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## What does the Evidence say about Student, Fieldwork Educator, and New Occupational Therapy Practitioner Perceptions of Successful Level II Fieldwork and Transition to Practice? A Scoping Review

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## Abstract

This study explored occupational therapy (OT) student, fieldwork educator, and new practitioner perceptions of successful Level II fieldwork experiences and how those experiences related to transitioning into practice. A scoping review was conducted where articles related to OT fieldwork experiences were analyzed using key terms and databases. A total of 14 articles related to OT fieldwork experiences and transitions into practice were critically analyzed. Three studies explored student perceptions of fieldwork experiences and perceived self-efficacy, two studies investigated student perspectives of fieldwork educators, four studies explored transition to practice of recently graduated OT students, two studies investigated student perceptions of preparedness for practice, and three studies explored recently graduated OTs' perceptions regarding professional confidence, ethical tensions encountered in practice, and near-misses and mistakes in the workplace. Eight articles were determined to be level IV evidence, and six articles were determined to be qualitative studies. Most of the studies found that confidence, professionalism, and setting/environment were important factors to a successful fieldwork experience or transition into practice. Recommendations for further research and more rigorous studies include investigating OT students' perspectives on what a successful second Level II fieldwork is and how that relates to transitioning into practice. This review reflects the limited research about students', fieldwork educators', and new occupational therapists' perceptions of Level II fieldwork and transition to practice.

## Keywords

Fieldwork, transition to practice, occupational therapy, clinical education

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored occupational therapy (OT) student, fieldwork educator, and new practitioner perceptions of successful Level II fieldwork experiences and how those experiences related to transitioning into practice. A scoping review was conducted where articles related to OT fieldwork experiences were analyzed using key terms and databases. A total of 14 articles related to OT fieldwork experiences and transitions into practice were critically analyzed. Three studies explored student perceptions of fieldwork experiences and perceived self-efficacy, two studies investigated student perspectives of fieldwork educators, four studies explored transition to practice of recently graduated OT students, two studies investigated student perceptions of preparedness for practice, and three studies explored recently graduated OTs' perceptions regarding professional confidence, ethical tensions encountered in practice, and near-misses and mistakes in the workplace. Eight articles were determined to be level IV evidence, and six articles were determined to be qualitative studies. Most of the studies found that confidence, professionalism, and setting/environment were important factors to a successful fieldwork experience or transition into practice.

Recommendations for further research and more rigorous studies include investigating OT students' perspectives on what a successful second Level II fieldwork is and how that relates to transitioning into practice. This review reflects the limited research about students', fieldwork educators', and new occupational therapists' perceptions of Level II fieldwork and transition to practice.

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### INTRODUCTION

Fieldwork is a vital hands-on component of occupational therapy (OT) education that provides opportunities to achieve clinical competence. Didactic coursework is important during fieldwork and is used as a foundation of understanding upon which students build. The relationships between the student and the fieldwork site and fieldwork

educator are just as important as the didactic coursework (Christie, Joyce, & Moeller, 1985a, 1985b). What a student defines as a successful Level II fieldwork and an easy transition into practice afterward is largely dependent on several factors that are further explored throughout this scoping review. Several areas of fieldwork education have already been explored and researched, but very few examine student, fieldwork educator, and new OT practitioner perceptions of fieldwork and how that relates to transitioning to practice.

It is important to examine perceptions of students, fieldwork educators, and new OT practitioners about fieldwork in order to gain a better understanding of what is beneficial for the student when transitioning from a student completing Level II fieldwork to practicing as an entry-level clinician. Fieldwork experience influences an OT students' choice for future area of practice (Chiang et al., 2013). For example, Hulse, Cash, and Simons (2000) determined that OT students who completed a Level II fieldwork experience in a preferred practice area felt more prepared when transitioning into an entry-level job in that practice area.

## **BACKGROUND**

There are two levels of fieldwork experience: Level I and Level II. Level I fieldwork is designed to enrich didactic coursework through observation and participation. Level II fieldwork, which occurs near the end of didactic coursework, is designed to develop entry-level practitioners who are competent as generalists (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE], 2018; American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2016). It is important to note that the structure of Level I and Level II fieldworks vary across different OT programs, but all programs are held to ACOTE standards.

According to the Commission on Education (COE) guidelines (2013) for an OT Level II fieldwork experience, "the fieldwork experience is an integral part of OT education, and ... should be designed to promote clinical reasoning and reflective practice, to support ethical practice through transmission of the values and beliefs of the profession, to communicate and model professionalism as a developmental process and a career responsibility, and to expand knowledge and application of a repertoire of OT assessments and interventions related to human occupation and performance" (p. 1). During the fieldwork experience students learn to apply principles mastered in the classroom to address client needs and develop a professional identity (AOTA, 2012). According to Costa and Burkhardt (2003), "fieldwork experiences are designed to enrich the coursework, and this serves to integrate academic knowledge with practical knowledge and skills. The goal of fieldwork education is to develop competent, entry-level generalists" (p. 644).

