

Professionalism Unveiled in DPT Student Monologues

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Abstract

Purpose/Hypothesis: Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students who reflect on personal beliefs and perform monologues in a capstone course were able to articulate strategies for advocacy and catalyzing change.

Number of subjects: 40 DPT Students completed a questionnaire and participated in a focus group after performing monologue talks. Community members (n=20) in attendance at the monologue performances completed a questionnaire about lessons learned from the students.

Materials and methods: This phenomenological study investigated DPT students (n=40) in a capstone course who performed Student TED (STED) talk monologues on the topic of becoming a new professional. Phenomenological methods were used to answer the following research questions: 1) How do experiences in life shape DPT student beliefs as an emerging entry-level physical therapist? 2) What do DPT students believe about their role as a new professional after performing a STED monologue talk? 3) What did the community learn about physical therapy after attending the STED monologue talks?

Results: Students were shaped by personal experiences in their lives as they began transitioning identity into entry-level physical therapists. Roles of an advocate were embraced. Students positively viewed their role in transforming society and catalyzing change through social responsibility. Community members gained a deeper understanding of what the physical therapy profession offers society.

Conclusions: Beliefs of DPT students regarding the physical therapy profession were shaped by lived experiences as student transitioned to entry-level physical therapists. Students embraced advocacy as a professional duty. The community gained a deeper understanding of physical therapy.

Clinical relevance: Unveiling professional identity requires reflection and an opportunity to embody professional roles beyond clinic walls. Opportunities to engage in public discourse should be encouraged in the curriculum.

Keywords: Advocacy; Public discourse; Monologue; Physical therapist students

Introduction

In the 2007 Pauline Cerasoli Lecture, Elizabeth Domholdt challenged physical therapist educational programs to try something outrageous and design curricular experiences which allow students to reflect deeply on the meaning of the human condition and how illness, injury or disablement defines one's sense of self [1]. Others in the field of physical therapy and medical education have encouraged the incorporation of medical humanities into the teaching and learning process as a means to connect more deeply with the human experience [2-16].

Physical therapist education seeks to educate future physical therapists in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learning allowing professional identity to be embodied through training the minds, hands, and hearts of students. Through the educational process, individuals identify with the profession, internalize its values, and consider the profession central to their being and themselves integral to the profession. When considering the deep relationship of having a calling to the profession of physical therapy, it is one thing to simply take on the identity of the profession but quite another experience of expressing or bearing one's professional identity to an audience by performing an individual monologue. "A monologue is a personal and participatory speech act, even though only one person may be speaking" [17]. Monologues usually have an important point the speaker is trying to get across to or with someone [17]. Sharing personal lived experiences and beliefs about a calling to a profession through a monologue performance may be a professional and

vocational challenge as students are asked to bear witness to beliefs that shape personal and professional identity.

The word profession is defined as a noun, meaning "a paid occupation, especially one involving training in and a formal qualification" [18-21]. The Online Medical Dictionary further states that a profession is "a calling or vocation requiring specialized knowledge, methods and skills" [18-21]. Belonging to a profession means accepting serious responsibility. Members of a profession continuously work to enlarge its body of knowledge, function autonomously in the formulation of policy, and maintain high standards of achievement and conduct [18,19,21]. Maintaining a code of ethics is one way a community of professionals establishes expected behavior that includes a commitment to lifelong study, placing service above personal gain, and being committed to human and social welfare as core values [18,19,21]. Epstein and Hundert [22] suggest that professional competence is built on a foundation of basic clinical skills and scientific knowledge, and extends into the realm of moral development. They further argue that

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although professional competence is built on cognition and technical skills, the essence of a professional is found in integrative skills and behaviors involving context, relationship, affective behaviors, moral meaning making, and habits of the mind. The challenge then becomes how to assess students' embodied values, ethics, and competence of a profession. Finally, there is an "avowed public declaration or statement of purpose" that occurs when becoming a professional [18,21].

Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) Talks have been used in a variety of settings to foster student learning and to deepen connections to the human experience since 1984 [23]. Takaesu suggests TED Talks have been used to improve listening skills and motivation, creating an environment encouraging autonomy in learning. TED talks present novel ideas, are recorded, and are available to the public [24]. Several sections of the American Physical Therapy Association have used TED talk formats to delve into current healthcare topics and issues at professional meetings [25,26]. These personal narratives provide human experiences behind the numbers affected by healthcare issues and policies. Lessons learned from TED talks often serve as a catalyst for grassroots change in society by raising awareness to personal narratives behind healthcare numbers or policies.

Narratives are stories, which enable us to make meaning of our lives. Narrative cases often illustrate the intricacies and resonance of an experience better than other forms of description [27-29] "Stories are powerful representations of a patient's life and illness experiences, and the exchanging of stories can be powerful sources of connection and understanding between individuals," suggests Mostrom [29]. Student physical therapists experience many challenges and successes on the journey to becoming professionals and each journey is unique. By graduation, expectations are that students enter practice as competent entry-level physical therapists owning the values and behaviors of the profession.

This study seeks to understand the student and community perspectives of monologues sharing lived experiences of becoming professionals presented by Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students. As listeners of the stories, the community enters into and shares the experiences of student physical therapists. In doing so, the students and community identify with the stories shared and learn from the challenges or struggles faced by the storytellers. Thomas and Pollio state that knowing and understanding another's experience involves "striving to understand an event as it has meaning in the life of the other" [30].

