for their time and valuable insights.	
	Ensure Comfort at Departure	Ensure participants are comfortable and provide follow-up information.	

Focus Group Questions & Rationale

Warm-Up Questions:

- **1). "Describe your daily experiences as an OT student."**
  - **Probe:** "Which of these experiences contributes most to your professional growth?"
    - **Relevance:** Offers a broad overview of their daily life, setting the context for understanding which experiences might be pivotal in shaping their professional identity.

- **2). "When you hear 'evidence-based practice', how does that fit into your view of a professional OT?"**
  - **Probe:** "What role does the OTD program play in shaping this view?"
    - **Relevance:** Taps into the scholarly component of their professional identity by exploring their relationship with evidence-based practices.

Transitional Questions:

- **3). "Who do you envision when you think of someone deeply involved in OT research and scholarship?"**
  - **Probe**: "How does the OTD program help in molding this vision?"

- o **Probe:** "How do you see yourself in relation to this envisioned individual?"
  - ▪ **Relevance:** Helps identify aspirational figures and benchmarks in the profession that might influence their perception of a scholarly professional.

- ● **4). "How do you feel about writing and publishing research right now in the OTD program?"**
  - o **Probe:** "Which experiences or courses in the OTD program influenced these feelings?"

  - o **Probe:** "Do you see writing research as a key part of your future professional role?"
    - ▪ **Relevance:** Directly probes their current relationship with scholarly activities, offering insights into their evolving professional identity.

Key Questions:

- ● **5). "What aspects of the OTD program do you believe have had the most impact on shaping your professional identity?"**
  - o **Probe:** "How do they contribute to your understanding of being a scholarly professional?"

  - o **Probe:** "Can you describe a moment or experience in the program where you felt your professional identity was transformed?"
    - ▪ **Relevance:** Directly targets the crux of the research question by asking for specific aspects of the program that shaped their professional identity.

- ● **6). "Can you share experiences or coursework from the OTD program that deepened your understanding or appreciation of research and scholarship?"**
  - o **Probe:** "How did these experiences influence your views on being a scholarly professional?"

  - o **Probe:** "Were there any challenges or breakthrough moments in these experiences?"
    - ▪ **Relevance:** Focuses on the academic side, helping to uncover pivotal coursework or experiences that reinforced their identity as a scholarly professional.

- ● **7). "Describe scenarios during your OTD program where you felt motivated to conduct research or felt it was unnecessary."**
  - o **Probe:** "What experiences influenced these feelings?"

  - o **Probe:** "How did these scenarios shape how you see research in professional practice?"
    - ▪ **Relevance:** Sheds light on contrasting experiences that could either strengthen or weaken their scholarly inclination and identity.

- ● **8). "Imagine yourself as a fresh student again within the OTD program. What advice would you offer based on your experiences?"**

- **Probe:** "Which experiences of the OTD program would you highlight?"

- **Probe:** "How do you think the OTD program prepares students to become scholarly?"
  - **Relevance:** Encourages reflection on their journey, helping pinpoint experiences they deem critical for newcomers and thus pivotal in shaping their identity.

● **9). "Reflecting on your journey so far in the OTD program, what resources and supports have helped you get through heavy research activities?"**
  - **Probe:** "Can you think about any moments when you read or learned something that really made things click or surprised you?"

  - **Probe:** "How about a moment where you felt more like an OT or scholarly professional?"
    - **Relevance:** Targets supportive mechanisms, which can often play a significant role in shaping a student's professional orientation and identity.

Ending/Cool-Down Questions:

● **10). "If you could design the most ideal curriculum to produce scholarly professionals, what would it include?"**
  - **Probe:** "Are there any elements or experiences right now in the curriculum that you alter?"

  - **Probe:** "What new experiences or courses would you introduce?"
    - **Relevance:** Pushes participants to synthesize their experiences, signifying which components of their education they found most influential in forming their scholarly identity

Closing

● **Request if there is anything anyone would like to share before closing**
  - Thank the group for participating

Words of Encouragement and Phrases Toolkit

1. Encouraging group dynamics and building on participant contributions
   a. "Does anyone have a different experience or perspective on what [Name] just shared?"
   b. "Has anyone else felt something similar experience?"
2. Encouraging Reflection
   a. "What do you think you would do in [blank situation]?"
3. Encouraging first thoughts
   a. "What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think about…"

4. Diving Deeper
   a. "Can you share more about…"
5. Simplifying
   a. "Let's break this down a bit. How do you feel about…[smaller unit]"
6. Reassuring
   a. "It's not uncommon to find this topic…[emotion]"
7. Clarifying
   a. "Can you help me understand what that means in the context of…"
8. Allowing Momentary Silence, deep thought takes time to process
   a. "Would anyone like to share what's going through their mind?"

Using Socratic Framework with Focus Group Questions

The six types of Socratic questions, derived from R.W. Paul's work, aimed at prompting deeper understanding and reflection.
- These include questions for
  - clarification
  - probing assumptions
  - examining reasons and evidence
  - exploring viewpoints and perspectives
  - investigating implications and consequences
  - understanding the question itself

- Each category includes specific examples to illustrate how these questions can be applied to promote critical analysis and thoughtful inquiry.

A structured approach to questioning that aims to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills using basic engineering principles
- Employing six specific types of questions, individuals are encouraged to:
  - delve deeper into the subject matter
  - challenging assumption
  - exploring reasons and evidence
  - considering alternative viewpoints
  - understanding the implications of their findings.

Example using focus group question #1:
"*Describe your daily experiences as an OT student.***"**
Probe: "*Which of these experiences contributes most to your professional growth?*"

1. **Clarification**:
   - Can you elaborate on what these experiences entail and how they influence your learning?
2. **Assumptions**:
   - What assumptions do you have about these experiences in terms of their importance to your professional growth?

3. **Reasons and Evidence**:
   o What specific experiences have led you to believe they contribute significantly to your professional growth?
4. **Viewpoints and Perspectives**:
   o How do you think your peers perceive the value of these daily experiences differently from you?
5. **Implications and Consequences**:
   o What long-term impact do you think these experiences will have on your career as an OT?
6. **Questioning the Question**:
   o Why do you think understanding your daily experiences is crucial to understanding your professional growth?

UNLV

SUBJECT: Invitation to Contribute to OTD Capstone Research at KUMC

BODY:

Hello OTD students,

My name is Andrew Ho, and I am a third year OTD student at UNLV. I am currently seeking participants for my Capstone project on OTD student professional identity formation as scholarly professionals.

I will conduct three focus groups to gather data on this topic from each cohort (year one, year two, and year three). Focus groups will take place in-person on campus and will be scheduled once the online interest survey is completed. There will be no online focus group opportunities.

Research Site Details:

- Kansas University Medical Center (KUMC)
    - MS 2003 / 3901 Rainbow Blvd., Kansas City, KS 66160

Participation Details:

- If you are interested in participating, please complete the online survey linked below.
    - Provide your school email on the survey so I can contact you to schedule a focus group session.
    - The online survey must be completed in order to participate in the study.
    - **Survey Link**: https://forms.gle/pLiQKyJa9YGB3fmu9
- For additional details about the study, refer to the attached research flyer.
- **Incentive:** A $10 gift card will be offered for participation upon completing the study.

If you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to contact me.

UNLV

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Research Site Details:
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)
  - Shadow Lane Campus, 1001 Shadow Ln., Las Vegas, NV 89106

Participation Details:
- If you are interested in participating, please complete the online survey linked below.
  - Provide your school email on the survey so I can contact you to schedule a focus group session.
  - The online survey must be completed in order to participate in the study.
  - **Survey Link**: https://forms.gle/pLiQKyJa9YGB3fmu9
- For additional details about the study, refer to the attached research flyer.
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If you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to contact me.

Appendix C: Digital Flyer (KUMC & UNLV)

THE SCHOLARLY BLUEPRINT: UNCOVERING KEY ACTIVITIES OF OT DOCTORAL EDUCATION

Your insights. Your moments. Your OT journey.
Join our exciting research to understand how learning activities can shape scholarly professional identities

SIGN UP HERE

Who can participate?

01

- 18 years or older
- Agree to be audio-recorded
- Enrolled as an occupational therapy doctorate student
- Willing to participate in a survey
- Willing to participate in a focus group

What do you have to do?

02

- Complete the online survey and fill out the contact information to be scheduled for a focus group
- Complete one 30-90 minute in-person focus group discussion to share your insights

When?

03

- The in-person focus group sessions will take place during the month of **January 2024**

Incentive

04

A $10 gift card will be offered to participants for completing the focus group

CONTACT US:

Donnamarie Krause, PhD, OTR/L
donnamarie.krause@unlv.edu
702-895-1811

Janice Davis, PhD, OTR/L
jdavis50@kumc.edu
913-588-7195 / TTY: 711

Andrew Ho, OTD/S
hoa5@unlv.nevada.edu
702-481-0133

The purpose of this research is to understand how learning activities may influence the OTD pathway of becoming scholarly OTs from the student's perspective.

This research will be conducted at KUMC, MS 2003 / 3901 Rainbow Blvd., Kansas City, KS 66160

THE SCHOLARLY BLUEPRINT: UNCOVERING KEY ACTIVITIES OF OT DOCTORAL EDUCATION

Your insights. Your moments. Your OT journey.
Join our exciting research to understand how learning activities can shape scholarly professional identities

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What do you have to do?

02

- Complete the online survey and fill out the contact information to be scheduled for a focus group
- Complete one 30-90 minute in-person focus group discussion to share your insights

When?

