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Abstract

This study examined the effect of an online journal club on fieldwork educators' perspectives on student professionalism. Fieldwork educators participated in a five-week journal club on the topic of professionalism. Thirty-nine fieldwork educators completed the experience, which entailed a pre-posttest survey, reading one article, and participating in a weekly, asynchronous discussion. Ratings of confidence in supervising students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors increased at a statistically significant level from pretest to posttest. Qualitative themes are presented for pre-posttest questions, in addition to the weekly discussion responses. An online journal club for fieldwork educators increased self-ratings of confidence in supervising students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors, cultivated discussion on how to best convey their expectations of professionalism to their students, and facilitated enrichment of their concept of professionalism within the field of occupational therapy.

Keywords

Occupational therapy, fieldwork education, professionalism, journal club

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The Effect of an Online Journal Club on Fieldwork Educators' Perspectives on Student Professionalism

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of an online journal club on fieldwork educators' perspectives on student professionalism. Fieldwork educators participated in a five-week journal club on the topic of professionalism. Thirty-nine fieldwork educators completed the experience, which entailed a pre-posttest survey, reading one article, and participating in a weekly, asynchronous discussion. Ratings of confidence in supervising students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors increased at a statistically significant level from pretest to posttest. Qualitative themes are presented for pre-posttest questions, in addition to the weekly discussion responses. An online journal club for fieldwork educators increased self-ratings of confidence in supervising students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors, cultivated discussion on how to best convey their expectations of professionalism to their students, and facilitated enrichment of their concept of professionalism within the field of occupational therapy.

Within occupational therapy education curricula, fieldwork is an integral, experiential-based component designed to actively immerse the student in the profession with the guidance and supervision of a licensed practitioner. These fieldwork experiences are focused on developing students into competent, entry-level practitioners (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE], 2018). Due in part to an increase in the number of students (Roberts et al., 2015), facility constraints (Jenson & Daniel, 2010), a decrease in the number of fieldwork placements (Coppard et al., 2021), an increase in productivity standards (Hanson, 2011), and concerns regarding student readiness and professionalism (Bell et al., 2014), it is becoming harder to find practitioners to take on the role of fieldwork educator (Jenson & Daniel, 2010). However, a national survey on fieldwork educators' perceptions found that 45% of

occupational therapy education content is delivered during fieldwork experiences (Evenson et al., 2015). The fieldwork educator seems to have the largest impact on the student learning experience (Grenier, 2015), and a positive supervisory experience is directly related to student confidence (Andonian, 2017). Students reported that positive fieldwork educator qualities included interpersonal skills, professionalism, and giving timely, relevant, objective feedback (Grenier, 2015; Koski et al., 2013). In order to have a positive impact on students, fieldwork educators need resources that foster growth in their role. Fieldwork educators have noted the need for resources in pedagogical support (Hanson, 2011), supervising ill-prepared students (Davies et al., 2011), incorporating evidence into practice, managing differences of opinion within the context of practice, and navigating overall generational differences (Hanson, 2011; Hatkevich & Miller, 2009).

The Commission on Education (COE) reported in their guidelines for fieldwork experiences that students should communicate and model professionalism throughout their experiences (COE, 2013). Students value their time on fieldwork as a time to develop their professional identity (Ashby et al., 2016) and perceive fieldwork as a time for greater professional growth compared to the academic setting (Howard & Barton, 2019). In a national survey of fieldwork educators, over half reported that having a resource on dealing with unprofessional behaviors from students would be beneficial (Evenson et al., 2015). Though researchers have reported on the importance of professionalism on fieldwork, little research has reported how to best prepare fieldwork educators for addressing unprofessional behavior. In fact, fieldwork educators place high value on professional behaviors, but these behaviors are inconsistently defined between educators (Steward, 2001). Research suggests that fieldwork educators are more hesitant to take on a student due to concerns with navigating unprofessional behaviors (Jenson & Daniel, 2010).