## **Perceptions of Fieldwork and Transition into Practice**

Below, several seminal articles are reviewed to gain a better understanding of research related to student, fieldwork educator, and new OT practitioner perceptions of fieldwork and transition into practice.

Christie et al. (1985a) found that five components led to a good fieldwork experience including supervisor/supervisory component, communications/relationships, attitudinal environment, variety in patient caseload, and variety of experiences. Similarly, another study by Christie et al. (1985b) concluded that both student and supervisor respondents perceived the supervisory process as the most critical element in distinguishing the good versus poor fieldwork experience. A similar study conducted by Vogel, Grice, Hill, and Moody (2004) focused on supervisor and student expectations of Level II fieldwork. The results indicated that supervisors had high expectations of students and students' expectations matched that of the supervisor. The authors postulated that the increase in expectations was due to greater demands on health care environments and new educational requirements.

Kautzmann (1990) and Herzberg (1994) explored fieldwork educators' attitudes and perceptions. Kautzmann (1990) found that the educators placed the highest value on providing a thorough orientation and the lowest value on individualization of the fieldwork experience and supervisor-student collaboration; whereas, Herzberg (1994) found that teamwork, active experimentation, flexibility, adaptability, and doing were the most important student attributes.

Two studies found that students perceived the fieldwork experience as important, controllable, and stressful, but not disruptive to their lives (Mitchell & Kampfe, 1990, 1993). Mitchell and Kampfe (1990, 1993) concluded that the students used five coping skills and that the students used problem-focused and social support strategies more than blamed self, wishful thinking and avoidance strategies. Tickle-Degnen (1998) and Tickle-Degnen and Puccinelli (1999) conducted studies related to emotional states perceived by students and fieldwork educators. Tickle-Degnen (1998) found that different settings required different sets of attributes to be successful, whereas Tickle-Degnen and Puccinelli (1999) found that students who negatively expressed emotions were evaluated by their clinical supervisors as less clinically skilled than those who were positively emotional.

Gutman, McCreedy, and Heisler (1998) found that student's communication and behavioral characteristics often predicted potential problems during Level II fieldwork including rigidity of thinking, discomfort with the ambiguity that accompanies clinical reasoning, lack of psychological insight, difficulty interpreting feedback, externalization of responsibility, difficulty learning from mistakes, discomfort with the physical handling of patients, and dependence on external measures for self-esteem. Scaffa and Smith (2004) found that 24 weeks of full-time fieldwork experience significantly facilitated the development of students' clinical reasoning skills. Based on understanding this literature related to fieldwork, little to no information was included about the transition to entry-level practice and Level II experience. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore what the evidence says about student, fieldwork educator, and new OT practitioner perceptions of successful fieldwork and transition to practice through a critical review of the literature.

## METHOD

A systematic review was the initial focus of this study; however, the study was revised to a scoping review because of limited literature and the topics of literature available. A scoping review is used to map key concepts and types of evidence, identify gaps in research, and make recommendations for future research. “Scoping Studies: Towards a Methodological Framework” guided the method for this scoping review (Arskey & O’Malley, 2005).

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) developed and published an evidence rating system in 2002. Each level of evidence corresponds with how rigorous the research design is for that article. Articles identified as level 1 are systematic reviews, meta analyses, or random controlled trials. Articles identified as level II are two group non-randomized controlled trials, like cohort designs, case control studies, and pre/posttest designs. Articles identified as level III are one group non-randomized non-controlled trials, like one group pre/posttest designs. Articles identified as level IV are single subject design, descriptive studies, case series or case reports. Articles identified as level V are expert opinions (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002). Table 1 categorizes each of the articles reviewed into the corresponding evidence level as determined by the reviewers of this scoping review.

Table 1

### *Levels of Evidence for the Scoping Review Articles*

<u>Level I</u> None
<u>Level II</u> None
<u>Level III</u> None
<u>Level IV</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Andonian (2013)</li> <li>2. Andonian (2017)</li> <li>3. Clark, Gray, &amp; Mooney (2013)</li> <li>4. Doherty, Stagnitti, &amp; Schoo (2009)</li> <li>5. Grenier (2015)</li> <li>6. Koski (2013)</li> <li>7. McCombie &amp; Antanvage (2017)</li> <li>8. Van Stormbroek &amp; Buchanan (2019)</li> </ol>
<u>Level V</u> None

Table 1 continued
<u>Qualitative</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hazelwood, Baker, Murray, &amp; Stanley (2018)</li> <li>2. Hodgetts, Hollis, Triska, Dennis, Madill, &amp; Taylor (2007)</li> <li>3. Holland, Middletons, &amp; Uys (2013)</li> <li>4. Rodger et al. (2014)</li> <li>5. Seah, Mackenzie, &amp; Gamble (2011)</li> <li>6. Toal-Sullivan (2006)</li> </ol>
<i>Note.</i> Based on AOTA Evidence Based Literature Review Project Levels of Evidence Rating System (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002)