03

- The in-person focus group sessions will take place during the month of **February 2024**

Incentive

04

A $10 gift card will be offered to participants for completing the focus group

CONTACT US:

Donnamarie Krause, PhD, OTR/L
donnamarie.krause@unlv.edu
702-895-1811

Janice Davis, PhD, OTR/L
jdavis50@kumc.edu
913-588-7195 / TTY: 711

Andrew Ho, OTD/S
hoa5@unlv.nevada.edu
702-481-0133

The purpose of this research is to understand how learning activities may influence the OTD pathway of becoming scholarly OTs from the student's perspective.

This research will be conducted at the UNLV Shadow Lane Campus, 1001 Shadow Ln., Las Vegas, NV 89106

Appendix D: Interest Form

UNLV

Capstone Research Participation Interest Form

Purpose: This survey aims to gather background information from potential participants for a capstone research project. The information collected will be confidential and secure, used only for the purpose of this research. All collected data will be destroyed seven years after the study's conclusion.

Please take about 5 minutes to complete this survey. Completion of this online survey is required to schedule the focus group session, which will be an in-person discussion format. There will be no online focus group opportunities.

1. School Email Address (for contact purposes):

2. First and Last Name (for contact purposes):

3. Phone Number (for contact purposes):

4. Preferred Method(s) of Communication: *Check all that apply.*
   o Email
   o Phone Call
   o Phone Text Message
   o Other: _____

5. Current Academic Year in the OTD Program: *Mark only one.*
   o Year one
   o Year two
   o Year three

6. Gender Identity:
   o Male
   o Female
   o Non-binary/Third gender
   o Prefer not to say
   o Other: _____

7. Year of Birth: *For example: 1989 or 2002*

8. Do you have prior experience with focus groups or similar research studies? *Mark only one.*
   o Yes
   o No

Appendix E: Script for Verbal Announcement

UNLV

[Introduction]
- Good [morning/afternoon/evening], everyone. Thank you for allowing me to have a moment of your time. My name is Andrew Ho, and I'm a 3rd year OTD student at UNLV. Today, I'm sharing information about my Capstone research project that some might have received through email.

[Purpose of the Study]
- The research study I am working on will gather data (student perspectives) regarding the OTD learning activities related to research and scholarly writing and how it may or may not influence the development of identity as a scholarly professional. OTD student perspectives will be collected using focus groups. So, as part of my Capstone project, I am here to inform everyone about my research that will require data collection from focus group participants. Participation is voluntary but necessary for the research study to meet its objectives.

[What's Involved]
- If you are interested in participating:
  - Participants must complete the online survey that is linked on the email and found on the flyer, allowing me to verify eligibility
    - But also, a way for me to contact participants to schedule the in-person focus group sessions.
- I will be conducting 3 in person focus groups that will take place on campus (KUMC or UNLV) in a quiet space where we can comfortably have our group discussions.
- The exact location, date, and time will be determined with participants upon completion of the interest survey and screening process.
- There will be 7 participants for each group where participants will be assigned to their respective academic levels (year 1, 2, or 3)
- Focus groups are anticipated to run about 30 to 90 minutes discussion.
  - Discussions will revolve around the research topic and your shared experiences, which will also be facilitated by the student researcher (myself).
  - There will be no online focus group opportunities.

[Participant Criteria]
- Some highlights from the participant criteria found on the flyer are:
  - Must be an OTD student, at least 18 years old, and reachable through phone or email for communication regarding the research study
- Must be willing to:
  - Complete the survey to verify participant criteria

o   Allow audio-recording of focus group discussion for my data collection and analysis, as well as the write-up and publication to share the study's findings

[Confidentiality and Incentives]
- Participants who do decide to sign up:
  o   All personal information will be kept confidential, secured, and protected throughout the study to ensure your privacy
  o   Records will be destroyed after 7 years of the conclusion of the study
- Participants will receive a $10 gift card for completing the study.

[Closing]
For any questions or further information, please contact me, Dr. Krause, or Dr. Davis using the contact information found on the flyer. Thank you for your time and consideration.

UNLV

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Brain Health – Occupational Therapy

TITLE OF STUDY*:* SHAPING SCHOLARLY PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES OF TOMORROW FROM A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE
INVESTIGATOR (S): DONNAMARIE KRAUSE, PHD, OTR/L; ANDREW HO, OTD/S

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Donnamarie Krause at **702-895-1844.**

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-0020 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.**

It is unknown as to the level of risk of transmission of COVID-19 if you decide to participate in this research study. The research activities will utilize accepted guidance standards for mitigating the risks of COVID-19 transmission: however, the chance of transmission cannot be eliminated.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to identify learning experiences in occupational therapy doctoral program curriculum that students perceive as pivotal in shaping their professional identity as scholarly professionals.

PARTICIPANTS

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit this criteria:

- 18 years or older
- Agree to be audio-recorded

- Enrolled as occupational therapy doctorate students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Kansas University Medical Center
- Willing to participate in a survey
- Willing to participate in a focus group

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

Following IRB approval and after PI confirms eligibility, the student researcher (AH) will obtain consent via email and be asked to return with a signature before the focus group, held at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Kansas University Medical Center campuses. Participants will verify their understanding and can ask questions along the way. On the focus group day, a hard copy of the consent form will be reviewed and provided to the participant.

It is estimated up to 42 participants will be recruited for the study to participate in focus groups from January through March 2024. The aim is to have three focus groups of seven members, separated by academic year (i.e., year one, year two, or year three) at each site to capture a diverse student perspective. An email flyer, word of mouth, and informative presentations (before or after class) will be utilized to recruit participants. Interested members will be asked to fill out an interest survey form, collecting contact information and background to participate in the study. Consent forms must be filled out and returned via email before the focus group occurs. Participants will be contacted to schedule a focus group date/time and be reminded to return a completed consent form. Then, the participant(s) will come to the designated focus group appointment to review and keep a hard copy of the consent form before the start of the focus group to address any questions to ensure the participant is comfortable before engaging. Participants will engage in 30 to 90 minutes of focus group verbal discussions regarding the topic of interest through open-ended questions with no more than seven total participants. The focus group will end after exhaustion of time or questions regarding the research topic. Participants will be thanked for participation and notified of potential post-contact regarding the research findings.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

There may be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how students perceive their professional identity formation as scholarly professions to inform occupational therapy education that can lead to improved curriculum designs. As a young but growing profession, it is paramount to continue to develop effective strategies, contribute to evidence-based research, and evaluate current processes to ensure the quality of practice. This commitment to continuous improvement ensures the profession stays accountable and meets the standards and needs of society. Despite the research on professional identity and professional identity formation across professional disciplines, these concepts are not receiving enough attention within curriculum designs. Another small but crucial thread of the OTD graduate identity is scholarship, which is sown with the profession's mission and vision to ensure a vital

purpose and value within the healthcare fabric. The future direction of the profession lies in the hands of tomorrow's leaders transitioning from academia to practice. A student's perspective is valuable as it provides front-line insight into the successes, challenges, and opportunities necessary to measure the efficacy of education and future practice.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. The anticipated risks of this study are minimal, but the focus group questions may cause some discomfort when answering questions. Participant questions and concerns will be answered before the start of the session to ensure a level of comfort. Safety is prioritized for all participants. Participants will be briefed on safety procedures and may excuse themselves from uncomfortable discussions at any time.

COST/COMPENSATION

There may be financial cost to you to participate in this study stemming from accrued travel and transportation to get to the study site. The study will take 30 to 90 minutes of your time. You will be compensated for your time. A small $5 gift card incentive will be offered to complete the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV or secured in an encrypted and password-protected computer until the completion of the study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be destroyed.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

<u>Audio/Video Taping:</u>

I agree to be audio-taped for the purpose of this research study.

Signature of Participant   Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

Appendix G: Master Code Book

UNLV

Code Book

Table of Contents of Code Book

- Color Key (Ascending Order)

- Sub-Code Definitions (12)

- Code Group Definitions (4)

- Definitions of Categories (3)

- Data Analysis Demographic Info

- Data Analysis Table

- Kawa Model Interpretation

Color Key (Ascending Order)

1. **Sub-Codes**

- Smallest Unit of Analysis

2. **Code Groups**

- Grouped Sub-Codes with shared themes

3. **Categories:**

- Captures the themes of the Code Groups

Categories (3), Code Groups (4), and Sub-Codes (12) Overview

1.) Empowerment and Challenge in the Academic Environment

- Academic Challenges:

  - Emotional and Motivational Barriers
  - Expectations and Workload Balance
  - Understanding and Applying Knowledge Challenges

- Student Growth

  - Confidence and Resilience
  - Learning and Emotional Growth

2.) Bridging Theory and Practice through Curriculum

- Influences on Learning

  - Application and Integration of Practical Knowledge
  - Learning Environment
  - Teaching Strategies
  - Supportive Learning Networks

3.) The Odyssey of Becoming: An Embodied OT Identity and Scholarly Professional

- Scholarly Engagement, Professional Development, and PIF

  - Reflexive Evidence Integration and Growth
  - Difficulties Arising from the Research Process
  - Scholarly Engagement and Lifelong Learning

Sub-Code Definitions (12)

Category 1

A. Code Group 1

- Emotional and Motivational Barriers

  - **Description**: Encompasses challenges related to students' emotional responses to their academic experiences, including a lack of confidence in their abilities, diminished interest or motivation, and the negative impact of poor learning experiences. Highlights the affective dimensions of learning that influence student engagement.

- o **Example Details**: Student expresses a struggle with confidence, decrease motivation, or mention a negative educational experience that hindered their learning.

