SRHE extract Alison Chambers

The field of study can be described in broad terms as professional identity. More specifically it is concerned with understanding the ways in which student physiotherapists construct a particular professional identity within a professional context that places increasing emphasis on interprofessionalism and collaborative working (DH 2000; 2001; 2002; 2009; Barr 1998, 2007). It is focused upon the social aspects of professional identity

Primarily concerned with understanding how the macro-policies of interprofessionalism in health care practice and education impacts upon the micro-experiences of individuals who are learning to be a particular type of professional. It is an exploration of the construction of a uniprofessional identity in physiotherapy in an increasingly interprofessional world. For professional students, developing an understanding of their future professional role and understanding how their chosen profession is positioned within the broader health care team is important to identity construction.

For student physiotherapists, the whole process of constructing a professional identity is complex. Contemporary practice requires physiotherapists to be capable of collaborative working (Vanderstraeten 2000, Wackerhausen 2008). In practice, blurred professional boundaries, contestable roles and shifts in professional positioning make for a complex process of constructing a uniprofessional identity. Where students experience the wide variations in practise and a wide variety of physiotherapists each with different (sometimes conflicting) professional identities it is hard for students to easily navigate their way through the differences (Howkins and Ewen, 1999; Apker and Eggley, 2004; Ferraro Coates and Crist, 2004; Adams, Hean, Sturgis and Mcleod- Clarke, 2006; Kell and Owen, 2006; Baxter and Brumfit 2008)

This study is located within a theoretical framework where notions of professional identity are considered to be complicated, contestable and subject to relations of power. Social perspectives of professional identity consider the relationship between the individual, the profession and society and through this offers explanations of ways in which social forces impact upon professional behaviour and identity (Cahill 1998; Callero 2003).
Situated with an interpretive paradigm, this study combines social constructivism (Burr 2003), Foucault (1977, 1978, 1980), narrative and identity theory (Stryker, 1968, 2002), espousing the idea that realities are constructed through human interactions allowing for

multiplicity of meanings and consideration of how objects are constructed within particular social and historical discourses.

Bjorklund (2000) suggests that the individual occupation therapy paradigm of students has a significant impact upon how they construct their identity. Clouder's work , (2003) supports contemporary notions of professional socialisation as interaction. For Pratt, Rackman and Kaufman (2010) medical students constructed their professional identity through work identity violations. Burman's (2003) study in teaching reached similar conclusions. Stott (2004) identified isolation as a key feature experienced by male nursing students which had a negative impact upon their ability to construct salient professional identities. Johansson and Hamberg (2007) conclude that mismatches between medical students ideas of being a doctor and their experiences in medical practice creates a significant difficulty for resulting in the normal state of medical students being one of anxiety.

The vast majority of literature exploring the concept of role models does so from a positive perspective (Jung 1986; Lockwood and Kinda 1997; Colwell 1998; Gibson 2004; Shakespeare and Webb 2008). The concept of the role model promotes the importance of the interrelationships between individuals in the socialisation process and infers that professional identity is constructed. Gibson's (2004) raises the point that the concept of a role model is dependent upon acts of identification based upon the perceptions of individuals and that it is the act of identification which makes another person a role model rather than someone being declared a role model simply because of the position they occupy. The concept of role modelling in physiotherapy is currently under researched The literature relating to role models tends in the main to have positive connotations, there is limited consideration of negative role modelling and counter identification (Elsy-McManus, Simons and Russell 2000).

There is an increasing interest in the narrative quality of lives, and the personal story has been resurrected as an important source of data (Polkinghorne 1995: Mishler 1987; Sparkes 1996; Temple 2002; Reissman 1996; 2004, 2008;Andrews et al 2008). We are constantly being reminded that selves are constructed through storytelling. Narrative practice lies at the heart of self-construction and stories of experience are an appropriate way of exploring professional identity.

The findings of this study were elicited from the biographical narratives of final year student physiotherapists utilising the approach advocated by McCormack's (2004). The key findings of this study suggest;

Student physiotherapists entering physiotherapy education or very early in their professional education have a fairly well formed notion of what being a physiotherapist means. Through this they construct an idealised version of their imagined professional self which subsequently becomes the *lens* through which they then judge their subsequent learning encounters.

In the process of constructing their professional selves they actively construct 'others' in comparison to their idealised professional self. An important constant across was the apparent importance of difference in how students mediate and negotiate their professional selves. Much of the identity literature tends to emphasis self-comparisons in terms of similarities (Jenkins 2004). I suggest that dis-identification is of primary importance in the process of identity construction and is displayed through the counter narratives (Andrews 2012) elicited from interview data. Professional socialisation literature perpetuates notions of emulation, positive role modelling and the capacity to mould students this study offers an alternative perspective. This study proposes that the process of professional identity construction is characterised by difference more than similarity and proposes that anti-role models are as important as role models in the construction of professional identity.

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