Occupational potential and possible selves of masters' level healthcare students with dyslexia: a narrative inquiry

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Occupational Potential and Possible Selves of Masters' Level Healthcare Students with Dyslexia: A Narrative Inquiry

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The social, educational and occupational challenges facing individuals with dyslexia are multiple and complex. Late diagnosis, lack of diagnosis, or lack of support in mainstream education can impact on outcomes. It is perhaps paradoxical then that there are students with significant dyslexia, including those undiagnosed until arrival in higher education, who have been able to progress to Masters' level study. In so doing they appear to have significantly bucked the trend for educational under-attainment. With this in mind, this research sought to explore influences on occupational potential, that is exercising latent capacities through participation/engagement in occupation, (Wicks, 2005) in shaping the 'possible selves' (perceptions of the self in the future) (Markus & Nurius, 1986) of master's level healthcare students with dyslexia. Twenty-four narrative interviews with nine Masters' Students were analysed using Clandinin & Connolly's (2000) narrative inquiry, to highlight significant plots and sub plots. Data was then organised into four Acts: Diagnosis, Shaping Possible Selves, Fitting the Mould, and Strategies and the Future, employing performance ethnography as the mode of communication. The findings show that occupational potential and possible selves are highly influenced by the sociological surroundings, resilience, and agency of the participants and their families and there is a strong relationship between these two concepts in relation to the actions required to reach desirable possible selves. The importance of context as well as familiar support are under considered in higher education and the research has important implications for institutional policy around retention and success, pedagogic practice, and student support.

Keywords: occupational potential, possible selves, narrative inquiry, occupational identity, dyslexia, performance ethnography

Introduction

Dyslexia is both complex and contested: it affects approximately one person in ten globally, is independent of intelligence, and varies significantly from person-to-person (Handler, 2016). Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), indicates neurobiological origin and alternative brain pathways used in readers with dyslexia, influencing learning and the acquisition of literacy skills, auditory and visual processing, aspects of memory and reading comprehension (British Dyslexia Association, nd; Handler, 2016; International Dyslexia Association, nd).

International challenges to living with dyslexia relate to educational and healthcare spending capacities, significant socioeconomic and cultural misunderstandings, problematic and chaotic instruction, lack of recognition and marginalisation, and inadequate teacher training (International Dyslexia Association, 2016). In addition, there are inter and multi-disciplinary arguments relating to the clarity of its origins, differentiation from other reading disorders and its' prevalence, existence and validity are questioned (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014). As a result, despite calls to enhance routine screening and pedagogical support in schools, this does not routinely take place (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009; International Dyslexia Association, 2016). Indeed, United Kingdom policy limitations and arguments purporting that diagnosis is unhelpful and perpetuates learned helplessness, lowering teacher and learner expectations, persist (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014) resulting in inconsistencies with teacher training, understanding and pedagogical adjustments.

Such issues present challenges and occupational consequences for people with dyslexia and their families, particularly as lack of pedagogical adjustment has implications for acquisition of learning and study skills and can thus be influential on life trajectories (MacDonald, 2012), self-esteem, depression and anxiety (Glazzard &

Dale, 2015). For example, up to 51% of people within the United Kingdom criminal justice system have dyslexia (MacDonald, 2012) and there is also an identified relationship between dyslexia and homelessness (MacDonald, Deacon, & Merchant, 2016). In addition, although there are also growing numbers of people with dyslexia accessing higher and post-secondary education internationally, this amounts to around just 4% of the student population in the United Kingdom (Pino & Mortari, 2014) and between 10% and 70% of the 11% of students with disabilities in the United States of America (Government Accountability Office, 2009). These figures are significantly lower than the 10% prevalence presented above and the number entering postgraduate study is largely unknown. The fact that students with dyslexia manage to progress to higher level study at all, considering their statistically poor life chances is, therefore, a phenomenon worthy of exploration as it poses the question of why some students manage to circumvent social and structural inequalities and exigencies while others do not. This study therefore seeks to explore the roles of occupational potential (Wicks, 2001; 2005) and possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and in particular, whether occupational potential has any influence on the shaping of possible selves. This includes, for example, how someone with dyslexia might perceive themselves in the future if there were earlier challenges to developing capacities which existed in latency (occupational potential).