The research question and search terms were derived from an international systematic mapping review of fieldwork education in OT conducted by Roberts, Hooper, Wood, and King (2015) that covered articles from the year 1990 to the year 2009. Several primary subthemes and themes related to fieldwork were identified. Two themes were chosen and used as the basis of this scoping review including student perceptions and transition to practice (Roberts et al., 2015). Search terms included student perceptions of Level II fieldwork success, transition into practice, and OT. Databases searched included Medline, CINAHL, ERIC, PsychINFO, OT Seeker, and social services abstracts, as well as hand searching several relevant journals. Included in this scoping review were journal articles published between the years of 2005 and 2018, and studies that were originally published in English, for fieldwork structure consistency, at all levels of evidence. Excluded were dissertations, articles published prior to review, and articles unrelated to the topic.

The reviewers worked together to evaluate all articles. Abstracts were reviewed, and relevant full text articles were saved and filed using the program Endnote. These articles were further reviewed, and selected articles were included in an evidence table. A synthesis of each article, detailed reading of each article, completion of an annotated bibliography, and completion of an evidence table were done. Table 2 is an evidence table of all reviewed articles that includes the author(s), date of publication, country of publication, evidence type and level, assessment tool(s), sample size, and study findings.

The initial search identified 694 articles for inclusion. After reviewing the abstracts of all 694 articles, 230 were removed due to duplication and 162 were removed due to relevance and inclusion/exclusion criteria. 68 full articles were reviewed. 31 were excluded due to inclusion/exclusion criteria and 23 were excluded due to relevance/topic. Fourteen articles were included in this scoping review. Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) processes were used to guide this review (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009; Moher, et al., 2015). In 1996, a similar guideline was developed and called the Quality of Reporting of Meta-analyses Statement (QUOROM). The QUOROM was developed to address suboptimal reporting of meta-analyses. According to the PRISMA Statement (Moher et al., 2009), the PRISMA flow diagram used below is a revision of the original (see Figure 1).

Table 2

## Evidence Table

**Question:** What does the Evidence say about Student, Fieldwork Educator, and New Occupational Therapy Practitioner Perceptions of Successful Level II Fieldwork and Transition to Practice?

<b>Author, Date, &amp; Country</b>	<b>Evidence Type and Level</b>	<b>Assessment Tool(s)</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Study Findings</b>
<i>Andonian, 2013</i> <i>United States</i>	Survey, IV	1. MSCEIT 2. FWPE 3. Student Confidence Questionnaire 4. Researcher-designed demographic survey.	199 OT students	Students with a higher emotional intelligence score were significantly more likely to have higher scores in intervention skills and managing emotions. This was significantly positively related to communication.
<i>Andonian, 2017</i> <i>United States</i>	Survey, IV	1. Student Confidence Questionnaire 2. Demographic Questionnaire	306 OT students	Students' self-efficacy was positively related to students' experience of supervision, prior professional experience, and meaningfulness of the fieldwork placement. As self-efficacy increased, positive perception of the fieldwork educator relationship increased.
<i>Clark, Gray, &amp; Mooney, 2013</i> <i>Australia &amp; New Zealand</i>	Mixed methods, IV	1. Survey	228 new graduate OTs in their first year of practice	Data gathered from new OTs in their first year of practice revealed that location, structured supervision, and registration significantly influenced the perceptions and reporting of practice errors.
<i>Doherty, Stagnitti, &amp; Schoo, 2009</i> <i>Australia</i>	VI	1. Postal questionnaire	18 OT Students	At 7 months post-graduation OT students felt adequately prepared to enter the OT profession and workforce.



<i>Grenier, 2015</i> <i>Canada &amp; United States</i>	Survey, IV	1. On-line open survey	29 OT students	OT students identified four areas within OT fieldwork education that either facilitated or caused a barrier to learning including individual, environmental, educational, and institutional.
<i>Hazelwood, Baker, Murray, &amp; Stanley, 2018</i> <i>Australia</i>	Qualitative	1. Cross-sectional survey 2. Questionnaire	8 new graduate OTs	Data gathered from new graduate OTs who had been working for 6-24 months identified six themes that caused ethical tensions within the workplace including working in a business model, respecting client choice, dealing with aggression and death, mandatory reporting is hard to do, differing team values, and feeling devalued and unsupported.
<i>Hodgetts et al., 2007</i> <i>Canada</i>	Qualitative	1. Survey 2. Focus groups Telephone interviews	299 students and OTs	Students and recent graduates reported that they lacked technical intervention skills, whereas longer-term graduates reported that they were comfortable with their knowledge and skills. Students and graduates reported being satisfied with their education but stated that it took between six months and two years of clinical practice to feel clinically competent.
<i>Holland, Middletons, &amp; Uys, 2013</i> <i>South Africa</i>	Quantitative	1. Semi-structured interviews	8 new graduate OTs	Data collected from new graduate OTs revealed three different ways of understanding professional confidence including "knowing," "believing," and "being."