- o <mark>**Expectations and Workload Balance**</mark>

  - o **Description**: Focuses on the stress stemming from misaligned expectations and the challenge of managing a heavy workload. Students may find the academic demands and expectations unrealistic, leading to feelings of being overwhelmed.

  - o **Example**: Student struggle to juggle personal and professional responsibilities with academic pressures requiring more time and effort than anticipated to ensure understanding/readiness.

- o <mark>**Understanding and Applying Knowledge Challenges**</mark>

  - o **Description**: Covers difficulties students face in connecting learned knowledge with practical application, experiencing confusion over academic content, and feeling overwhelmed by numerous learning objectives.

  - o **Example Details**: Emphasizes the challenge of connecting classroom learning with real-world application where students struggle to understand and apply what they've learned in real-world scenarios, which may be contributed to inconsistencies between learning content and the realities of professional world.

B. <mark>**Code Group 2**</mark>

- o <mark>**Confidence and Resilience**</mark>

  - o **Description**: Captures the students' experience as they build self-confidence and resilience while focusing on developing self-efficacy, overcoming academic and personal challenges, and growing trust in their capabilities within academic and professional settings.

  - o **Example**: Student doubts their ability to succeed but demonstrate persistent effort, application of effective strategies to adapt, and show a deep understanding of self to navigate challenges.

- o <mark>**Learning and Emotional Growth**</mark>

  - o **Description**: Encompasses the refining of personal learning approaches and experiencing positive emotional responses tied to academic and personal development. Highlights the importance of identifying and leveraging effective learning strategies and acknowledging and valuing the positive emotions arising from academic achievements and personal insights.

- **Example**: Students' discovery of improved performance and enhanced understanding fosters a deeper engagement in their learning experiences and a positive learning outlook despite the complexity of topics/activities.

<div align="center">Category 2</div>

C. Code Group 3

- **Application and Integration of Practical Knowledge**

  - **Description**: Encompasses instances where students apply theoretical knowledge through practical, hands-on experiences, both within and outside the classroom, to deepen their understanding and skills relevant to occupational therapy practice.

  - **Example Details**: Includes both structured learning experiences, such as simulations/scenarios, and unstructured real-world experiences, such as fieldwork and clinical interactions, that allow students to apply and integrate practical knowledge for future practice.

- **Learning Environment**

  - **Description**: The setting where and how learning takes place and contextual dimensions of their learning environment.

  - **Example Details:** Context insight of the students' learning environment: clinical, community, professional conference, educational setting, and academic event.

- **Teaching Strategies**

  - **Description**: Beneficial teaching strategies that connect academic learning with real-world practice, enhancing clinical skills, professional identity development, and preparing students for complex healthcare environments. Strategies include mentorship, hands-on learning, collaboration, reflective thinking, and application of knowledge using evidence-based practices**.**

  - **Example Details**: Mentions of specific instances where teaching strategies directly contributed to student's understanding, confidence, and overall personal/professional development to navigate challenges.

- **Supportive Learning Networks**

  - **Description:** Supportive learning networks, similar to CoPs, combine community support, mentorship, and peer interactions to enhance learning. They create a nurturing environment receptive to feedback among members where students

collaborate, receive guidance, share experiences, and promote personal and professional growth.

- o **Example**: Emphasizes learning as a communal activity supported by relationships, mentorship, and collective learning purpose. This generates a sense of belonging that contributes to a student's level of engagement within a community/profession/setting.

<p align="center">==Category 3==</p>

D. ==Code Group 4==

- o ==**Reflexive Evidence Integration and Growth**==

  - o **Description**: Captures the journey of developing as evidence-informed practitioners who blend clinical expertise, best available evidence, and client preferences. This includes honing technical research skills for understanding research design, methodology, data collection, and analysis necessary for practice and client care. Highlights a learning cycle of doing, reflecting, and applying evidence-informed practices.

  - o **Example Details**: Learning activities such as simulated research projects, case studies, attending professional conferences, guest lectures, scholarly presentations, and other opportunities where students engage and build research proficiency to implement informed practices. Reflective learning activities such as critical writing tasks, reflective essays, and discussions reinforce continuous improvement and thoughtful application of evidence-informed thinking. Emphasizes the learning experiences that enable students to weave evidence-informed reflective practices.

- o ==**Difficulties Arising from the Research Process**==

  - o **Description**: Highlights the challenges students encounter in comprehending and communicating scholarly research. Challenges with reading and writing can impact the student's confidence level and deter engagement with EBPs. Difficulties may also raise questions about the practical value of research and related skills that inform EBPs, potentially affecting students' future application of EBP in client care.

  - o **Example Details**: Challenges with interpreting literature and articulating their findings can cause students to experience a disconnect in understanding the relevance of research and EBPS in their future clinical practices. These challenges can hinder the student's scholarly development, engagement, and contributions to knowledge. It highlights any perspectives underscoring

student challenges and the underdeveloped value of research and scholarly engagement.

- o **Scholarly Engagement and Lifelong Learning**

  - o **Description**: Encompasses the commitment to continuous learning and involvement in scholarly activities beyond clinical applications. This includes mentions of scholarly contributions to the broader field through leadership, education, advocacy, and community or professional engagement.

  - o **Example Details**: The student or someone they identify actively engages in scholarly activities, presents research findings, and seeks out additional learning opportunities to promote personal and professional development. This experience has shaped their perspective and appreciation for scholarly endeavors.

Code Group Definitions (4)

A. Academic Challenges

- o The obstacles and barriers, such as the emotional, cognitive, and logistical barriers students face, negatively impact academic performance.

B. Student Growth

- o The development of students, such as their response to stress, highlights personal and academic transformation to overcome challenges.

C. Influences on Learning

- o The key elements influencing student understanding and highlight the external and internal factors affecting the learning process.

D. Scholarly Engagement, Professional Development, and PIF

- o The journey of engagement in evidence-informed practices, research-related challenges, and scholarship as students shape their professional identities as scholarly professionals.

Definitions of Categories (3)

1. Empowerment and Challenge in the Academic Environment
- **Summary:**

- OTD students navigate, overcome, and experience the hurdles of academia. Students learn and develop emotional maturity, confidence, and resilience to meet academic demands.
- **Key Elements**:
  - Overcoming emotional and motivational challenges.
  - Managing academic workload and expectations.
  - Learning to apply theoretical knowledge in practice.

2. Bridging Theory and Practice through Curriculum

- **Summary:**
  - The learning environment, curriculum design, and teaching and learning strategies build student understanding. The category highlights the teaching practices and learning experiences students identify as meaningful.
- **Key Elements**:
  - Hands-on experiences that reinforce theoretical knowledge.
  - Curriculum design that supports practical application.
  - Student request for more experiential learning opportunities.

3. The Odyssey of Becoming: An Embodied OT Identity and Scholarly Professional

- **Summary:**
  - The academic journey facilitates the development of occupational therapy students' professional identity, competence, and scholarship. This category highlights the scholarly activities, challenges, and research-related experiences influencing student integration of research skills for evidence-informed practice.
- **Key Elements**:
  - Embracing the values and ethics of the OT profession.
  - Building research skills for evidence-based practice.
  - Engaging in reflective practice for personal and professional growth.

Kawa Model Interpretation

Kawa Model Elements Within the OTD Program Context

Kawa Model Element	Definition	Notes
River Flow (Professional Identity Formation)	Represents the OTD students' journey through their educational and professional development.	The flow of their experiences from encountering academic challenges to achieving student growth and professional identity.
Riverbanks (Environmental Influences)	The academic and professional environments that shape the learning experiences and opportunities for applying theoretical knowledge.	The learning environment, curriculum design, and hands-on experiences that support the practical application of occupational therapy principles.
Rocks (Obstacles and Challenges)	Symbolize the academic challenges and barriers (emotional, motivational, workload, and application of knowledge) that obstruct students' flow.	Emotional and motivational barriers, and the difficulty in balancing expectations and workload.
Driftwood (Personal and Relational Influences)	Represents the resources and support systems OTD students utilize to navigate their challenges, including teaching strategies and supportive learning networks.	Beneficial teaching strategies and supportive learning networks that help students apply theoretical knowledge and integrate practical experiences.
Spaces (Opportunities for Growth)	The opportunities for learning, growth, and development that emerge from navigating through and around the obstacles.	Student growth in confidence and resilience, and scholarly engagement leading to professional development.

Note. OTD = Occupational Doctorate

Table 2

Master Code Table

Sub-Code	Description	Example details	Y1 Quotes	Y2 Quotes	Y3 Quotes	Y1 Quotes	Y2 Quotes	Y3 Quotes
Empowerment and Challenge in the Academic Environment	OTD students navigate, overcome, and experience the hurdles of academia. Students learn and develop emotional maturity, confidence, and resilience to meet academic demands.	Overcoming emotional and motivational challenges. Managing academic workload and expectations. Learning to apply theoretical knowledge in practice.						