Occupational Potential and Possible Selves

Occupational potential, identified by Asaba & Wicks (2010) as a concept within the lexicon of occupational science, relates to how a person's capacity can be reached through participation and/or engagement in occupation (Wicks, 2005). Occupational scientists are aware that occupational potential may be influenced and indeed hindered by lack of opportunity to participate and engage in occupation. The dynamic influence

of occupation (Humphry, 2005) supports perspectives on occupational potential as sociological, cultural, institutional and political factors influence temporal, dynamic, evolving changes in capacity which are exercised over the life course (Asaba & Wicks, 2010; Wicks, 2005; Wilcock, 1998; 2001; 2007). It is through the dynamic interaction with occupation that individuals develop abilities to problem solve, carry out functions and work towards and achieve objectives (Van Bruggen, 2010). Importantly, occupation advances and fosters equal capacity development in order that people may become whomever they have the potential to be (Aldrich, 2018).

Possible selves, developed in the 1980s by psychologists Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius (Markus & Nurius, 1986) are representations or perceptions of the self in the future and are drawn from perceptions of the self from the past and present (ibid). They are determined and often depend upon immediate and distant sociological, cultural and historical contexts (ibid). Hoped for possible selves act as life goals and are important to life roles (Cross & Markus, 1991). Actions or the things people 'do' are also known to be highly important to the realisation of desired possible selves as well as avoidance of undesired possible selves (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart Johnson, 2004; Oyserman, Destin, & Novin, 2015; Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2010). However, across the literature no connection has previously been made between possible selves and occupational potential. Despite this, it is acknowledged that self-regulation and goal directed behaviours and actions are fundamental to reaching desired possible selves and require investment in order to support identity formation (Cross & Markus, 1991). This research explored this investment (internal and external) . Therefore, this research considered how, despite the challenges facing people with dyslexia, the nine participants in this study are reaching their desired possible selves as healthcare students and professionals.

The authors elected to research Masters' level students because the postgraduate student with dyslexia experience is significantly under-researched. In addition, these students had not only made it in to higher education but have successfully gained their first degree, made the decision to progress on to further study and were working at an academically higher and therefore more demanding level. The authors chose to focus on students seeking professional level qualifications on a number of Healthcare Master's degree courses as they were interested in exploring how these career choices had been framed, as well as the educational journeys they had undertaken.

Methodology

The 1st author employed narrative inquiry to capture temporal dimensions of the experience (personal and social) of growing up with dyslexia and consider the relationship between individual experiences and the social and cultural contexts in which they took place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), thus acknowledging the relationship between the participants and their world. Consideration was given to the importance and relevance of everyday experiences and actions through employment of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013), appreciating the importance and relevance of everyday experiences and actions (Clandinin, 2013; Dewey & McDermott, 1973; Clandinin, 2013). Thus, the subjectivity of the participants was respected and that of the researchers also acknowledged (Creswell, 2007); it also enabled the generation and representation of subjective realities whilst applying a pragmatic view of knowledge (Clandinin, 2013), allowing focus to remain on the research aim and questions (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The experiences of the participants and those of the researcher (Murphy, 2018) were situated alongside each other and led to a representation of reality based on storied experiences, communicated here through performance ethnography in the forms of Acts and Scenes (Denzin, 2003;

Douglas and Carless, 2013) in order to separate the ontological narrative from the epistemological (Harling Stalker, 2009). This form of representation was chosen in order to 'do justice' to the participants who, despite busy schedules studying Masters' level courses, volunteered their time (Nayar and Stanley, 2015) to share their stories.

Exploring possible selves temporally also enabled the elucidation of past representations of the self and experiences, which may have been influences on present and future selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Rossiter, 2007). In conveying their stories of the past, present and future, the participants in this study provided reflections of contextual factors that added to their life experiences so far (Stevenson & Clegg, 2011). The research design enabled perceptions and considerations of possible selves to emerge as the participants spoke and explored their stories, allowing collaboratively constructed plots and sub plots to develop as they reflected upon and repackaged their lived experiences (Stevenson & Clegg, 2011). This added insight into how and why these participants with dyslexia made the choices they did, undertook specific actions, and how elaborated and distinct their possible selves were and are for the future, as well as highlighting how occupational potential was and continued to be reached.