<p>Koski et al., 2013 United States</p>	<p>Survey, IV</p>	<p>1. Self-Assessment Tool for Fieldwork Educator Competency</p>	<p>85 fieldwork educators and 37 OT students</p>	<p>Students and fieldwork educators ranked behaviors that are valuable to the perceived success of students. Both students and fieldwork educators ranked the value of behaviors the same, and responses varied depending on which fieldwork experience the student was on (first or second).</p>
<p>McCombie &amp; Antanvage, 2017 United States</p>	<p>Mixed-methods, IV</p>	<p>1. Survey</p>	<p>202 OTs</p>	<p>For the majority of participants, the transition to practice experience was positive, but for some of the participants not all of the components of transition to practice were positive including employment location, management influence, impact of initial responsibility, and communication skills.</p>
<p>Rodger et al., 2014 Australia</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>1. Documentation for 124 Practice Excellence Commendations nominations between 2008 and 2011 were analyzed.</p>		<p>Students identified the just right challenge as an overarching theme that symbolized excellence in practice education. Three specific areas that contribute to the just right challenge were identified and discussed including valuing a reciprocal relationship, facilitating learning experiences and opportunities, and encouraging autonomy and independence.</p>
<p>Seah et al., 2011 Australia</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>1. Face-to-face interviews</p>	<p>8 OT students</p>	<p>Data gathered from OT students revealed four themes that effected student perception of transition to practice including valuing maturity, being new, needing skills, and pursuing satisfaction.</p>

<i>Toal-Sullivan, 2006</i> <i>Canada</i>	Qualitative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial interview</li> <li>2. Journal</li> <li>3. Second interview</li> </ol>	6 new graduate OTs	Data gathered from new OTs in the first year of their career revealed several challenges during their transition from student to practitioner including limited practical experience, responsibilities of a client care system, system issues, and role uncertainty.
<i>Van Stormbroek, &amp; Buchanan, 2019</i> <i>South Africa</i>	Mixed Methods, IV	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cross-sectional survey</li> <li>2. Questionnaire</li> </ol>	103 OTs	OTs found that working in complex practice settings like rural South Africa posed several challenges including satisfactory supervision, cultural competence, and language/communication barriers.