The use of journal clubs to transfer evidence into practice has a growing research foundation (Honey & Baker, 2011). A systematic review concluded that journal clubs increase knowledge (Deenadayalan et al., 2008). As the healthcare professions move towards productivity-based models, and with the increase of communicative technology compared to just a few decades ago, face-to-face time becomes a commodity and in-person journal clubs are harder to form (Richardson et al., 2012). The components of an effective journal club are convenient meeting times, utilizing a formal structure, having a trained leader, and proper dissemination of materials, which are all properly addressed using an online format (Chetlen et al., 2017). There is baseline evidence for the use of an online journal club to support fieldwork educators in their supervisory role (Ellington, 2018; Janes & Ellington, 2020). However, online journal clubs have not yet been used to support fieldwork educators in preparation for students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors. The purpose of this study was to determine how an online journal club impacted fieldwork educators' perspectives on student professionalism.

Methods

Design

We conducted a retrospective analysis on data from an online journal club. The University of Missouri Institutional Review Board provided exemption status to this post-hoc analysis. Participants were informed of future intentions to use data collected from the journal club for research purposes, but informed consent was not required for this study. A pre-posttest survey produced both quantitative and qualitative data, and additional qualitative data were collected from the discussion boards in the journal club.

Participants

Participants were recruited through Academic Fieldwork Coordinators in the Gateway Occupational Therapy Education Consortium (GOTEC), a regional consortium of ten accredited occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs. The target sample size for the journal club was 100 fieldwork educators from either occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant placements. Each program distributed recruiting materials to their respective fieldwork database. Potential overlap between those databases precluded accurately counting the total number of fieldwork educators in the sampling frame. Participants were offered free continuing education Professional Development Units as compensation based on time spent interacting with the journal club. Inclusion criteria for the journal club included being a fieldwork educator contracted through a GOTEC institution and fieldwork educators who had frequent and easy access to a computer or other internet-enabled device. Academic Fieldwork Coordinators at each GOTEC institution distributed invitation emails to all fieldwork educators in their databases. This invitation email had a link to guide interested fieldwork educators to the demographics survey.

Demographics Survey

The surveys administered in this study were created by the research team and were not subject to psychometric testing prior to their administration. We administered a survey to collect data on the professional demographics of participants, such as years of experience, practice setting, and prior supervisory experience. Upon completion of the demographics survey, we immediately redirected participants to the pretest survey.

Pre-Posttest Survey

A five-question pre-posttest survey was designed specifically to address the concepts of the paper selected for the journal club. Academic Fieldwork Coordinators at GOTEC institutions reviewed the survey for clarity, but psychometric properties were not established. Three forced-choice multiple choice questions addressed participants' confidence in dealing with unprofessional student behavior, their concept of professionalism, and their perception of students' understanding of professionalism. Participants were asked the same three questions prior to and after the journal club in a Likert scale format, with a score of 1 associated with "Strongly Disagree" and a score of 5 indicating "Strongly Agree." Two open-ended questions asked participants to give

their definition of professionalism and how they convey professional expectations. At the end of the posttest survey, participants were shown their answers to the open-ended question from both pretest and posttest. Participants were then prompted to answer how participation in the journal club influenced their understanding of professionalism.

Journal Club

Upon completion of the pretest survey, University of Missouri Libraries granted participants access to the journal club article *Professionalism and occupational therapy: An exploration of faculty and students' perspectives* (Robinson et al., 2012). The Canvas (Instructure, 2021) platform hosted the journal club. Canvas is a web-based learning management system which includes file delivery, announcements, and a threaded discussion forum component. We created a free, access-restricted Canvas page to host the journal club. Our main priority was to maintain the integrity of the discussion and experience for participants, so each time one of our nine sections fell below five participants, the remaining participants were reassigned to another discussion section the following week.

The journal club lasted five weeks. Every Monday, a new module was posted on the Canvas page with instructions on which part of the article would be covered that week, and participants were provided two sample prompts to foster discussion. The five weekly readings were: Abstract and Introduction, Methods, Student Perspectives, Faculty Perspectives, and Results and Conclusion. Upon completion of the fifth week, participants were asked to complete the posttest survey.