Following local university ethical approval, participants were recruited using purposive sampling via email to course leaders at a university in the North of England. Emails were forwarded to dietetics, speech and language therapy, osteopathy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy students. Inclusion criteria were that participants were to be studying healthcare courses at Masters' level and had a diagnosis of dyslexia (regardless of when this diagnosis had been made). The research sought to establish what their educational journeys to Masters' level had been and continued to be like, what barriers and facilitating factors had hindered and helped their progress, and what strategies, if any they had used in seeking to be academically successful.

Justification for conducting the interviews on just one university site resided in the spatial element of Clandinin & Connolly's (2000) narrative inquiry space which requires researcher familiarisation with the environment. Moreover, the intent was not to provide generalizable data but to elucidate the specific and the particular (Creswell, 2007). Consequently, the data needed to be multi-layered, evolving and rich (Josephsson & Alsaker, 2015) and up to three semi structured interviews were carried out with nine participants. In total, twenty-four interviews took place. Some participants elected to be interviewed twice, believing they had shared their stories sufficiently.

All participants originated from the United Kingdom, eight were females and one male (see Table 1). All participants provided informed written and verbal consent to participate, the interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were undertaken by the 1st Author (an academic teaching on health care courses). Table 1 presents the demographics of the participants.

Table 1. *Demographics of Participants*

Name	**Age**	**Age Diagnosed**	**Studying**
Rebecca	21	7	Physiotherapy
Maria	28	11	Occupational Therapy
Abigail	26	16	Occupational Therapy
Paula	29	29	Occupational Therapy
Jessica	24	20	Occupational Therapy
Jo	28	20	Occupational Therapy
David	21	6	Osteopathy
Anne	29	20	Occupational Therapy

Penny	36	43	Occupational Therapy

Each interview began by asking the participant to offer their stories of growing up with dyslexia. Further questions and prompts were used to clarify points and respected the three-dimensional space of temporality, sociality and spatiality (when, who, where, and internal and outward reflections) (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013) and were informed by considerations of both occupational potential and possible selves.

The 1st Author used reflexivity throughout the research process to manage potential biases relating to being a parent of a child with dyslexia herself, and a tutor, occupational therapist and occupational scientist. Throughout the research process, researcher subjectivities and emotional responses were explored, acknowledged and managed through the use of reflexive diaries, creative letter writing and poetry (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, Bertsch, & Camic, 2003).

A process of iterative and evolving analysis followed each interactive interview (Josephsson & Alsaker, 2015) using a table adapted from Tse, Yuen, & Suto, (2014). The 1st Author read and reread copied and pasted transcripts placed into the table to identify plots, sub plots and threads. This involved making notes and highlighting anything of importance under the following headings: temporality (past, present and future), transactional (personal and social), occupations, and possible selves. Analysis from earlier interviews informed the questions asked in interviews 2 and 3. Once the final interviews were complete, the transcripts for each person were reread together and plots, sub plots and threads were further identified and developed through a process of writing new narratives. This process combined the ontological narratives of the participants with the epistemological position of the 1st Author (Harling Stalker, 2009).

However, this was problematic as the spirit of the interviews was considered by the 1st Author to be missing from the newly constructed narratives. Douglas & Carless (2013) also highlight this phenomenon and suggest a solution lies in employing performance ethnography as the mode of communication.

Therefore, in order to maintain the spirit of the interviews, and do justice to the valuable time and insights offered by the participants, ontological narratives, using participant words verbatim, were constructed into Acts and Scenes. Thus enhancing communication with the research audience (Denzin, 2003; Douglas & Carless, 2013). The Acts and Scenes remain rooted in the storied experiences of the research participants by providing extracts from the original transcripts. This way, similarities and differences across plots are highlighted and respected, the voices of the participants remain audible (Gilligan et al., 2003) and the "spirit" of the interviews is maintained (Douglas & Carless, 2013: 53).