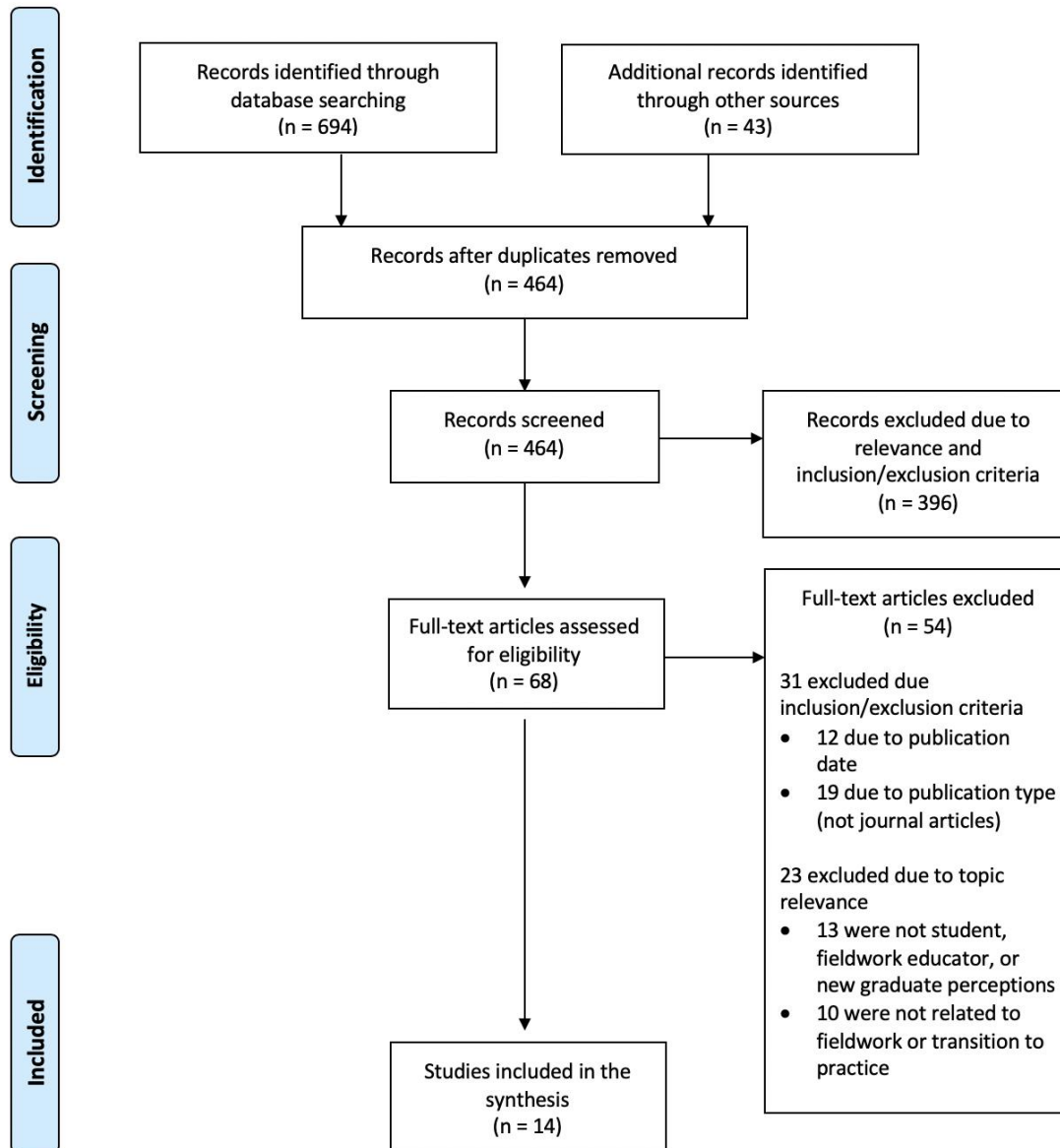


Figure 1. PRISMA table.

Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., Altman, D.G., & The PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. *PLoS Med* 6(7): e1000097. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000097>

## RESULTS

The 14 articles analyzed were categorized by theme and subtheme, and relevant results are discussed below. Five themes emerged including student perceptions of preparedness for practice, student perceptions of fieldwork and perceived self-efficacy, student perceptions of fieldwork educators, transition into practice, and practice perspectives of new OT graduates. Within these themes nine subthemes emerged (see Figure 2).

		Articles	Subthemes								
			Skills	Collaboration	Supervision Relationship	Confidence & Competence	Responsibility	Feedback	Setting/ Environment	Learning Style	Independence/ Autonomy
Themes	Student perceptions of preparedness for practice	1	■	■		■					
		2	■	■		■		■			
	Student perception of fieldwork and perceived self-efficacy	3	■		■	■			■	■	■
		4	■		■				■		
		5	■					■	■		
	Student perceptions of fieldwork of educators	6							■		
		7	■		■			■	■		

Transition into practice	8	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	White	White	White	
	9	Blue	White	Blue	White	White	White	Blue	White	White	White	
	10	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	
	11	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	White	White	White	White	White	
	Practice Perspectives of New OT Graduates	12	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	White	White	White	White	Blue	White
		13	White	Blue	Blue	White	White	White	Blue	White	White	White
		14	Blue	White	White	Blue	White	White	White	White	White	White

Figure 2. Themes and subthemes of each article.

Note: A blue shaded box represents a theme or subtheme is present in the corresponding article.

**1:** Doherty, Stagnitti, and Schoo (2009); **2:** Hodgetts, Hollis, Triska, Dennis, Madill, and Taylor (2007); **3:** Grenier (2015); **4:** Andonian (2017); **5:** Andonian, (2013); **6:** Koski, Simon, and Dooley (2011); **7:** Rodger, Thomas, Greber, Broadbridge, Edwards, Newton, and Lyons (2014); **8:** Toal-Sullivan; **9:** Strombroek and Duchanan (2019); **10:** Seah, et al. (2011); **11:** McCombie and Antanavage (2017); **12:** Hazelwood, Baker, Murray, and Stanley (2018); **13:** Clark, Gray, and Mooney (2013); **14:** Holland, Middletons, and Uys (2013)

## Themes

**Student perceptions of preparedness for practice.** Two studies focused on student perceptions of preparedness for practice. Doherty et al. (2009) determined that self-competence as a newly graduated practitioner was positively and significantly related to confidence in clinical decision making, and a positive self-view of knowledge and skills. Similarly, Hodgetts et al. (2007) found that longer-term graduates felt competent in their skills as a clinician but noted that it took between six months and two years to gain the ability to provide individualized interventions and feel competent as a practicing clinician. Respondents in the Doherty et al. (2009) study noted that one of their greatest strengths was their ability to work autonomously as well as a member of the team, whereas, Hodgetts and colleagues (2007) found that students near graduation did not feel confident to act as independent clinicians because they felt they lacked technical skills and concrete intervention strategies.