Academic Challenges	The obstacles and barriers, such as the emotional, cognitive, and logistical barriers students face, negatively impact academic performance.							
Emotional and Motivational Barriers	Encompasses challenges related to students' emotional responses to their academic experiences, including a lack of confidence in their abilities, diminished interest or motivation, and the	Student expresses a struggle with confidence, decrease motivation, or mention a negative educational experience that hindered their learning.	**S1G1E:** "…the practical application of research or what you can do to impact the community, I think that would definitely make me feel, you know, more optimistic about research,	**S1G2A**: "…I don't know a whole lot. We've done, like, some informal research and haven't, like, fully published it, um, but I feel like we've gotten really close to, like, where we could publish it. Um, it just seemed like I	**S1G3B:** ""I got super excited because... there were more OT students that I get to hang out with" (expressing difficulty with isolation without	**S2G1A**: "…like the faculty in the program trying to like emphasize research, but I think me personally, just because I'm very strong opinionated and I	**S2G2C:** "I didn't expect so much research related, um, classes and them expecting us to do research. Um, I was thinking more of a practice thing, um, when it comes to	**S2G3C:** "I also did not really look into what a doctor it was. But I think with this program having so much research and want to build, like, such a strong research foundation

negative impact of poor learning experiences. Highlights the affective dimensions of learning that influence student engagement.

'cause, 'cause I think I'm, I think a lot of us are on the same boat of, um, we want to do stuff that's hands on."

don't know how to do it, but I feel like I actually would, like, with help from a mentor. Just, yeah. I guess the thought of, like, publishing something is, like, kind of scary." *Currently, students do not feel confident publishing research without their mentor's assistance, and thinking about the process elicits some fear. Mentors play a large role in fostering students'*

other peers)

know who I am, and my personality that I probably as of right now would steer away from it."

S2G1E: "I wasn't aware, and I don't think many of us were aware that it was a route that we could choose to take with research, um, for when we do our capstones and such. I think a lot of us maybe, or

doctorate. I was thinking of more of a... more advanced, um, ways to practice, maybe, to learn about that and to be more knowledgeable about how to practice, and all that. Of course, um, evidence-based"

S2G2C: "I am nervous just because UNLV is a research tier university, I feel like I would need a lot of help. Just because, I

course for OT, I feel like it could have helped... I feel very underprepared when it comes to learning about research. I feel like the resources are a little bit limited for us or maybe for our cohort when it comes to, like, learning about research."

scholarly pursuits.

"**S1G2B**: "…our service learning at American Stroke was community-based, so it was very, it, it was very relaxed and not as structured and not what I envisioned, I guess, my future to be, future career to be, so it's kind of ... it was kind of hard, but looking forward to more experience." *The service learning experience was not as* at least I didn't have a clear understanding of what kind of research we would be expected to do." don't know, I feel like research for me was really hard to just even understand."

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			inspiring as the student expected/envisioned.				
Expectations and Workload Balance	Focuses on the stress stemming from misaligned expectations and the challenge of managing a heavy workload. Students may find the academic demands and expectations unrealistic, leading to feelings of being overwhelmed.	Student struggle to juggle personal and professional responsibilities with academic pressures requiring more time and effort than anticipated to ensure understanding/readiness.	**S1G1B:** "…we have so much going on, but it's also hard because we're learning so much about every different site and population that OT deals with…" **S2G1B:** "…various challenges from, um, keeping up with the coursework, uh, the readings, uh, being able to, uh, focus in class and	**S1G2B:** "…A lot of our classmates said that if they knew that it was such a research-heavy thing, uh, degree, the doctorate, they would've went for their masters. I've heard that before from classmates." *(There appears to be a disconnect between OT education expectations and students' understanding of expectations. This may be a*	**S1G3A:** "…capstone mentor … does clinical work and she does research, um, but she was talking about how, like, probably 98 to 99% of our graduates will be clinicians, not conducting research, other than doing, like, program evaluatio	**S2G1A:** "why are we holding all these lectures and meetings and things like that if you're expecting us to do it on my own time, then I'll do it on my own time, but you're making me stay here all day. So then how am I supposed to do all these readings?"	**S2G2B:** "I just don't know how, like, how realistic it is for, for us to be out in the field and doing research to like, figure out what the best evidence-based practice is for something for any situation…" **S2G2D:** "…my confidence would be a lot higher. But since	**S2G3C:** "…in the beginning, it was kind of ironic for me or contradicting because they teach us about occupational balance, but this program schedule does not give us occupational balance." **S2G3C:** "… I don't think all the research classes are complete enough to... for us to

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really feel like you are contributing to the activities and everything like that, while still kinda having the energy to go about your day after leaving school."

consideration to look into further. Are educational institutions being transparent with their expectations? Are students doing their due diligence and reading the standards? Are students capable of understanding the standards to begin with?)

ns in their own practice." (Expecting to primarily conduct program evaluations in future practice may influence the relevance of other research-related topics).

S2G1A: "I didn't realize how self-taught some of the classes were going to be. So to- I mean, I understand the importance of like coming in and lecture and whatnot, but then it almost feels like maybe it should be more of a hybrid type situation where we take those classes ourselves,

we have like six different other classes that we need to focus on and those take a while, um, and a lot of time as well, like it makes the research or trying to do research right now like scary.

S2G2A: "…I feel like doing the research part is not what I'm most like nervous about. It's just putting all of that information together and writing and

feel confident about writing and publishing a paper by the end of the third year."

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and then we have to do something like a lab or something to apply it. I don't know. I mean, I see that that's why there's lecture and lab, but there's a lot of self-taught. So sometimes it's just, there's like a blurred line, I feel like in the program." making it sound, I guess unique in its own way, while still specifying like specific things that you find within the research of like just condensing and consolidating everything is what I'm more nervous about rather than actually doing the projects. (*Synthesizing research effectively is a challenge*).

| Understanding and Applying Knowledge Challenges | Covers difficulties students face in connecting learned knowledge with practical application, experiencing confusion over academic content, and feeling overwhelmed by numerous learning objectives. | Emphasizes the challenge of connecting classroom learning with real-world application where students struggle to understand and apply what they've learned in real-world scenarios, which may be contributed to inconsistencies between learning content and the realities of professional world. | **S1G1A: "…**I'm just summarizing someone else's work. So it makes me wonder what kind of, in a way, like, what, why do I, what's the purpose of me rewording or re-summarizing when it's already summarized for me?" | **S1G2B**: "…That's what I think is hard. I don't think it clicked until this last semester because nobody was really asking questions. Like, we were sitting in class our first semester and it was like the first slide of the PowerPoint wasn't, like, this is why you need to know research because we need you to be evidence-based practitioners and be able to apply it. And the research out into the | **S1G3A:** "…maybe I'm being a perfectionist, but I feel like I still don't, uh, really understand research. And I can kind of just get by reading an article and kind figuring out the gist of it (laughs). And, you know, I don't, I know that's probably bad to say but, like, I'm not, I mean, I'm | **S2G2A:** "at times I feel like a lot of the material is very, um, is not connecting and I felt a little bit, uh, overwhelmed or I don't know how this is gonna be used in a real setting." | **S2G2A**: "…we're taking three research classes. And I feel like I haven't really retained anything because when you're given a bunch of lecture material, and all these terms, and all these concepts to go over, but you're not seeing it applied, and it's a lot of like you have to do it, like on your own, like discord to like doing it like independent | **S2G3**: "…writing abstracts and different things, like, the first month, I feel like it was kind of like random. Oh, practice writing an abstract or practice doing this. Um, but yeah. I feel like also I didn't really know like, what questions to even ask..."

 S2G3E: "…insurance doesn't, from my knowledge, |

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field. It was all right, this is a research method. And we're like, "Okay."

S1G2B: "…I don't know if there's a such thing as taking time off to do research or that maybe that could be a retirement thing"
(Due to the requirement of time/resources to engage in research, the student sees research as potentially something you could do at retirement.)

S1G2A: "…writing

not a researcher."

S1G3A: "…maybe I'm being a perfectionist, but I feel like I still don't, uh, really understand research. And I can kind of just get by reading an article and kind figuring out the gist of it (laughs). And, you know, I don't, I

ly. It's kind of hard to, like, apply those concepts..."

doesn't employ like researchers. You don't, you know, like, I feel like a lot of the insurance companies, like, Medicare and Medicaid, they only focus on, like, the traditional, um, types of treatment, the ones they've been using for years and years."
(Identifies the role played by insurance companies in Evidence-

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abstracts and different things, like, the first month, I feel like it was kind of like random. Oh, practice writing an abstract or practice doing this. Um, but yeah. I feel like also I didn't really know like, what questions to even ask... know that's probably bad to say but, like, I'm not, I mean, I'm not a researcher.”

Based Practice (EBP) and clinical practice)

Student Growth The development of students, such as their response to stress, highlights personal and academic transformation to overcome challenges.