Findings relating to the narratives of the participants are presented in the next section as Acts: 'Diagnosis', 'Shaping Possible Selves', 'Fitting the Mould' and 'Strategies and the Future'. The Acts are presented in `typescript` in order to differentiate the actual words of the participants. Readers are requested to picture a row of nine students sitting upon a stage with spotlights shining down on them as they speak. Researcher, (1st Author) is also present.

Findings

Act 1, Diagnosis,

Scene 1, Viciously Dyslexic

Characters: Rebecca, Researcher (1st Author) and David

Rebecca

I was little, I can't really remember too much. (Pause) Felt (pause) different and (pause) felt that it took ages to do stuff; felt like I took forever to do stuff and felt a bit thick really. My mum would hate me to say that. Just feel a little bit thick, a bit slow.

Researcher

When you got the diagnosis, did you still feel that?

Rebecca

Yes, yes, it didn't change that. No, it didn't make me feel any different. When I had a tutor, I felt a lot better. I had someone to talk to and she would say, "Let's have a look at this, and that, and did you understand that?" That was nice. But that was paid for. My mum paid for that. At school, it wasn't very good. We were meant to go to a specialised learning (pause) for like a couple of hours a week or something. I was just told to read a book that was at the right level. I would just sit there and read this book and I was quite good at reading …it's interpreting. I was just slow. People had more severe difficulties than me. I carried on struggling but because I was at the top of a bottom class I was always overlooked throughout. I gradually dropped throughout the years. I got worse.

David

We had a teacher who was like an old-school teacher and there was me and this other lad who was in the year above but we were together cos it was such a small school that the years were together. She proper showed us up. She

like, … I couldn't write very well for a long time and she used to make us go up to do it and would proper have a go and she took us from the hall, dragged us in, made us keep doing it, made us go up in front of the class and kept doing it and stuff. It was quite bad and then Jack the little lad told his mam and she complained and she (the tutor) was suspended and we didn't see her again … But because of that we got dyslexia tested and it turned out I was quite viciously dyslexic.

Researcher

You say viciously?

David

Yes, I'm better now but especially earlier on it was a mixture of being dyslexic and not wanting to learn and so I wasn't in good stead cos like, I didn't have much confidence in doing things.

Act 2, Shaping Possible Selves,

Scene 1, Lots of squiggles

Characters: Abigail and Paula

Abigail

When I was in reception the teachers … said "She's really intelligent, she can read. The others can't read". My Mum was like, "Are you sure?"

…I was pretending I could read. I was picking up books we'd read in class and was pretending to read them to the

other kids. Using the pictures or how I remembered the stories. My Mum knew I couldn't read. … and it took me a long time to read because I was convinced I was really clever, but I was pretending to read…. On the first day of reception I sat down with this girl and was like, "I'll read you a story" (laughs).

I went through primary school and quite quickly the teachers realised I wasn't a genius. …in…year 5, a teacher stood me up and said, "This is the worst speller in the world" and asked me to spell, …a 3-letter word and asked me to spell 'ton' and I put an 'e' on the end but I was panicking as soon as I stood up. I was really panicking. I was so upset (crying),

Mum took me to the local sports centre and she said, "There's this, I've signed you up. Would you like to go?" And I was like, "Oh, I'd love to". So, I tried it and I used to train most days of the week …It gave me a lot of confidence in myself. …I loved that I was good at it. It gave me a lot.

Paula

So, I didn't go to primary school. I was home schooled predominantly by my Mum… Me and both my brothers... I loved it yeah, I really, really loved it.

So, my mum always knew I had loads of issues with writing and spelling and stuff like that but I also really liked

it and always wanted to write stories. You know, fantastical or kind of imaginative stories or whatever. But I always struggled with the actual spelling but she didn't make a big deal of it at all and just kind of encouraged me anyway. …We had a little thing, if I couldn't spell stuff I would like do a little squiggle if I didn't know what the letters were which sometimes didn't work if I couldn't remember what the words were (laughs). Lots of squiggles everywhere.

Act 3, Fitting the Mould.

Scene 1, "I have to Work a lot Harder"

Characters: Jessica, Jo and Maria.