**Student perceptions of fieldwork and perceived self-efficacy.** Three studies focused on student perceptions of fieldwork and perceived self-efficacy during fieldwork. Grenier (2015) found students perceived their overall fieldwork experiences as successful when their fieldwork educators demonstrated well-developed interpersonal skills and professionalism. Additionally, Grenier (2015) found when fieldwork educators adapted to the students' learning styles by providing the just right challenge and autonomy, students perceived better learning and more successful fieldwork experiences. Disengagement and lack of clinical reasoning skills, as well as lacking trust and confidence in students' abilities were identified as barriers to student learning. Students identified lack of confidence and overconfidence as barriers to learning (Grenier, 2015).

In a similar study, Andonian (2017) looked at OT students' perceived self-efficacy related to student and employee success as well as competency, experience of supervision, and perception of meaningfulness of Level II fieldwork. The results of the study indicated that the degree of self-efficacy was related to students' experience of supervision, prior professional experience, and the meaningfulness of the fieldwork to the student. As the students' perceived self-efficacy increased their perception of a supportive supervisory relationship also increased. The results also indicated that students' experience of positive supervision with open communication was significantly and positively related to students' confidence, and that previous professional experience in a related setting was positively related to perceived self-efficacy. An earlier study conducted by Andonian (2013) also explored self-efficacy, and the results of the study showed that emotional intelligence, having a choice in setting or environment, and having a professional experience in a related setting were positively correlated to fieldwork performance scores.

**Student perceptions of fieldwork educators.** Two articles focused on student perceptions of fieldwork educators. Koski et al. (2011) found behaviors that students ranked as the most important for fieldwork educators to possess included constructive feedback, maximizing opportunities within the environment/setting, and being sensitive

to learning style. Both students and fieldwork educators agreed that working to establish a collaborative relationship was the most important behavior in this section. Similarly, Rodger and colleagues (2014) found that valuing a collaborative relationship with the fieldwork educator, facilitating learning experiences and opportunities, and encouraging independence and autonomy made an excellent fieldwork educator. Both studies found that a fieldwork educator who understood the learning style of the student and could provide constructive feedback, as well as a collaborative relationship led to a better perception of fieldwork educators, which ultimately led to a more positive fieldwork experience (Koski et al., 2013; Rodger et al., 2014).

**Transition into practice.** Two articles focused on transition into practice. Toal-Sullivan (2006) revealed that new graduates were challenged by their limited practical experience, the responsibilities of client care, system issues, and role uncertainty. New graduates stated that support from colleagues and peers was critical to their learning and eased their transition from student to therapist, and client relationships were valuable to their development of professional identity. Similarly, Van Stormbroek and Buchanan (2019) found that supervisor support where the supervisor was approachable, competent, supported learning, and respectful led to a more successful fieldwork experience. Seah et al. (2011) found that new graduates struggled with several aspects of transition including valuing maturity, being new, needing skills, and pursuing satisfaction.

Unlike Seah et al. (2011), Van Stormbroek and Duchanan (2019), and Toal-Sullivan (2006), McCombie and Antanavage (2017) found that for the majority of participants, the transition period was positive with the first place of employment perceived as a good clinical fit which led to high job satisfaction. First employment site influenced responses. Those initially employed in psychiatric settings rated the transition process more positive than those in a skilled nursing facility. In addition, those in skilled nursing facilities were least likely to indicate the presence of a mentor as compared to those initially practicing in acute care, psychiatric, or rehabilitation settings. Other obstacles found to interfere with a smooth transition included low professional and personal self-confidence, time management, and lack of reality of practice expectations.

**Practice perspectives of new OT graduates.** Three articles focused on practice perspectives of new OT graduates. Hazelwood et al. (2018) explored new graduate OT perceptions of ethical tensions and found that they were uncomfortable working in a business where management valued the organizations' financial gains over quality of care. New graduates also had a hard time respecting client choice over clinical judgement, dealing with aggression and death, and feeling devalued and unsupported. In a similar study, Clark and colleagues (2013) found that being unsupported significantly influenced the perceptions and reporting of practice errors.



Holland and colleagues (2013) revealed that several studies reported that new OTs questioned their professional confidence during their initial transition into practicing clinician, but they argued that new graduates just need to understand professional confidence in order to be a competent practitioner. They further justified that new graduates were capable by having them define professional confidence for themselves.

### **Subthemes**

Nine subthemes emerged including skills, collaboration, supervision relationship, confidence/competence, responsibility, feedback, setting/environment, learning style, and independence/autonomy. Each of the nine subthemes is discussed below, and relevant examples are provided.

**Skills.** The subtheme about skills was found in twelve articles, and further divided into generic skills and OT specific skills (Seah et al., 2011). Generic skills included coping strategies, professionalism, communication, relational skills, problem-solving skills and networking (Seah et al., 2011; Toal-Sullivan, 2006; Van Stormbroek & Duchanan, 2019). Occupational therapy specific skills include practice confidence, self-knowledge as a competent practitioner, technical skills, intervention skills, clinical reasoning skills, and clinical skills (Andonian, 2017, 2013; Doherty et al., 2009; Hazelwood et al., 2018; Holland et al., 2013; McCombie & Antanavage, 2017; Seah et al., 2011; Toal-Sullivan, 2006). Doherty and colleagues (2009) found that one limitation identified by the students was the “limited time spent in developing technical or practical occupational therapy skills in class” (p. 344), and that as practicing clinicians one of the greatest strengths was clinical justification skills.