Confidence and Resilience	Captures the students' experience as they build self-confidence and resilience while focusing on developing self-efficacy, overcoming academic and personal challenges, and growing trust in their capabilities within academic and professional settings.	Student doubts their ability to succeed but demonstrate persistent effort, application of effective strategies to adapt, and show a deep understanding of self to navigate challenges.	**S1G1A**: "…I got in my head so much because I was listening to everybody else freak out that it builded up my anxiety and it builded up my insecurities of whether or not I was going to be able to complete it well, if I knew enough information. Um, and so I would tell myself try to stay, stay away from all those mental games of, you know, am I good enough to be here?" *(Student would advise past self*	**S1G2A**: "…presenting the poster, like, at the end of all of the work, I feel like, I don't know, you feel kind of smart. It's like, okay, I can actually, like, understand this information and, like, share it with others and, like, kind of answer questions, like, to the best of my ability. I feel like that's kind of like where I feel like, I don't know, research pays	**S1G3C**: "even the base of knowledge of knowing that what I've learned is based in evidence, and I can be confident in what I'm implementing with patients, or confident in what I'm bringing up to other practitioners who were at my fieldwork site. And	**S2G1C**: "…the exposure we've had within the community. Uh, last fall, we had, like, it was like the fall prevention, uh, thing we did f-f- uh, for the community, that was like our first exposure, and just like, helping, you know, those who had like, or, or like, um, fall risk, doing like assessment	**S2G2C**: "…my fieldwork over the summer really, um, validated me and pushed me, challenged me. Um, I think my, like, aha moment was when she just left me by myself. And I was like, oh my gosh, there's no one... Like she's not watching me, I have to like make sure I'm doing the right thing. And I'm doing everything I	**S2G3F**: "…a lot of prospective students during, like, their interviews and whatnot. And they want me to give them my real perspective. And I tell them like, "This program will test you emotionally, physically, mentally, all of the above." And no matter what, you just have to find a way to

and future students to develop coping strategies to prevent/reduce toxic self-talk [e.g., impostor syndrome] and promote positive thinking).

off the most…" (*Presenting research findings in class boosts student confidence and facilitates constructive feedback from professors. Opportunities to enhance communication skills to articulate their research).*

so I think KU has done a really good job of, like, laying that foundation. And as much as it might not be our favorite thing…"

s and things like that. And then like, educating them on like, resources, I thought that was, um, just like that. And like, going out to the, for, um, mental health as well. And just being exposed to the community I feel like, has really helped us in like, reflecting and like preparing for like fieldwork, 'cause like,

can to keep this patient safe. Um, so that was pretty validating." (*Autonomy, ownership, and validation*)

S2G2B: "…you have to be flexible all the time. Like things don't always go as planned and stuff. So you just have to be able to kinda roll with the punches and, and do the best you can with any situation…"

persevere through all of it. Uh, there... It is doable. It's not impossible. So I would always tell students like, "You just got to find your occupational balance, make sure that you keep yourself happy but also try not to get too, I would say, too lazy to do school work, sometimes. " You just got to find your routine, stick to it. Um, it may

going out to those has helped me like, understand, oh, I need to like work on this with my, um, communication."

seem hard at times, but there'll never be, like, obstacles you can't overcome in this program" *(Coping and managing stress strategies and occupational balance)*

<mark>Learning and Emotional Growth</mark>	Encompasses the refining of personal learning approaches and experiencing positive emotional responses tied to academic and personal development	Students' discovery of improved performance and enhanced understanding fosters a deeper engagement in their learning experiences and a positive learning outlook despite the complexity	**S1G1B**: "…But I think for a lot of us, we've learned how to, like, lean on our classmates a lot instead of just, like, I know for me, a lot of times in undergrad, I was very	**S1G2B**: "…Was not expecting that, but thank you." And they were like, you know, three professors who are super big into research just being able to talk to them in	**S1G3C:** "I'm so grateful for it... I knew where to look if I was unsure about something"	**S2G1E:** "…evidence-based practice, and I think about how it ties into, uh, my professional identity and being an OT student, um, it	**S2G2E:** "…I have learned so far is that a lot of research that is out there is not necessarily credible, or valid or reliable in a sense, which they	**S2G3E:** "…fieldwork experiences just really help kind of, um, grow my professional identity as an occupational therapist."

. Highlights the importance of identifying and leveraging effective learning strategies and acknowledging and valuing the positive emotions arising from academic achievements and personal insights.	of topics/activities.	solo in all of my assignments and, like, classes and everything. But having every class with everyone in our cohort, I think it makes it easier for us to lean on each other and sympathize" *(A shift in learning style from individual to community/peer support approach)*	the back and forth about research is kind of cool." *(Providing students with positive feedback from instructors significantly boosts confidence levels and enhances overall learning experiences. This validation of their hard work creates a sense of reward, encouraging continued scholarly engagement.)* **S1G2A**: "…breaking it down. Um, but yeah. I feel like	**S1G3A:** "there's a lot of things that need to be taught in OT school, and there's a lot of different things, and I think, as a student, it helps to organize what an OT is. And I think as a faculty, it helps to organize what, like, OTs need to learn, or what future OTs need	gives me a sense of pride to know that our profession is backed by research… proven to be most effective through research…"	might have other reasons for putting the research out, um, whether that's for their proposal, their capstone, so it doesn't always mean that the research is thorough."

working with a group is really helpful because we could, like, during that project that B was talking about, um, 'cause we could really collaborate and, uh, like work with the teachers as well and just kind of like hear everyone's questions, um, 'cause I, like, hadn't thought about some of the questions. I'm like, "Okay, that's really actually helpful to, like, learn and I can actually apply that in the future."'"

to learn." (*Using theories and frameworks*)

(The final semester involved group work and a step-by-step research process. Collaborating with peers enhanced understanding via diverse perspectives and questions. This was helpful for shy students who could learn from others' questions).

| Bridging Theory and Practice through Curriculum | The learning environment, curriculum design, and teaching and learning strategies build student understanding. The category highlights | Hands-on experiences that reinforce theoretical knowledge.

Curriculum design that supports practical application. |

	the teaching practices and learning experiences students identify as meaningful.	Student request for more experiential learning opportunities.					
Influences on Learning	The key elements influencing student understanding and highlight the external and internal factors affecting the learning process.						
Application and Integration of Practical Knowledge	Encompasses instances where students apply theoretical knowledge through practical, hands-on experiences,	Includes both structured learning experiences, such as simulations/scenarios, and unstructured real-world experiences, such as	**S1G1C**: "…practical exams being helpful for me, especially when we did the OSCE because we had to consider, um,	**S1G2A**: "Level-two fieldwork. I feel like that would be another, like, turning point where I'll be able to, like, use more of the	**S1G2B**: "…I did a round table on. And, um, this ind-individual student had a really rare diagnosis	**S2G1B**: "…we've had to write a lot of essays, especially in the past semesters. And I, not that they were not	**S2G2E**: "…I would say our fieldwork experience really made a big impact on building my professional, um,	**S2G3A:** "fieldwork is some of the most valuable experiences to, um, having professional developme

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both within and outside the classroom, to deepen their understanding and skills relevant to occupational therapy practice.

fieldwork and clinical interactions, that allow students to apply and integrate practical knowledge for future practice.

the client and their factors going in and what they enjoyed…"

knowledge of, uh, gained over the last year and a half, um, and actually, like, use different assessments and, um, like compassionate listening and, like, uh, being like an evidence-based…"
(Level II FW has a positive impact on student growth "turning point," applying knowledge, EBPs, and using compassionate listening skills with clients.)

and it, we, the team didn't really know a whole lot about it. And so my ability to kind of find research on it and, like, present, like, what's being said about the specific diagnosis, um, they, like, afterwards were, like, thank you for, like, "Thank you for, like, sharing

important, but I feel like, like, what D was saying, like, what I really retained was when I was able to do things. That's what stuck with me and will stick with me. So, like in our lap times, or maybe having more outings, really doing those hands on activities …"

characteristics more, especially having the field work our first year, and being able to be out there, we- I learned more from just doing it and learning from other OTs in that setting. And when I came back to school, I was able to apply the information more."

nt, um, allows for you to be independent in a workplace, really apply everything that you've learned, see how our profession looks in real life, and build our confidence "

that informati on. Um, I didn't know those things." Like, just hearing things like that from people that, like- ... you, like, especially , like, your superviso r (laughs) being, like, you know, like, "Good job, like, those are really interestin g, like, articles, and

things." Like, that was really, it was really comforting"

| Learning Environment | The setting where and how learning takes place and contextual dimensions of their learning environment. | Context insight of the students' learning environment: clinical, community, professional conference, educational setting, and academic event. | **S1G1G**: "…instructors make a big point of letting us know that, like, we're all on the same team and we should be helping each other and it's not, like, a competition between, like, who can be the best of that…" (*Professors play a large role in shaping student perspectives and learning,* | **S1G2B**: "I would say along with that, uh, the female professors were also a lot more, they were a professor and a research person, whereas the males were mostly just researchers." (Perceived gender, background, and role influence from their instructor on the students' | **S1G3B**: "Our second year was fieldwork ... in the fall and in the spring... along with online classes." | **S2G1D**: "I've found the faculty to be very open. Like, if I have any questions, I don't feel intimidated. I can literally just walk up and ask them a question, be answered or be helped." | **S2G2B**: "I just, I don't see a lot of people out here, um, at least the fields that I've been in, doing their own research to, to find how they should treat a patient."

 S2G2B: "…fieldwork has been very helpful in forming that identity. Um, but even before that, doing | **S2G3B**: "…this is just what I've seen in fieldwork settings, like, some, um, even newer practitioners are still resistant to evidence, newer evidence. So there's, like, always new evidence coming out. There should be new science, right? And |

fostering supportive learning environments) learning experience)

the, the competencies in our labs, um, first year, I think was very helpful. Um, and then there's a couple of the professors are like very good in class and lecture, like, kinda like relating everything to real life experiences, so like that's really helpful to kinda like, understand what's gonna be happening out in the field when you go out

things do change, and people find ways of doing things better, and things that work better for, for, you know, different diagnoses. And I think that a lot of practitioners are very resistant to newer evidence. They, they wanna stay in their comfort zone. It's like, "Well, if works and, um, I'm gonna keep doing this even though there's new

there…" (*Students consider fieldwork, professors, and lectures with real-world relevance as having a significant impact on their professional identity).*

evidence showing that this might work even better." And so they become resistant to that. So I think for one more time, I think it's really important. That's why research is so important for us because we don't... Like E was saying, **we don't have a lot of research**." *(Some practice environments may*

| Teaching Strategies | Beneficial teaching strategies that connect academic learning with real-world practice, enhancing clinical skills, professional identity development, and preparing students for complex healthcare environments. Strategies include mentorship, hands-on | Mentions of specific instances where teaching strategies directly contributed to student's understanding, confidence, and overall personal/professional development to navigate challenges. | S1G1B: "outside of my service learning, like, that's where I feel like I've gotten the most, like, applicable research knowledge, but then in the class, but I also am not a, I'm not a person who learns best through just reading, and I think that's very hard because research or, like, looking | S1G2A: "I feel like actually, like, just watching kind of like more simpler research studies take place, it's like, okay, that, like, makes sense. Like, I can see where they're applying, like, different information. Um, so I feel like now that I've seen it more first-hand, it's been a little more enjoyable to | S1G3A: "Everything that we've learned is evidence-based... analyze whether something is or it's not evidence-based."