Jessica

I have to work a lot harder is probably a more negative thing but I suppose as I've had to do it all my life, and there are people on this course who will just write an essay. It's more beneficial to me to know I have to plan it and spend three weeks. But I learn. Whereas if was just writing it I wouldn't learn as much, I find I learn a lot more doing it over 3 weeks rather than banging out an essay. For me it means I learn, take the time to read things through, compare, contrast.

It makes me structure my time. I'm good with time management. Like on placement, all my reports to finish. I knew I had to give myself time to finish it all off. I

knew I had to give myself time to be able to finish it well. I had to give myself 3 days to finish it all off. That was a positive because I could say to my educator I need this and she had dyslexia as well so she was ok with that. I have developed my own strategies in terms of working so yeah… not really needing anyone else which is I suppose, is good but still a bit shaky.

Jo

So, in my undergrad I had written myself off as not being academic, I just thought, "Oh right, well this just obviously doesn't work for me". I thought, "I'm just not very academic". … I didn't doubt I was bright. I just didn't think I was bright in the way that fit the mould.

Maria

I think being on an occupational therapy course makes you re- evaluate the balance in your life and it makes me take more time out for myself. I'll set aside time, don't get bogged down with work, and don't get into that spiral of not being able to cope with things.

I think this course has told me that you know, it's never going to be perfect you know. … Sometimes, you are going to fail at things and sometimes you have to accept that you can't be brilliant with everything and it just takes you longer to learn and develop skills to address these issues and like I said I would rather develop these skills as a student rather than being a practitioner.

Act 4, Strategies and the Future

Scene 1, “Actually, Yes I can!”

Characters: David, Anne and Penny

David

I use mnemonics. Like … beautiful, ‘b’ ‘eagles’ ‘attack’ ‘under’ ‘turkeys’ ‘in’ ‘four’ ‘ugly’ ‘lorries’. So, I’ve got 400 of them... That was in year 6 or 7 so I could remember them over time. Doing them over and over again. I can do it without it now and that made a huge difference and made a huge impact cos I felt like I wasn’t struggling with spelling so much. I was struggling with structure and punctuation and we weren’t doing so much anyway other than spelling tests which I wasn’t a big fan of cos I was like “Well I’m not gonna learn it by just doing this”.

Anne

You don’t even realise what you're doing sometimes but then when I look back I see, “Oh right, I did do that strategy” and I didn't realise I had.

Penny

I always wanted to do something, have a career and … my ex-husband just wanted me to be a sales person because that’s what he was, “Oh just go and sell something” … “I don’t want to sell something”. …I never ever thought I would be able to be on a course like this but I wanted to. Housewife …I was just there to do dinner parties, look after the kids, I was rock bottom. I didn’t think I was capable...

> When I got divorced I had a fantastic GP [General Practitioner] and brilliant solicitor and barrister. I had to take my ex to court which was horrible but afterwards the solicitor and barrister said, "You know, you are really bright. You are free now. You can go and do whatever you want to do". They'd just heard me speak. I hadn't had to write anything down so it was then I thought, "Actually, yes I can! I can do whatever I want to do". So, I spent a couple of months looking at what I could do and then I chose occupational therapy.

Discussion

The Acts show evidence of both the oppression and development of occupational potential and possible selves, exposing a complex dynamic interaction between the influences of environmental experiences and the resilience and determination of the participants.

Rebecca, David and Abigail's narratives show some consequences of insufficient pedagogical support. For example, despite diagnosis at age 7, Rebecca's occupational potential was constrained by limited and restricted pedagogical school experiences (Wicks, 2005) and she developed a long standing occupational persona (dimension of self, shaped by a myriad of factors), (Wicks, 2005) as a "bit thick". As a result, her academic self-esteem was low and her emotional response internalised, leading to feelings that it was the dyslexia, and herself, that were problematic, rather than the environment suppressing or constraining the development of her capacities (Wicks, 2005). Moreover, for Rebecca, David and Abigail the school environments risked a disconnectedness whereby pedagogical understanding and adjustments were not sufficiently in place and occupational opportunities altered the participants' sense of

competence in study skills, challenging their ability to gain a sense of mastery and self-belief in their own proficiency (Laliberte Rudman, 2002). Furthermore, there is an omission of awareness of multidimensional capacities and intelligences (Collins, 2007) whereby mainly literacy and numeracy are measured against highly valued literate norms.