**Collaboration.** The subtheme collaboration was found in seven articles and discussed collaboration between workplace relationships, and outside mentoring and networking. Workplace relationships included co-workers such as office staff and interdisciplinary co-workers, as well as collaboration with clients. (Clark et al., 2013; Doherty et al., 2009; Hazelwood et al., 2018; Hodgetts et al., 2007; McCombie & Antanavage, 2017; Seah et al., 2011; Toal-Sullivan, 2006). Toal-Sullivan (2006) found that “mentoring was evident in collaborative approaches to learning among colleagues and clients” (p. 520), and that these meaningful experiences were critical for their practice culture.

**Supervision relationship.** The subtheme supervision relationship was identified in seven articles. The supervision relationship was identified within the workplace as well as fieldwork placement as a necessary support system for positive experiences both in the workplace and fieldwork setting (Clark, et al., 2013; Rodger, et al., 2014; Seah et al., 2011; Van Stormbroek & Duchanan, 2019). McCombie and Antanavage (2017) found that new graduates during their first year of practice agreed that clinical educators provided the “skills necessary to become a successful entry-level occupational therapist” (p. 131) during their fieldwork experiences as students.

**Confidence and competence.** The subtheme of confidence and competence was found in seven articles and described the development of professional confidence through positive fieldwork and job experiences which lead to clinical competence in the

form of skills and knowledge (Holland et al., 2013). Doherty and colleagues found that “respondents’ perceived self-competence as a newly graduated practitioner was positively and significantly related to confidence in clinical decision-making” (p. 344). Grenier (2015) found that “students identified self-confidence as a personal attribute that was both a facilitator of and a barrier to learning in fieldwork education” (p. 4), because having self-confidence was helpful when learning and successfully completing new tasks, but lacking self-confidence or overconfidence was a barrier to learning.

**Responsibility.** The subtheme responsibility was found in two articles and described responsibility in relation to workload and client outcomes. Toal-Sullivan (2006) discovered that new therapists felt a responsibility over their clients’ outcomes like readiness for discharge and home safety. McCombie and colleagues (2017) revealed that most new graduates agreed that their first place of employment was realistic in terms of caseload responsibility and job role.

**Feedback.** The subtheme feedback was found in three articles and discussed fieldwork educators’ feedback to students. Positive feedback was linked to a better learning environment and confidence, whereas negative feedback was linked to a lack of skill development and a lack of confidence (Andonian, 2013; Hodgetts et al. 2007; Rodger et al., 2014). Andonian (2013) found that “highly confident students were dismissive of feedback thus limiting their skill development and performance, while less confident students were more open to integrating feedback and improving their performance” (p. 210).

**Setting and environment.** The subtheme of setting and environment was found in eight articles and was described as influential in fieldwork as well as employment. Students found that having previous experience in a specific setting and being able to request a certain setting was beneficial to learning (Andonian, 2013, 2017; Koski et al., 2013). New graduates and students found that rural settings and settings that lacked resources were more difficult to thrive in (Clark et al., 2013; Seah et al., 2011). Grenier (2015) found that “students preferred fieldwork sites that gave them the chance to shadow practitioners or work in multiple departments (e.g., geriatrics and outpatient rehabilitation departments) and with varied client populations’ (p. 4), and reported that this provided more exposure to different learning opportunities.

**Learning style.** The sub theme learning style was found in two articles related to fieldwork and graduate-entry education. Students felt that the fieldwork educator who took advantage of teaching moments positively influenced learning in the fieldwork setting (Grenier, 2015). Independent learning, reflective practice, and group work were components of the education curriculum that students felt prepared them for a successful transition to practice (Seah et al., 2011).

**Independence and autonomy.** The subtheme of independence and autonomy was found in three articles and focused on students’ independence during fieldwork and new graduates’ independence. Students described independence as a preferred teaching technique when FWEs’ provided proper guidance and modeled interventions

beforehand (Grenier, 2015). New practitioners described independence in the workplace as satisfying, but found it challenging when clients' chose not to follow recommendations of the therapist (Hazelwood et al., 2018; Seah et al., 2011).