S1G3C: "…I think our program has done a good job of not pushing anything | S2G1E: "…a lifelong process. And, um, it's always good to reflect on experiences, because, you know, it- it's, um, you can always learn something about yourself and about the world from doing that. Um, so I think our | S2G2E: "…we have to think on our feet and in that moment to do what we think is best during the simulations of the competency, um, it's made me go back and want to research exactly what would be the best approach. Um, for example, I had a case | S2G3A: "…Our CAT presentations for systematic review felt pretty, um... helped me feel, like, a professional, you know. We dressed up all nice and had to give a professional presentation where we invited, you know, |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

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learning, collaboration, reflective thinking, and application of knowledge using evidence-based practices**.**

at research studies is a lot of just reading."

think about and, like, maybe want to do more…" (*Opportunities to see simple research and breaking the process/information down enable students to build understanding*).

on us. They're not saying, "You need to become a researcher or you can only be an OT that does no research." I think they've given us the tools, if we wanted to go out and do research, that we know how to write a grant, we know how to kind of conduct a research

program and our professors do a really good job of, um, highlighting the importance of, uh, self-reflection, um, in order to improve our interactions with patients in order to, um, you know, im-improve our own competency and, um, you know, be, be the best practitioners we can be."

where a patient had like diabetic neuropathy and it involved the driving simulator. So it made me want to go back and just research for that specific instance, what would be appropriate and wanting to research because I want to be able to explain it well to the patient that what I'm doing makes sense and it's backed by evidence."

basically whoever. You know, it could be mentors and other people to watch us give this presentation. And, yeah. It felt good. It was ha... And it was really hard to do. And at the end, it felt like it made sense what I was saying. *(The CAT presentation helped the students build confidence, showcase their abilities and hard work, and*

(Despite emphasizing research within the OTD program, the institution and educators reduce student stress by reminding students that research and scholarship do not determine their career success).

(Competency-based clinical scenarios and simulations help students develop skills in scholarly research and motivate them to find evidence to support their approach, while also being knowledgeable in effectively articulating their approach to clients).

S2G2B: "…there's been case studies that

feel a sense of professional achievement. Wearing formal professional attire and communicating with peers and the scholarly community increased their self-efficacy in engaging at a scholarly professional level).

S2G3F: "…she would always have a piece of evidence or an article for me to read before

we've been given that, where we have to, do research to figure out interventions that we would use for that specific client. I think that has deepened my understanding of the need for research and, and motivation."

we start the day. And I would always ask her, like, "Oh, um, not to be, like, nitpicky, but why do we have to read an article every day when we can be, like, treatment planning?" She was like, "Well, I wanna expand your knowledge 'cause this is good for your growth as a professional and as a practitioner

moving forward." *(The student identifies a fieldwork educator as someone who reflects a dedicated occupational therapy scholar. The educator's daily literature review has helped the student gain a better understanding of EBP and research. This mentoring experience has allowed the student to*

								see the practicality and implementation of EBPs to enhance the profession as a whole).
Supportive Learning Networks	Supportive learning networks, similar to CoPs, combine community support, mentorship, and peer interactions to enhance learning. They create a nurturing environment receptive to feedback among members where	Emphasizes learning as a communal activity supported by relationships, mentorship, and collective learning purpose. This generates a sense of belonging that contributes to a student's level of engagement within a community/profession/setting.	**S1G1E:** "It's kind of nice to be able to ask questions to your group and kind of be able to piece everything together and everyone thinks differently. So we all brought different things to the table," (*Student acknowledges the benefits of*	**S1G2B** I ask a lot of questions in class…." "…other classmates is that... "Thanks for asking the question 'cause I was so confused." **S1G2A**: "…they have a passion for research and it's, like, one of the most important things to	**S1G3C:** "But they're not pushing it on us and telling us, "This is something you have to do to be a successful practitioner."	**S2G1D**: "…one thing that I appreciated was the, you know, prompt to mentor system. Like, I, I took that, and I'd reached out to my mentors, and they've been kind of helped me the second	**S2G2D**: "…she just told me that the knowledge is there and just to be confident in what I do, and she wants my other CI to report back that I did, like amazing. And so like that kinda gave me the boost. And I took, um,	**S2G3B**: "…just very open to new ideas and new research and gives you a platform to be able to experiment and see what works and really kinda follow your passion. And I think that, that's really

students collaborate, receive guidance, share experiences, and promote personal and professional growth.

group research projects, such as gaining diverse insight on different topics and learning together).

S1G1B: "…in undergrad, I don't think I spoke to any of my professors, like, outside of... I don't think I ever really communicated with them. I just showed up and did the work and then left. But now I actually talk to my professors…"

S1G2A: "…they have a passion for research and it's, like, one of the most important things to them. You can just tell by, like, the way they talk about it and, uh, how they wanna get, like, others involved and

them. You can just tell by, like, the way they talk about it and, uh, how they wanna get, like, others involved and they feel like it really makes an impact, um, which it does…"

S1G2A: "…they have a passion for research and it's, like, one of the most important things to them. You can just tell by, like, the way they talk about it and, uh, how they wanna get, like, others involved and

year, the third years kinda helped me a little bit. I know some people didn't have the same experience. But I think I really appreciated that, having someone that's gone through it and to ask them like, hey, like, like how do you feel like or like, you know, for like, your capstone, like, what ideas did you do?"

initiative for like almost everything in the last three weeks. And my CI who was looking at me, he's like, "Whoa, it- it's a big difference compared to like, um, your, your competence level was a big difference the last three weeks," and I was like, "I think I just needed that push." And that made me more confident in my ability to be like an OT."

important when you're looking at research, is not just with your passion, but she'll give you enough space to where you (laughs) can make mistakes. And you need to be able to make mistakes. And then that can help you identify, like, how you can be better as a researcher and as a scholar." (*The Capstone mentor*

S1G2A: "…they have a passion for research and it's, like, one of the most important things to them. You can just tell by, like, the way they talk about it and, uh, how they wanna get, like, others involved and they feel like it really makes an impact, um, which it does…"

they feel like it really makes an impact, um, which it does…"

S2G1B: "…in the semesters that we've been here, we've already seen quite a bit of change in teaching styles with our professors and like the way they run class, the type of assignments they give us, is like within a semester, they will change if we give them feedback. So that was actually

played a vital role in shaping the student's foundational knowledge of research and scholarship. (The mentor's passion, openness, and willingness to learn from mistakes as a scholar made a lasting impact).

S2G3F: "…when you learn about it, it gives... it puts into perspective on what you can do

very cool. I've ever had that experience before."

when you actually have the chance to apply it. But field work is where you bridge that didactic knowledge to clinical application. So it gives you the chance to see what your skills are really made of, what your preferences are when you graduate on which location you want to work at, which setting you wanna work in."

The Odyssey of Becoming: An Embodied OT Identity and Scholarly Professional	The academic journey facilitates the development of occupational therapy students' professional identity, competence, and scholarship. This category highlights the scholarly activities, challenges, and research-related experiences influencing student integration of research skills for evidence-informed practice.	Embracing the values and ethics of the OT profession. Building research skills for evidence-based practice. Engaging in reflective practice for personal and professional growth.

	The journey of engagement in evidence-informed practices, research-related challenges, and scholarship as students shape their professional identities as scholarly professionals.							
	Captures the journey of developing as evidence-informed practitioners who blend clinical expertise, best available evidence, and client	Learning activities such as simulated research projects, case studies, attending professional conferences, guest lectures, scholarly presentations, and other	S1G1I: "…we wrote critically appraised papers individually, um, and then critically appraised topics in groups. And although those were	S1G2B: "…By the end of the semester, we had a poster presentation. We had disseminated this information and we had it in this poster presentation.	S1G3A: "…it wasn't, like, explicitly said like, "Oh, look at the syllabus to read the ACOTE standards.	S2G1A "…when I think of like evidence-based practice, I think of like the quality of, um, patient care, like we're	S2G2A "when I go through articles, I kind of go through them with the intent to talk about them in conversation. So when we have to	S2G3D: "I think that if I'm not doing evidence-based practice that what I'm doing is pointless because I could be doing

preferences. This includes honing technical research skills for understanding research design, methodology, data collection, and analysis necessary for practice and client care. Highlights a learning cycle of doing, reflecting, and applying evidence-informed practices.

opportunities where students engage and build research proficiency to implement informed practices. Reflective learning activities such as critical writing tasks, reflective essays, and discussions reinforce continuous improvement and thoughtful application of evidence-informed thinking. Emphasizes the learning experiences that enable students to weave evidence-informed

very, like, tedious assignments that took a long time, I would say that got me very comfortable on PubMed. (*Individual and group critically appraised paper learning activity enabled students to develop skills for locating research/literature using well-supported databases, such as PubMed*).”