Within Act 2, Abigail and Paula's childhood working self-concepts (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and occupational identities (Christiansen, 1999) are shown to be developing. Paula enjoyed writing and from a very early age Abigail developed a love of stories, which she enacted through pretending to read. Both had supportive families and the Act shows the importance of familial care, support and attention within the development of occupational potential. However, the two narratives contrast: Abigail, experienced occupational alienation as her hopes were separated by enforced non-accepting social realities (Bryant, Craik, & McKay, 2004), while Paula benefitted from a protective, bespoke home education which supported her scholarly occupational identity. Abigail became keenly aware of discrepancies between her actual self, ideal self and ought self (the image held by others such as teachers) resulting in high levels of anxiety which could in turn shape future behaviour, personal growth and self-actualisation (Collins, 2007).

Within the Acts it is also evident that parents compensated for some of the unsupportive school experiences, particularly by introducing meaningful and purposeful occupations, which served as social "cues" (Destin & Oyserman, 2010 p:1018). Through this, a symbiotic relationship between occupations and future desired selves evolved as strategies and occupations implemented by parents and families enabled the development of latent capacities, leading to more realistic perceptions of future possibilities. Family held beliefs, assumptions and theories determined occupations

such as attending regular gymnastics lessons, writing stories and reading, informing who the participants could be in the future, and influencing self-perceptions (Asaba & Jackson, 2011). Realities were based on individual interpretations, constructed in relation to perceptions of future selves, and occupations allowed individuality to flourish (Aldrich, 2018).

The ability to be intentional actors (Sugarman & Martin, 2011), in other words, apply agency, an important facet of possible selves (ibid) and occupation, is fundamental within these Acts. The narratives emphasise a tendency to carry on despite and in spite of environmental barriers, thus resisting and challenging hegemonic practices (Ramugondo, 2015) and adverse conditions necessary for realizing capacities (Aldrich, 2018). Implicit and covert barriers are shown to influence occupational possibilities (Laliberte Rudman, 2010), occupational identity (Christiansen, 1999) and indeed occupational potential and possible selves. However, the participants show that through working harder than their peers, applying strategies and tolerating times of difficulty relating to lower grades or even failure, they were able to persevere and defy many emotional challenges. Success remained possible and feasible under their control (Smith, James, Varnum, & Oyserman, 2014). This sustained application of agency may also have been due to certainty of their own ability to persevere and work hard, as well as confidence that other contextual factors such as their course, families and career prospects remained salient and in place (Smith et al., 2014). In addition, their targeted, goal orientated possible selves of being health professionals remained relevant and conceivable (Destin & Oyserman, 2010). Maria experienced failure as humbling, and placed high value upon success when it arrived (Smith et al., 2014). This resonates with the work of Asaba and Wicks (2010) who refer to a prevailing inner discourse of "I can" associated with "the experience of potentiality" (Asaba & Wicks, 2010: 122). This

"can do" concept or attitude is prominent across the findings of this research, despite challenges within some social environments.

Within Act 4 Penny's excerpt indicates, that despite under and post graduate qualifications she experienced tensions which limited her occupational potential in adulthood. She refers to finding herself "rock bottom", unable to express herself in writing, influenced significantly by the social responsibilities impressed upon her by her relationship with her ex-husband, roles and occupational possibilities (Laliberte Rudman, 2010). Since occupational possibilities are influenced by social values and beliefs about what people should do in everyday life according to their life stage, social class and gender, Penny's story evidences that although she had the capacity to fulfil the roles expected of her in the past, to do what was "required" (Wicks, 2005: 137) she was not able to become at that point, who she had "the potential to be" (Wicks, 2005: 137). In turn this meant she was not able to reach her occupational potential or perceive desirable possible selves and her reflections indicate a direct link between occupation and health (Wilcock, 2007).