## **DISCUSSION**

Findings from this review revealed a lack of specific research exploring Level II fieldwork experience and transition to practice for entry level OT practitioners, and there was no specific research on how fieldwork experience affected transition to practice. However, after reviewing both seminal and current research related to successful fieldwork placements and transitions to practice, several similarities arose in subthemes and themes. All of the seminal articles focused on fieldwork, but none focused on transition to practice. Some did mention the importance of fieldwork in regard to education and how that prepares a student to become a practitioner (Christie et al., 1985a; Mitchell & Kampfe, 1990, 1993; Scaffa & Smith, 2004). Christie et al. (1985a) looked at three stages of professional development including the preprofessional stage (experiences before OT school), the academic stage (including didactic in classroom work), and Level II fieldwork experiences, but did not review transition to practice. Mitchell and Kampfe (1990, 1993) and Scaffa and Smith (2004) explored the transition from didactic coursework to fieldwork. Mitchell and Kampfe (1990, 1993) focused on coping strategies and perceptions during second Level II fieldwork, and Scaffa and Smith (2004) explored the development of students' clinical reasoning skills.

Student perception of practice is influenced by time from didactic course work to fieldwork and it can take a while for new grads to feel confident in their abilities once they transition into practice (Doherty et al., 2009; Hodgetts et al., 2007), so it is important that new graduates receive professional support to ease this transition. It is also important to note that if students have low self-efficacy in fieldwork then they may need more support in their new job (Andonian, 2013, 2017). The fieldwork educator plays an important role in student perceptions including self-efficacy, so a positive relationship between student and fieldwork educator is crucial to fieldwork success as well as success during transition to practice. Fieldwork educators who individualize supervision and serve as role models for professionalism are more helpful for students and foster professional growth (Andonian, 2013; Grenier, 2015; Hodgetts et al. 2007; Rodger et al., 2014; Toal-Sullivan, 2006).

Five of the nine subthemes were also reflected in the seminal articles including supervision relationship, collaboration, setting/environment, and skills (Christie et al., 1985a, 1985b; Gutman et al., 1998; Kautzmann, 1990; Mitchell & Kampfe, 1990, 1993; Tickle-Degnen, 1998; Vogel et al., 2004). This consistency demonstrates the importance of these factors to the perceptions of successful fieldwork experiences and a sense of competency by the students. Fieldwork success is defined differently according to each student because it is a highly personal process. For example, a student might have a negative experience at a fieldwork placement but deem the experience a success.

The five themes could be viewed as a continuum of time as students move through different roles during their Level II fieldwork. The continuum starts with student perceptions of fieldwork and perceived self-efficacy which can occur before entering the fieldwork and also while completing the rotation. Second, students' perceptions of fieldwork educators, and ultimately the fieldwork placement itself, form once students have been immersed in the fieldwork for a period of time. Third, student perceptions of preparedness for practice occurs as students reflect on their fieldwork placements. Fourth, students transition to practice, and become clinicians, and then form new OT perspectives, which is the last theme discussed in this scoping review. Overall, there seems to be a positive relationship between fieldwork success and ease of transition into practice.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this scoping review is that the studies were from varying countries including Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, and the United States, which all have slightly varying educational requirements for fieldwork education. However, all of these countries adhere to the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) model curriculum. Low evidence levels of articles included in the review could also be a limitation.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Further research is needed in fieldwork education in general. Further research needs to be conducted to understand students' perceptions of successful fieldwork, and how that correlates to their transition into practice. Further research should also be conducted on student perceptions of both first and second fieldwork experiences and the comparison of the two since they are in varying practice settings with different client populations. In order to meet ACOTE and AOTA standards for fieldwork more studies need to be conducted to understand how a successful fieldwork placement is defined by the student, the program, and the fieldwork educator. If all three parties can collaborate to have the same goals, then new graduates will be more likely to be successful transitioning into practice as competent and confident clinicians.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE AND EDUCATION**

The challenges of fieldwork placement is a tremendous task for academic programs. However, academic programs may benefit from meeting the needs of students during fieldwork placements with emphasis on the nine subthemes outlined above in combination with the fieldwork educator score and comments/feedback. A working definition of perceived success should be incorporated into the pass/fail nature of fieldwork placements to ensure students are transitioning into practice as clinicians with competence and confidence. A working definition of perceived success should address student perceptions, and the program should aim to restructure student perceptions regardless of the experience by incorporating ways to enhance areas found to be essential to students' perceptions.

## CONCLUSION

When student perceptions of a fieldwork experience align with that of the fieldwork educator and the program's definition of success then the student will be more likely to be successful transitioning into practice and beyond. After reviewing and analyzing seminal and current literature on fieldwork placements and transition to practice, it is clear that perception is key. Perception can be altered from within, but also by manipulating parts of the environment that are controllable. For example, students cannot force the fieldwork educator to collaborate with them, but they themselves can be open to collaboration and the academic fieldwork coordinator can enforce/educate the fieldwork educator on the importance of collaboration. In the end, the evidence suggests that confidence and competence, skills, responsibility, collaboration, supervisory relationship, learning style, independence/autonomy, feedback, and setting/environment are important aspects that influence student perceptions about fieldwork success and ease of transition to practice.

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