S1G1H: “…just being up to date mostly and,

Then we gave a poster presentation to all of our classmates about what we had found. And so I feel like that class really helped me understand okay, from start to finish, this is what research would look like” (*Learning the research process throughout the semester and engaging in it step-by-step ("start to finish") was very helpful in understanding research. Students gained more knowledge by*

" But part of transitioning from master's to doctoral is to make sure that you would be prepared to be in a position to teach at a university level, so it is important, like, in our classes, they do talk about ACOTE standards because that's obviously if you're going to enter into

taking the time to make sure to do our research and understand like, oh, this, um, treatment and, um, intervention is like backed up by like all this evidence.”

S2G1D: “I'm using this opportunity to do research to figure out what I want to specialize in, or what I want to do. Or maybe this is

do like, the formal like appraisals and stuff for class, and we go so deep into detail, you're even considering who you're gonna be talking about this to.”

S2G2B I don't know it's a gender thing. Maybe it's, it's a ... I don't know what it is, but the way they taught was very much more like, like, okay, how do we apply it? Like, what does it

something else that could actually help them as opposed to assuming it'll help them or doing something because it feels right because other people are doing it, because of, uh, whatever traditional methods are used or the, the culture they have at that specific, uh, facility. It's like a really nagging thing in my

reflective practices.

like, seeing current research, because I think that's really important with how quickly things change…" (EBP)

S1G1A: "…a gentleman come in who specialized in knapping, which is, like, this art of turning rocks into spheres. I don't know, don't, that's not, don't, don't quote me on that description. But anyways, the reason being, um, is that what if we had a

applying what they had learned).

S1G2A: "…very functional and, like, meaningful activities and, like, what do you want to do? Um, stuff like that. So that was kind of a shock coming in. I would say it made me, like, appreciate how, like, broad OT is and, like, what I can do with it, um, and how, like, mental health's incorporated into it and I never really thought about

academia, it's important to understand that that exists, and also that there's certain things that the program needs to address, and there's certain things that there just isn't time to address in, in depth, because there's maybe a standard, or maybe no standards

something that I wanna like, you know, continue for the next 20, 20 years. Now, if I want to specialize in, say, um, uh, feeding or if I want to specialize in wheelchair, if I want to specialize in like hand therapy or something. So I'm using this opportunity, uh, to do research to figure out

look like? Where ours was, like, the semesters before with our fe- our female professors, it was like, all right, can you read this chapter and then take this test? (When considering scholarship courses, the importance of gender may diminish in comparison to teaching strategies that focus on the application of knowledge, which were

brain that I don't like. Sometimes, I wish I could just, "Yeah. I'll just do that," instead of having to always think, "Am I doing the right thing for this person based off of what science tells us?" (*Development of thinking as a scholar*)

S2G3D: "…in that position paper, they're saying, "Hey, stop doing that.

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client who wanted to get back to doing that activity and we had no, no idea what that meant? And so maybe that was my, like, aha moment of research." (*Guest speaker experience benefits their learning experience, providing an opportunity to integrate OT learning content into current understanding*)

S1G1B: "…My interpretation of a CAT is it's a, a Clinically

it before, so kind of like broadened my idea of OT."

S1G2B: "…staying up-to-date with all the evidence. Um, there's always new evidence coming about every day, so staying up-to-date with like, um, what the evidence is saying now in order to instill that into practice. So, um, staying informed. We have a responsibility to do that as OT students and future OT practitioner" *(Grasps the importance of EBPs and*

attached to it."

S1G3B: "…That's, like, my thing. But, like a bunch of different things. Like, the threads are the little rivers that go into the big body of wa-ocean? I don't know, Pond.

who I am and figure out what I want to do."

found to have a greater impact on student learning.)

S2G2A: "…my aha moment was over or during my summer fieldwork experience. And I, It wasn't limited to just one patient but just after going through them, I'm just like, oh, yeah, like all of these patients that pretty much just allowed me to be an OT with them rather

We have a lot of good evidence that this other stuff works, and it's very useful." And as a profession, as professionals, how are we going to do things that don't work? Imagine a doctor doing that with, like, procedures or medicines? That would be considered negligence. And so, like, how are we taking what we're

Appraised Topic. So basically I think we found, like, four or five research papers about the same topic. So, like, for my group it was in-home therapy for stroke patients, I think. And so we each, each member of our group, like, kind of found an article and then we compared them in our CAT and just kind of, like, broke them down and then, like, talked about how they

staying up-to-date with research for practice as practitioners).

S1G2A: "…I feel like it's really important to, like, provide the best interventions and, like, the best education for a patient, um, as you can, especially when it's backed up with evidence because, uh, I feel like that trust also builds. Um, and just, like, getting into the routine of, um, reading research, um, scholarly research and,

than looking at me as like a student even though that's what I kept getting introduced as, they, they would like validate me after the, I like at the end of my treatment sessions, they're like, "I can't wait to see you as an OT because I had so much fun doing the things that you came up with for me 'cause I wouldn't have thought of it myself." *(Ongoing application*

learning and just discarding it because it's a lot easier from a compensatory like, you know, getting money because, "Oh, this treatment is easy to do, and insurance will pay for it, you know." It just seems unethical." *(The student identifies a concern regarding the current EBP environment due to a lack of*

were similar and how the interventions in those specific Papers could impact our therapy. I'm still a little bit fuzzy on it…" (*The student demonstrates a good understanding of the basic research processes, indicating acquiring knowledge and skills for engaging in scholarly activities, but acknowledges room for learning*).

um, like thinking about it, and then in that way, it will like, like, help translate easier to practice 'cause I'm thinking about it more and it's, like, part of, like, my decision making." (*Recognizes the value of evidence-based practices and staying current with research in order to ensure effective communication and education for clients, enabling them to make more informed decisions*)

of knowledge, recognition, and validation from clients helped shape their professional identity and understanding of their role - sense of belonging to OT).

knowledge and potentially unethical to continue)

S2G3D: "…think is warranted because this school as I've been told is an R1 Carnegie level, whatever, right? And it's funny. I knew one of the alumni from the, uh, post-professional doctorate. And one of the things that they complained about was that it was too, uh,

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research-focused which is insane because you came to a doctorate at a school that is supposed to be at this level. And so, how are you gonna complain about that when you hopefully knew what you signed up for, right?"

S2G3A: "…I think having fieldwork that is not traditional has helped me develop, I

think, more broadly. If I only saw certain types of fieldwork, like, things that had to do with, you know, just the body, then, I would develop into an OT"

S2G3B: "…it's hard. But in the end, it's, it's probably for the better. I know a lot of people don't like research. They find it difficult. And it's maybe not quite what

they think they signed up for, similar to what D was saying with, um, the post-professional doctorate. And I would say for me, personally, I didn't have the expectation that it would be so research heavy coming into a doctorate program. That might be on me for not reading, um, thoroughly enough on what a

doctorate is and what that is going to entail but, yeah. It's not, it's not really what I expected." *(The student takes responsibility for understanding doctoral-level standards and expectations to promote research and scholarly engagement in the OTD academic experience).*

S2G3D
"I think that if I'm not doing evidence-based practice that what I'm doing is pointless because I could be doing something else that could actually help them as opposed to assuming it'll help them or doing something because it feels right because other people are doing it, because of, uh,

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whatever traditional methods are used or the, the culture they have at that specific, uh, facility. It's like a really nagging thing in my brain that I don't like. Sometimes, I wish I could just, "Yeah. I'll just do that," instead of having to always think, "Am I doing the right thing for this person based off of what science tells us?"

Difficulties that Arise During or Around the Research Process	Highlights the challenges students encounter in comprehending and communicating scholarly research. Challenges with reading and writing can impact the student's confidence level and deter engagement with EBPs. Difficulties may also raise questions about the practical value of research and	Challenges with interpreting literature and articulating their findings can cause students to experience a disconnect in understanding the relevance of research and EBPS in their future clinical practices. These challenges can hinder the student's scholarly development, engagement, and contributions to knowledge. It highlights any perspectives underscoring	**S1G1A**: "…when it comes to research and writing about it, I get really in my head about if I find, if I really want to follow a certain argument but I keep seeing contradicting arguments, where it's like, "But this is better," but I've been really wanting to, like, say, "But no, this is great."	**S1G2A**: "…My faculty mentor, he has like an engineering background and you can really see that too. Like, in research, I just don't have that mindset…" (*Assumes researchers have traits and mindsets reflecting engineering professionals, such as being analytical and logical. The student determines these qualities unattainable*	**S1G3A**: "…I think capstone is unique in the fact that it's a self-guided thing, whereas at least in my fieldwork experiences, it was very much, like, a maybe you're not collaborating with other OTs, you... But there's all, like, generally,	**S2G1E**: "…my friend also let me know that research, uh, oftentimes can be a mostly solitary endeavor, uh, endeavor. And, um, since it's such a lengthy process, and you know, it's very, uh, it's very methodical and has, um, you know, it, a specific	**S2G2D**: "…wording like sometimes everything is hidden. So it was just not straightforward with what kind of study design or what they used. And so you really have to like read through the whole study to try to figure out like what they're doing. And if you don't know, I guess the study, the	**S2G3C**: "…some classes were not having some stats classes, like, data classes kinda discouraged me to write research or do a research because it feels like I didn't, you know, get that type of education that I need to do a research, a full research."

related skills that inform EBPs, potentially affecting students' future application of EBP in client care.

student challenges and the underdeveloped value of research and scholarly engagement.

or something they cannot possess)

S1G2B: "…I'd say in general, a lot of them from very smart. (laughs) Um, I think almost stupid smart…" (*Students see researchers as intelligent individuals—maybe too smart—which may indicate that they cannot reach that level of performance*)

there's PTs, there's SLPs, there's, um, you know, teachers if you're in the school setting. So, like, there's more of that, like, comradery…" (*Acknowledging the differences between fieldwork and Capstone experiences, the latter being more self-guided, encourag*

way of doing it, it's, it can be very mentally draining. And I know as an OT, I definitely want to be more involved in my, uh, my patient care and actually be involved in my patients' lives and getting that hands on experience. Um, so while I do really admire, um, and respect everything that, um,

designs and wording, it's hard to see what they actually used as well."