Data Analysis

Participants who did not complete all portions of the journal club and surveys were excluded from analysis. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the sections of the journal clubs. Once the sections tested to be homogeneous, the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Rank was used to examine differences between pretest and posttest quantitative data from the pre-posttest survey multiple choice questions.

Qualitative data collected from the journal club discussion posts and the open-ended questions on the pre-posttest survey served as validation of the quantitative data. We coded qualitative data from the pre-posttest open-ended questions and on a weekly basis for journal club discussion board responses to identify themes. We read whole responses to questions and journal club discussions to structure initial codes. We performed a secondary thematic analysis by breaking down each response into sentences or concepts and coding these specific parts to provide a more nuanced view of initial themes. This secondary process also served as validation of our initial codes as suggested by Nowell and colleagues (2017). We exported a list of our themes with 20% of the quotes collected to each of five third-party investigators and asked them to pair the quote with the appropriate theme to further validate themes as part of the investigator triangulation process (Nowell et al., 2017). The investigators' pairings agreed with our pairings in approximately 90% of the pairings on average.

Results

One hundred thirty-two (132) fieldwork educators started the demographic and pretest survey. Fieldwork educators were informed that only the first 100 to complete the registration process would be able to take part in the journal club, and those remaining would be added to a waitlist. Eighty-nine (89) participants completed the registration process for the journal club and were split into nine sections. A total of thirty-nine (39) participants in six sections completed all aspects of the journal club. The total number of participants at the beginning of each stage is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Retention Counts

Stage of Journal Club	Participants	
	Remaining	Dropped Out
Survey Completion	132	N/A
Registration	89	43
Start of Week One	89	0
Start of Week Two	62	27
Start of Week Three	49	13
Start of Week Four	42	7
Start of Week Five	39	3

Demographics Survey

Demographic data are shown in Table 2. The sections tested to be homogeneous on all baseline variables utilizing the Kruskal-Wallis test except for the number of Level II students supervised. One participant had supervised more than double ($n=11$) the second highest number of Level II students supervised ($n=5$) ($h=13$, $p=.021$). Because the groups otherwise tested to be homogenous, all sections were combined into one sample for subsequent analyses.

Quantitative Results

Participants significantly increased their confidence in supervising students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors ($p<.001$) across the journal club period. When looking at confidence at pretest, the average rating was between “Neither Agree nor Disagree” and “Agree.” In posttest, the average rating was between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree.” None of the other questions yielded a significant change (see Table 3).

Table 2*Demographics*

Measure	Count (%)
Participants	39 (100%)
Practice Setting:	
Hospital Based	23 (59%)
Community Based	4 (10%)
School Based	5 (13%)
Other	7 (18%)
Number of Students Supervised:	
0	5 (13%)
1-2	7 (18%)
3-4	4 (10%)
5-7	5 (13%)
8-10	3 (8%)
10+	15 (39%)
Level of Education:	
Associate	1 (3%)
Bachelor's	9 (23%)
Master's	25 (64%)
Doctorate	4 (10%)

Table 3*Quantitative Analysis from Pretest-Posttest Survey Responses*

	Pre	Post	z	p
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)		
I am confident in my ability to supervise students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors	3.5 (.92)	4.2 (.70)	-3.50	.00*
I have a strong concept of what professionalism means to me	4.5 (.76)	4.4 (.50)	-0.23	.81
The fieldwork students I supervise know how I define professionalism	3.8 (.71)	3.8 (.68)	-1.0	.31

Note. SD=Standard deviation.

Qualitative Results***Pretest Survey***

Participants were asked to define professionalism once before and once after participation in the journal club. Themes that emerged from the pre-participation responses included (a) skills and behaviors associated with professionalism and (b) representation of occupational therapy as a whole.

