

Paths to Occupational Therapy: Experiences of Practitioners with Disabilities

Introduction

- Occupational therapy (OT) recognizes the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Literature on diversity has focused on gender, ethnicity, and race
- Relatively little is known about how OTs with disabilities in the U.S. come to the profession

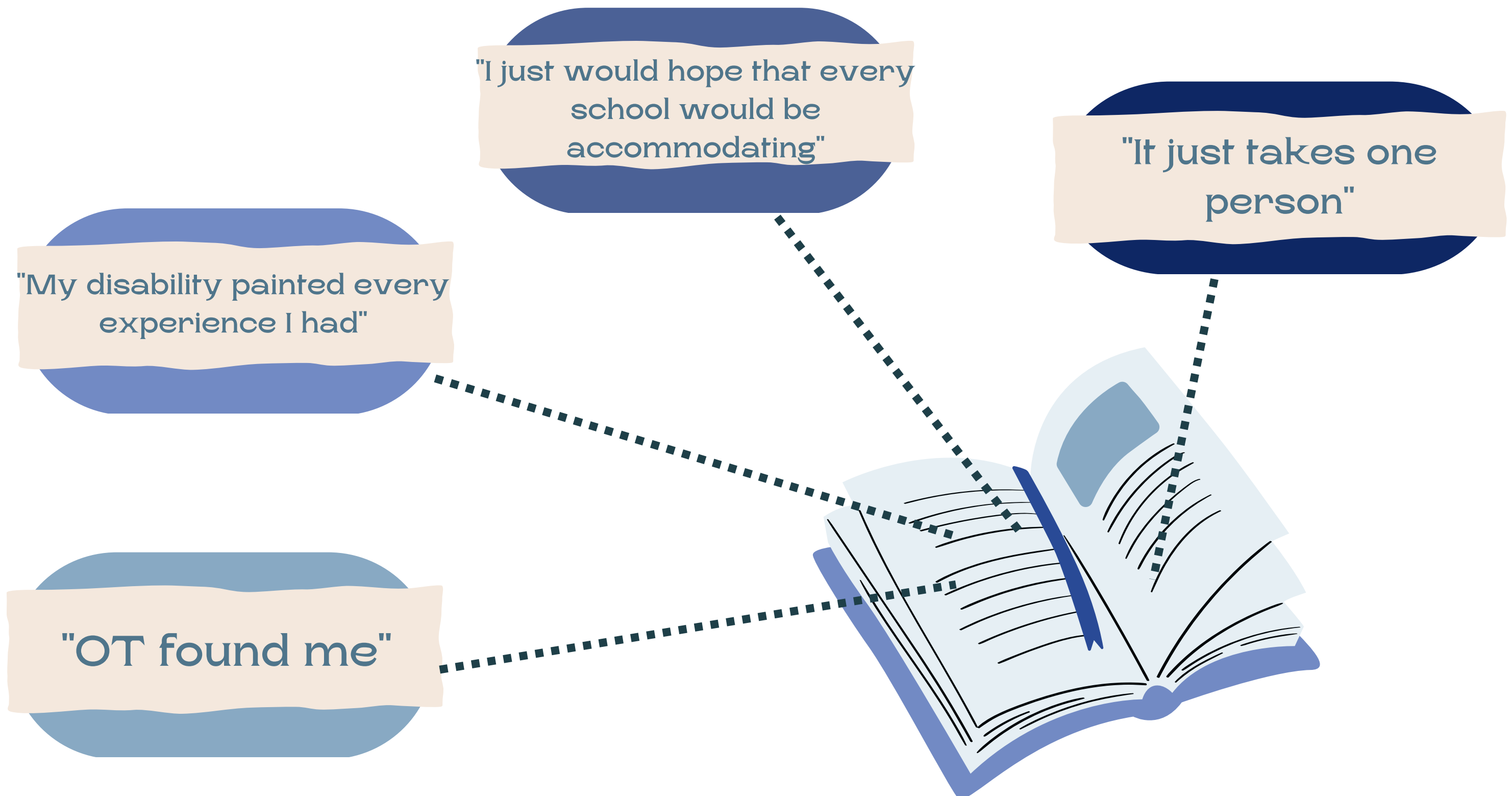
Research Questions

- How do individuals with disabilities find out about, choose, and pursue a career as an occupational therapist?
- What supports and barriers do they experience in this process?

Methods

- Descriptive qualitative design
- Recruitment: flyers, social media, email, word of mouth
- 10 Participants
 - Experience range: 5 months-29 years
 - Age range: 25-59
- Data collection: semi-structured interviews via zoom
- Data Analysis: thematic analysis with primary and secondary coding

References



Discussion

- Range of supports and barriers before and during OT school
- Disability experience, stigma, self-acceptance, and growth transact
- Challenges with receiving accommodations and support from educators and peers
- Relationships influenced experience

Implications

- Promote earlier exposure to the field
- OT academic programs should consider hiring a disability coordinator
- Continuous examination of inclusive curriculum and teaching practices is critical
- Continued education for OT educators to reduce ableism

Conclusion

- Findings highlight the importance of inclusivity and access to accommodations
- With increased exposure, changes in curriculum and continued education for OT educators, the path to OT for individuals with disabilities can be more accessible
- Having an accessible path to OT makes diversity in the field a reality, and not merely a rhetoric