S2G2D: "…when I'm thinking about somebody doing research is like, I think back to my undergraduate days with, uh, my biology professors. Um, like I w- was a lab TA for, for my ecology professor and like doing soil samples and stuff like that. So that's kinda

es deeper reflective practices on current experiences)

S1G3A: "I still don't really understand research... I can kind of just get by reading an article"

S1G3A: "…we do specific, like, learning activities to, like, analyze whether something is or it's not

research offers, and I do want to, uh, carry that w- with me throughout my career, um, I, I would like to have, um, more of a, uh, hands on experience, uh, in, in my professional practice…" (*A contradicting view of devoted researchers where the student would prefer to be more hands-on and*

like, where my mind goes, is somebody in a white lab coat in a lab, like analyzing samples or doing data analysis like that, that's like my first thought."

S2G2E: "…I just feel like that's kind of like a backwards way of going about instead of just learning in class that this is being presented, this is the best way to treat it. Um, just, I don't know, I feel

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evidence-based. So I feel like it fits into your practice if you're, like, initially trained that way. But I think it can be harder for people who maybe have been in the OT field for a really long time and haven't learned or practiced or known the importance of evidence-based

interactive with clients).

S2G1E: "…so I think I lack a lot of maybe exposure to research that is, I guess, more geared towards, going away from what I typically think of researchers, which is like, just sitting down isolated, collecting data or you know, analyzing stuff, typing

like the research is already out there. And it's been done. And we're kinda like, redundantly doing it again, instead of just being taught what's already been known so that we could maybe, later on come up with new things. (*The student is confused about the emphasis on self-directed learning in their education. Rather than generating*

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practice, I think it can be harder for them to adapt to using that in practice …" (*The student recognizes the importance of integrating evidence-based practice (EBP) into their learning activities to ensure its use in their future practice. However, they acknowledge that*

papers and stuff like that."

or learning new approaches, focusing on established research/techniques may be more efficient, optimizing their knowledge and preparation)

S2G2B: "…evidence-based practices is definitely has its place in, in the field of OT. I mean, it's how we learn what the best, um, interventions are for, for any client is. It's how

they may face a challenge from practicing clinicians who may not be familiar with this way of practice without having received a similar educational experience. This suggests that the student may not be fully equipped to address this challenge effectively).

we base all of our treatments off of. Um, but to be like realistic like in the workforce, I don't know how much we apply that to it. Um, just like going through fieldwork and working in the hospital previously, um, like I've never seen any OTs or PTs, like, doing their own research to look up how they should treat a patient. Is like the thing most

								people will just go to their supervisors or their directors and try to figure, figure it out that way, if they don't know what to do." (*Disconnect between learning content and realities of the workplace - lack of relevance*).
Scholarly Engagem ent and Lifelong Learning	Encompasse s the commitment to continuous learning and involvement in scholarly activities beyond	The student or someone they identify actively engages in scholarly activities, presents research findings, and	**S1G1J: "**I don't have enough knowledge in a certain topic to be able to write about something that deeply. And so just	**S1G2B**: "…I feel more of like a researcher I guess when I can actually like explain it to people and like understand	**S1G3C**: "…three minute video trainings that they'll just be able to watch,	**S2G1E**: "I think that having maybe more exposure to, um, like the practical application	**S2G2B** "you might read a sentence in a article, and it sounds truthful. But they're like, they could	**S2G3A**: "…I hate to say this. But presentatio ns are, I think, a very good way to build

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clinical applications. This includes mentions of scholarly contributions to the broader field through leadership, education, advocacy, and community or professional engagement.

seeks out additional learning opportunities to promote personal and professional development. This experience has shaped their perspective and appreciation for scholarly endeavors.

reading it, I can kind of, just from context clues, figure out what they're talking about, but it's not something that's natural to me (The student feels unprepared to write about certain topics confidently, expressing difficulty interpreting research for understanding.)"

S1G1C
"I'm not, honestly, that interested in writing research. Like, I'm more interested about

what's going on." (Captures growth in confidence, self-perception, and their capabilities as the student progresses through the program)

S1G2A: "…I feel like just gaining, like, confidence and, like, problem-solving and, like, not just hearing different case studies but actually, like, discussing things with people, like with clients and coworkers and fieldwork supervisors

interact with, so they're not gonna be tough. Um, but just making sure that they're completing them, and then it's measurable in the long run. They have to complete them to see if it's measurable or, like, if it's working. And then hopefully keep it sustainable. But yeah, ran into some

of research or what you can do to impact the community, I think that would definitely make me feel, you know, more optimistic about research."

skew that data somehow to just kinda like meet their, their motives or whatever they're tryna present. So it makes it very hard to like, just figure out whether sort of presenting the information accurately or not."

professional development. Um, I think that for me, personally, it got easier as we went through the program and done so many presentations. Um, you just get more confident being able to speak in front of a group of people. And I think that even translates into, um, smaller groups as well, just your confidence and, and

learning about it and a bunch of different things within the field of occupational therapy" (The student expresses a misalignment with their academic and professional areas of interest, which can impact their level of engagement).

S1G1J
I felt like it was challenging to, like, synthesize all the information and not just kind of paraphrase what the

and everyone else I feel like will help me probably grow the most as a professional …" (*Gaining the confidence to perform OT practice is expected to be achieved through actual practical application and real-world scenarios, not just classroom learning. Students are eager to break away from listening to classroom material and test what they know with other healthcare professionals)*

roadblocks today with my site mentor and we're like, "How are we gonna... Where, where are we gonna go next with this?" So we'll see what happens." *Demonstrates adaptability, collaborates with a mentor, prioritizes sustainability, and understands foundational*

people skills."

research articles were saying, but to actually, like, think about it and how to put it into words that make sense to us and builds off of all the research.

research processes.

S1G3B: "…it's still taking a little bit to get used to. Um, but I kind of just tell myself, like, this is, you know, a 14-week experience, it's a learning experience. And then after that, like, I can just take all that knowledge into, like, my actual practice"

Adjustment to the Capstone experience is a continuing process, and it provides a period for the students to reflect on future practice using the knowledge they gained.

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 practice in health care professionals: A scoping review protocol. *The Canadian Journal*

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Occupational Therapy Doctorate   May 2024
Capstone Project: *Shaping Scholarly Professional Identities of Tomorrow from a Students' Perspective*
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sheama Krishnagiri, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology   2020

Clinical Experience

Inclusion Fusion, Level IE	2023
Nevada Community Enrichment Program, Level IIB	2023
Tick Talk Therapy, Level ID	2023
Cornerstone Christian Academy and Tykes Preschool, Level IC/D	2022
Renown Rehabilitation Hospital, Level IIA	2022
Concentra Urgent Care, Level IB	2022
Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services, Level IA	2021
North Las Vegas VA Medical Center, Occupational Therapy, Volunteer	2019 – 2020
NeuroRestorative, Nevada, Occupational Therapy, Shadowing	2019

Work Experience

Las Vegas Real Estate Agent	2018 – present
United States Air Force, Culinary Specialist	2010 – 2017

Professional Affiliations

American Occupational Therapy Association	2021 – present
Nevada Occupational Therapy Association	2021 – present
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post: 12101	2019 – present
Las Vegas REALTORS®	2018 – present

Honors and Awards:

NAVPA Region VIII Scholarship
National Association of Veterans Program Administrators   2023

General Scholarship
University of Nevada, Las Vegas Occupational Therapy Program   2023

Fieldwork Out of Area Scholarship
University of Nevada, Las Vegas Occupational Therapy Program   2022

Jerri Zika-Semenza Memorial Scholarship
UNLV Division of Educational Outreach   2021– 2022

NOTA Student Scholarship
Nevada Occupational Therapy Association   2021

Student Veteran of the Year
Student Veterans of America   2020

Valerio Military & Veteran Scholarship
University of Nevada, Las Vegas   2020

Sastaunik Veterans Scholarship
University of Nevada, Las Vegas   2020

Bernard Osher Re-Entry Scholarship
University of Nevada, Las Vegas   2019 – 2020

CSUN Head Start Scholarship
University of Nevada, Las Vegas   2019 – 2020

Dean's Honor List
University of Nevada, Las Vegas   2018 – 2020

Leadership Experience and Community Service

President	Student Occupational Therapy Association	2022 – present
Community Service Chair	Student Occupational Therapy Association	2021 – 2022
President	Rebel Vets Organization	2020 – 2021
Secretary	Rebel Vets Organization	2019
Peer Advisor Leader	Peer Advisor for Veteran Education	2020 – 2021
Peer Advisor	Peer Advisor for Veteran Education	2018 – 2020

Big Brother Big Sisters of America	Mentor	2018 – present
Student Veterans of America	Leadership Institute	2019
United States Air Force	Non-commissioned Officer	2014 – 2017

Grant Funding

Title	Awarding Agency	Dates
Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)	Graduate RSO Funding Program	2022 – 2023
Consolidated Students of UNLV (CSUN)	Ways & Means Student Organization Funding	2020 – 2021

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/andrew-ho702/