Skills Associated with Professionalism. Twenty-nine (29) participants noted in their definitions that skills such as being on time, being respectful, having a strong work ethic, communicating well with colleagues and clients, and having a sound base of knowledge of the target population through evidence-based practice were important aspects of being a professional. One participant working in a long-term care facility listed skills associated with professionalism as, “prompt, dressed well, follows rules, polite, attentive, asks appropriate questions/engages appropriately.” Being an active learner and asking many questions were noted as being professional behaviors by both students and practitioners. Participants also noted that attitude and personality can have a major impact on behavior and professionalism as a whole.

Representation of Occupational Therapy. Twenty-six (26) profession-specific definitions highlighted the importance of representing occupational therapy in a positive light to clients and colleagues. One participant described professionalism as, “The ability to always put the patient first while maintaining the integrity of the occupational therapy profession while successfully navigating both positive and negative relationships with others.” Definitions also highlighted the need for ethical and moral practice as defined by professional frameworks and organizations.

Participants were also asked to describe how they currently conveyed their expectations of professionalism to their students. Themes produced from these responses included (a) direct means of conveying expectations, (b) “Lead by Example”, and (c) gradual means of conveying expectations. Twenty-two (22) participants provided responses that fit into at least two of the aforementioned themes.

Direct Means. Thirty (30) participants reported direct means that included providing a contract of expectations centered around skills of professionalism, providing “clear expectations” for professional behavior in the workplace, providing materials on expectations through binders or emails prior to the start of fieldwork placements, or having conversations about professionalism at the beginning of placements. One participant stated they use, “[A] fieldwork packet from [the] facility and email with expectations prior to the first day.”

“Lead by Example.” A common strategy (14 responses) for promoting professionalism was the modeling of professional behaviors to students in conversations and actions. One participant stated, “...Often, professionalism is conveyed in the moment as they observe me interacting with staff, parents and students.”

Gradual Means. Seventeen (17) participants noted gradual strategies for conveying expectations of professionalism. This occurs when there’s a violation of these expectations with no formal conversation prior to the violation, as well as having periodic check-ins with students to discuss performance. One participant noted that, “...our setting has weekly expectations and we discuss this in weekly meetings.”

Journal Club Data

Themes from each week of the discussion board can be found in Table 4. Descriptions of each theme presented can be found in Appendix A.

Table 4*Themes from Weekly Journal Club Discussion Boards*

Journal Club Week	Manuscript Topics	Discussion Themes
1	Abstract and Introduction	Professionalism as a dynamic concept “What professionalism isn’t” Development of professionalism
2	Methods	Unprofessional behaviors
3	Student Perspectives	Agreement with results Personal life and professionalism Professionalism education framework Applications in practice
4	Faculty Perspectives	Awareness as an advanced professional skill Professionalism as identity Professional development continuum Impact of experience on professionalism
5	Results and Conclusion	Providing clear expectations Meeting the student where they are Mindfulness of level of professionalism

Posttest Survey and Reflection

Two themes emerged from the posttest responses: (a) context specific nature of professionalism and (b) professionalism as a continuum.

Context Specific Nature of Professionalism. Participants (7) agreed that definitions of professionalism depend on factors such as work setting, region, experience in the field, and other job experiences. One occupational therapist commented that, “It requires life experience to attain this deeper understanding that includes responsibility and self-awareness. It [is] also site-specific and depends on the context of the interactions.”

Professionalism as a Continuum. Twenty-eight (28) participants discussed that professionalism is developed from more concrete skills and behaviors (punctuality, dress code, etc.) into abstract concepts (effective communication, self-awareness). One participant noted that, “Professionalism looks different to students (who are more concrete) compared to faculty (more context based, more fluid definition) and can be improved at any stage in a career.” Table 5 lists examples of other behaviors associated with each end of the continuum.