It is important to note that the participants were continually involved in interpreting, constructing and reconstructing their personal and social identities within their environments (Laliberte Rudman, 2002). This development of identity was a constantly changing and evolving phenomenon; influenced by occupations engaged in along the way. For all the participants, their sense of agency, informed and motivated by desirable possible selves made possible the nearing or indeed reaching of occupational potential at various times of their lives. This resonates with the work of Asaba and Wicks (2010) who refer to a prevailing inner discourse of "I can" associated with "the experience of potentiality" (Asaba and Wicks, 2010: 122). This "can do" concept or

attitude is prominent across the research despite challenges the participants faced within some social environments.

This research shows that reaching possible selves relates to the dynamic relationship between occupational potential and possible selves, as well as agency, family, strategies and congruent environments (Murphy, 2018). It is in reaching occupational potential in specific occupations (for example, study) and developing occupational identities which align with social contexts that possible selves are perceived, achieved and new possible selves become feasible. In this research, it was evident that families purposefully chose and encouraged participation in occupations according to their own personal values and those of the society and cultures they existed within. Moreover, parental aspirational possible selves (Murphy, 2018), that is, how parents envisioned their own and their children's futures according to what they perceived as possible, was critical in influencing the choices of occupations and therefore the opportunities they provided for their children. In other words, there is a clear relationship between, and an interdependence of occupations and possible selves: the goal orientated actions the students were engaged in, in seeking to attain desired possible selves, are fundamental to changing capacities and ultimately enabling them to become the selves they want to be. The participants' stories show how occupational potential and possible selves are reliant upon both contextual environmental factors as well as personal capacities, choices and preferences.

Viewing the storied experiences of students through the lenses of occupational potential and possible selves, therefore, allows an enriched perspective, adding to the knowledge surrounding dyslexia. This research illuminates the transformational nature of occupation and its relevance and importance to life trajectories. Furthermore, this research adds to the knowledge surrounding occupational potential thereby reaffirming

its position and increasing awareness of this construct within occupational science (Asaba & Wicks, 2005).

Limitations

The authors recognise, of course, that the power dynamic between a university tutor and student participants may have influenced the spoken stories. However, the participants' interview responses were open and conversational, and their willingness to engage suggested a collaborative relationship which was managed with utmost respect towards the participants. Some participants, particularly the occupational therapy students, had a tutor/student relationship with the 1st Author and may have had pre-existing awareness of occupational potential. In addition, all students were briefed on the aims of the study and the semi structured interview questions purposefully explored educational experiences of growing up with dyslexia in order that these storied experiences could be heard. Moreover, performance ethnography as the mode of communication (Denzin, 2003; Douglas & Carless, 2013) allowed an enhanced level of audibility (Gilligan et al., 2003), offering the opportunity to bring the words and voices of the participants closer to the audience. Finally, occupational potential and possible selves are not measurable entities and gaining in-depth knowledge relies upon perceptions, reflections and interpretations, therefore subjectivity remains a central tenet of this research.

Conclusion

The occupational experiences of growing up with dyslexia is under- researched within occupational science and occupational therapy and would merit further investigation as, without further elucidation, the risks of occupational injustices, as well as the many challenges to reaching occupational potential, will persist. It is clear,

however, that illuminating the stories of students with dyslexia as they undertake their educational journeys can offer important insights which can help frame institutional policy, practice and student support. Robust educational policy which advocates inclusive participation and pedagogical understanding throughout educational journeys is necessary if people with dyslexia are to reach their occupational potential and be the people they have the potential to become. The role occupational potential plays in supporting the realisation of desirable possible selves is an important outcome of this study and further research applying this concept within occupational science is warranted. In particular, occupations involved in supporting the development of study skills in learners who have dyslexia are of particular relevance as these are fundamental to educational progression and life trajectories. Thus, professions such as psychology and education could benefit significantly from knowledge gained by applying an occupational perspective as it offers an excellent method of counteracting these types of challenges to decreased participation and engagement in vitally important occupations. In conclusion, dyslexia is an important topic because it influences approximately 10% of the global population and impacts the life trajectories of many. In short, many of those with dyslexia may not be becoming the selves they have the capacity to become. Occupational science has the potential to provide a key lens through which to view this phenomenon in order that conditions for realizing capacities (Aldrich, 2018) may be facilitated; further research may thus better expedite the fullest achievement of occupational potential in students with dyslexia.

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