Table 5*Concrete and Abstract Components of Definitions*

Concrete	Abstract
Punctual	Conflict Resolution
Adherence to Dress Code	Accountability
Lack of use of Profanities	Absent of Bias
Meeting Deadlines	Effective Communication
Asking Questions	Representing the Profession
Be Prepared	Self-awareness
Work Ethic	Responsibility
	Respect
	Adaptable
	Morality and Values

Participants were then shown their definitions of professionalism before and after participation in the journal club and were asked to reflect on if anything changed. Themes included (a) ambiguity in definition and (b) incorporation of the student perspective.

Ambiguity in Definition. Participants (19) largely noted that their definition grew from before, however professionalism became harder to define because of this. One OT noted that, “I think I have a better understanding of how professionalism can change based on the situation and that professionalism is multi-faceted and difficult to concretely define.”

Incorporation of the Student Perspective. Although their definitions did not change, fifteen (15) participants noted that it was good to know that students have their own ideas of what professionalism is and that this can be used to assess where they are in their professional development. One pediatric occupational therapist noted that participation in the journal club, “...changed my perspective on how students may define it and how to approach students who aren't exhibiting what I would define as professional behaviors.”

Participants were shown how they conveyed their expectations on professionalism to students at pretest and were asked to reflect on any changes. Themes included (a) assessment of professionalism and (b) providing context.

Assessment of Professionalism. Seven (7) participants found it important to gauge the student's current level of professionalism. One participant stated, “I will try and understand their previous experience with professionalism and work to meet them where they are.” One method noted was to have the student define professionalism in their own words prior to the start of fieldwork and have them reflect on this definition periodically throughout the experience. Participants also noted that periodic check-in conversations with students is a good way to measure growth.

Providing Context. Thirty-one (31) participants noted the importance of giving context-specific guidelines on the more concrete concepts of professionalism to give the student a solid, explicit foundation to build on their experience. One OT noted that, “I will aim to identify concrete behaviors that I believe will demonstrate professionalism in my specific setting.”

Discussion

Results suggest that online journal clubs can increase fieldwork educators’ confidence in working with students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors, including clarifying expectations of professionalism and how to convey this to their students. There were no changes in fieldwork educator’s ratings of their concept of professionalism, and qualitative findings provided a sensitive insight into how these concepts were enhanced or elaborated by participation in the journal club. This suggests that despite having a strong concept of professionalism prior to this experience, fieldwork educators were still able to strengthen their concept through participation. No significant differences were noted in fieldwork educators’ perception of their students knowing how they define professionalism, and that is to be expected as most participants had not yet had the opportunity to apply these new concepts in practice with students. Qualitative data produced a more in-depth look into how they might convey this definition or expectations to students differently due to participation in the journal club. This suggests that fieldwork educators were providing expectations or definitions to their students prior to the journal club, but through participation found better or more meaningful methods of conveying these concepts to their students.

Thirty-eight participants gave insightful reflections in the posttest survey when asked how their definitions changed and how they were going to convey their expectations of professionalism to their students in the future. While one participant noted that their definition did not change and that they were going to convey their expectations in a similar manner, participation in the journal club appears to have facilitated a growth in mindfulness about professionalism for the remaining participants.

This study contributes to a growing body of evidence supporting the use of journal clubs in healthcare to increase knowledge and transfer evidence into practice (Deenadayalan et al., 2008; Honey & Baker, 2011). More specifically, this study contributes to a small field of literature promoting the use of online journal clubs to support fieldwork educators in their supervisory role (Ellington, 2018; Janes & Ellington, 2020).

Prior research indicates that fieldwork educators were hesitant to take on students due to concerns surrounding professionalism (Jenson & Daniel, 2010), and participation in the online journal club gave practitioners more confidence in supervising these students. Steward (2001) noted that professional behaviors are highly valued, yet inconsistently defined. Participation in the journal club discussion allowed fieldwork educators to discuss their own definitions of professionalism and enhance their thinking while recognizing the impact context can have on this concept. Qualitative findings from this study provide insight to how well fieldwork educators’ perceptions align with what students have reported to be supportive and effective behaviors (Dunn et al., 2020).

This study also fulfills more broad categories in research, such as the need for resources on supervising students who exhibit unprofessional behavior (Evenson et al., 2015). One previous limitation in online journal club research (Janes & Ellington, 2020) was the need for a platform that tracked time spent in the site and allowed for threaded discussion. Canvas Free for Teacher proved to be an effective platform in this study and was able to track time spent and allowed for threaded discussion. Time spent was not analyzed for this project but was used to inform the amount of competency assessment units awarded for the National Board of Certification in Occupational Therapy registration renewal.

Though this study provides enticing results, several limitations must be taken into consideration. The dropout rate in this study is rather large, but many of these participants offered reasoning as to why they felt they could not continue to participate. The two most common reasons for dropout were time constraints or personal and professional constraints related to COVID-19. Though all data associated with those who dropped out were excluded from analysis, their brief participation in the journal club discussions may have impacted the answers of those who were included. Another limitation has to do with computer literacy and the Canvas Free for Teacher platform. Although an improvement over previously used platforms, many participants had never used the Canvas interface before. Though the principal investigator provided detailed instructions, several participants reported confusion in trying to navigate this interface which may have led to decreased participation.

Implications for Future Research

This study filled existing gaps in research on fieldwork education and professionalism. However, there are many other gaps in which fieldwork educators need support in. This study provides an effective framework for filling these voids in the literature. This study also shows that more work needs to be done to make journal clubs an efficient professional development activity, as time constraints were a major point of concern for participants who dropped out. This study shows the need for increased educational focus and collaboration on professionalism in academic programs and fieldwork sites. Finally, more research is needed on the development of professionalism in occupational therapy and how this impacts evaluation in fieldwork education and readiness for entry-level practice.

Implications for Occupational Therapy Education

This study provides a clear and effective opportunity for academic institutions to provide supports for their fieldwork educators through asynchronous, online journal clubs. The framework of this project may be easily reapplied to address institution-specific concerns and is free to implement. This study may also inform future education on professionalism for fieldwork students. Fieldwork serves as a time and place for both clinical and professional development, and the latter must be facilitated between academic institution and fieldwork site like the former.

Conclusion

An online journal club for fieldwork educators increased their confidence in supervising students who exhibit unprofessional behaviors, changed their practices on how to best convey their expectations of professionalism to their students, appears to have created mindfulness on reasonable expectations within the professional development continuum, and enriched their concept of professionalism within the field of occupational therapy. In addition to providing a resource for fieldwork educators, this study contributed to the body of evidence suggesting the use of an online journal club format in healthcare education and professional development.

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Appendix A

Week One: Abstract and Introduction

Professionalism as a Dynamic Concept

It was widely agreed (27 participants) that professionalism is dynamic and is hard to globally define. Participants noted that professionalism can look and feel different depending on culture, setting, profession, stage of life, and geographical area. Participants also noted that their definitions change consistently with experience.

“What Professionalism Isn’t”

Thirteen (13) participants noted there are some universal concepts of what professionalism isn’t, such as noncompliance with a dress code, lack of timeliness, lack of respect of time and others, lack of responsibility, lack of work ethic, and lack of self-awareness.

Development of Professionalism

Twenty-six (26) participants discussed that their concept of professionalism started developing in school, in prior jobs, in continuing education courses, and in entry-level practice. This development occurred mainly through mentorships and self-reflection.

Week Two: Methods

Unprofessional Behaviors

Participants discussed unprofessional behaviors they have seen from students in either shadowing opportunities or on fieldwork. Thirteen (13) participants discussed the challenges associated with inappropriate technology use in the workplace. Twenty (20) participants noted that time management, including punctuality, preparedness, and initiative had been a major point of concern. Fifteen (15) participants discussed experiences relating to poor communication, specifically with profane language use and poor or inappropriate client interaction styles. Other problem behaviors discussed were poor self-awareness, lack of confidence, lying, insensitivity for the client’s experiences, unkempt physical appearance or inappropriate workplace attire, and poor responses to feedback.

Week Three: Student Perspectives

Agreement with Results

The “Student Perspectives” section outlined that students: experience uncertain expectations in regard to professionalism, search for concrete definitions of professionalism, and believe that professionalism is context specific. Twenty-four (24) participants reflected on previous supervision experiences and provided examples of each aforementioned phenomena occurring in practice. An example of professionalism as a context-specific concept arose in the discussion on whether there was therapeutic

benefit to cursing in practice. Participants against the use of cursing in practice argued that it was inherently unprofessional, while advocates for its use cited its disarming effect for clients and facilitates rapport building.

Personal Life and Professionalism: Students from the article mostly agreed that there was a difference in their personal lives and their professional lives. Some participants (7) disagreed with that sentiment, while others agreed (2) that it was important to have times in which professionalism may be “switched off.” The discussion on this topic mainly revolved around the use of social media and how following coworkers, clients, and their caregivers has both benefits and challenges associated.

Professionalism Education Framework

Seventeen (17) participants agreed that their role in facilitating professional growth within their students was to provide context-specific guidelines and expectations. The consensus was that it was the role of the educational institution to “lay the groundwork” in promoting the skills that are widely accepted as professional. Participants noted that there are currently major gaps in this groundwork between institutions and students, as prior life experience impacts professional development.

Applications in Practice

Participants (18) suggested that this section of the article informed their future workings with fieldwork students. Applications included providing context-specific guidelines, clarifying their expectations for the fieldwork student, and looking at students through a positive lens and assume they want to be professional.

Week Four: Faculty Perspectives

Awareness as an Advanced Professional Skill

One of the major findings from the “Faculty Perspectives” section was the importance of the development of self-awareness in professional growth. Seventeen (17) participants reflected on their own experience and included ways in which they developed self-awareness, which included self-reflection, asking questions past entry-level practice, and continuing education.

Professionalism as Identity

This section of the paper presented professionalism as a contract with oneself. This contract seemed to be a subjective concept, as 17 participants took that to mean they are always “on.” Being “on” means that one must conduct themselves in a professional manner in all aspects of life: at home, on social media, on vacation. Other participants (2) took this same contract as the inverse, citing the need for a work-life balance and that practitioners have off days.

Professional Development Continuum

Expanding on the idea of the professional education framework from the previous week, participants discussed the concept of professional development in occupational therapy. Participants were quick to point out that students were defining professionalism through

explicit skills and behaviors, whereas faculty were defining professionalism through more abstract concepts like professional responsibility and awareness. Participants discussed their role in bridging the gaps for students between these explicit skills and the more global concepts. Ten (10) participants discussed how professionalism is a lifelong learning process that doesn't end at entry-level practice.

Impact of Experience on Professionalism

Twenty-seven (27) participants aligned with the faculty perspective when it came to defining professionalism. Participants discussed the impact experience has on professionalism. Some posited that experience leads to a more global perspective of professionalism, and this can lead to the assumption that coworkers and students are at the same point on the continuum.

Week Five: Results and Conclusion

Providing Clear Expectations

Twenty-two (22) participants noted that because students may be seeking concrete definitions of professionalism, they will be providing students with clear expectations outlining these more concrete aspects of professionalism in order to give students a foundation for professional development while on fieldwork. Participants also noted that giving these concrete aspects make for attainable goals in the early stages of fieldwork and can boost confidence when met rather quickly.

Meeting the Student Where They Are

Participants (20) gathered that professionalism exists on a developmental continuum and requires an individualistic approach. Participants noted that it's important to assess where the student is at the beginning of their placement in order to write appropriate goals. Their expectation is that most students will have met their concrete goals and have transitioned into working on the more global strategies by the end of Level II fieldwork.

Mindfulness of Level of Professionalism

Twenty-one (21) participants noted that their own level of professional development impacts their perception of others and what constitutes professional behavior. Participants expressed the need to be mindful of their own professional development to avoid holding students and coworkers to unrealistic and unfair expectations.