Little research addressed the use of medical humanities or performance as a part of the DPT curriculum. The hypothesis for this study was that Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students who reflect on personal beliefs in a capstone course are able to articulate professional identity and strategies for embodying advocacy and catalyzing change through public discourse using a STED Talk monologue. Phenomenological methods were used to answer the following research questions: 1) How do lived experiences shape professional beliefs as an emerging entry-level physical therapist? 2) What do DPT students believe about their role as a new professional after performing a STED Talk monologue? 3) What did the community learn about physical therapy after attending the STED talk monologue presentations?

Methodology

Phenomenological methods were used to explore the lived experiences of physical therapist students who staged and performed

a STED talk monologue as part of a capstone course in a DPT curriculum in the Midwest United States of America. The experiences of community members who attended the monologues were also examined. Phenomenological research is qualitative in nature and examines lived experiences to derive meaning from those experiences [30-32]. In this process, researchers attempt to set aside personal experiences and biases to understand trends that develop from the lived reality of research participants. Author van Manen, defined phenomenology as "the study of the life world or our everyday experiences and the meanings we construct from our experiences" [31]. Two main assumptions in phenomenological research are: 1) Humans seek meaning in their lives; and 2) Multiple realities exist that are socially constructed [30-32].

Participants

Forty DPT Students completed questionnaires and participated in focus groups after performing a STED talk monologue in a capstone course for a Midwestern DPT program. Twenty community members in attendance at the STED talks completed a questionnaire about lessons learned from the students' talks.

Procedures

Forty Doctor of Physical Therapy students in a capstone course were recruited to perform a five-minute monologue or STED talk monologues on the topic of what students believed was important in the personal formation of professional identity. The "I believe monologues" were to be performed in TED-style format in front of classmates and others from the university and surrounding community. The topic was to discuss beliefs of the students in their role as new graduating entry-level physical therapists. All students had completed 40 weeks of assigned clinical education experiences before this capstone course occurred. Students independently chose the theme for the I-believe monologue. The topics of the STED talks dealt with what becoming a new professional physical therapist meant to each student. Students discussed lived experiences, which influenced their formation into becoming physical therapists. The main themes of the topics related to pivotal experiences, which helped students answer a calling to the profession. Titles of the STED talks are listed in Table 1. The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) developed a new vision emphasizing the role of physical therapists in "transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience" [33,34]. The STED talk monologues were an opportunity to connect the community with this new vision statement of the APTA. Phenomenologists suggest that by reading or listening to the lived experiences of others, it is possible to connect on a deeper level to shared human experiences [30-32,35-37]. Community members were invited to attend the STED Talk event through open announcements on campus and through newspaper announcements in the local community. This study was deemed exempt by the Davenport University (Grand Rapids, MI) Institutional Review Board.

After STED talk monologues were performed, students and community members completed an open-ended questionnaire regarding the monologues, which were performed and filmed during the final day of a capstone course. Students also participated in focus groups regarding the experience. Questionnaires and focus group data provided thick, rich descriptions of DPT students' embodied beliefs and views regarding professional identity and advocacy. Questionnaires from the community provided descriptions on what the audience learned about the profession of physical therapy and the students (See Table 2 for the questionnaire examples and focus group questions).

Compassion	The Art of PT Meets the Science of Connection
Education	Professionalism
One VS Group	Mindfulness Matters
Hips Don't Lie	Social Responsibility
Physical Therapists in Action	Beyond the Science
I Believe You are Going to Fail at PT	The "Why" of Physical Therapy
Helping Others	Patients are My Passion
Why the Stigma	Forever a Student
Label Me Able	Evidence-Based Research in Motion
Advocacy	Guide to Community Involvement
Babying the Aging	Freedom
Addressing the New APTA Vision and Obesity	Wrecked: Before, During, & After
PT & the Stigma against Mental Illness	I Believe We Can All Be Fit
Promoting Health and Wellness	Possibilities Not Disabilities
PTs Shouldn't Fear Chronic Pain	Passion Changes Lives
Clinical Research and Evidence-Based Practice in PT	I Believe in Being Happy
What if You Were Told This Was Your Last Game?	PT Gives Patients Power
Never Give Up	PT Education and Quantum Physics: Flip a Bit
Diversity in Physical Therapy	Beyond Disability
Global PT: Helping, Serving, Empowering Or the Elimination of Need	Leadership: The 5 Qualities a Leader Should Possess

Table 1: STED talk titles.

Student Survey
What did you learn about yourself from the STED monologue talks?
What did you learn about your classmates from the STED monologue talks?
Community Survey
What did you learn about the Doctor of Physical Therapy students?
What did you learn about the profession of Physical Therapy?
Student Focus Group Questions
Think of the time when you presented your STED Talk Monologue and tell me about it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did it feel to present your monologue? • How long did it seem to last? • What did you learn about yourself? • What did you learn about your classmates?
Imagine yourself in that moment: what was it like to be you?
Additional Prompts:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm interested by what you just said. Can you tell me more about what you mean by "_____?" • That's a phrase I haven't heard you use yet. Can you tell me what that means? • I want to make sure I understand you right. Can you give me an example? • Do you recall what you meant . . . a time . . . etc.?

Table 2: Survey and focus group questions.

Data analysis

Questionnaires from the students and community members in attendance as well as data from student focus groups were analyzed using a descriptive phenomenological approach described by Giorgi [35,36] and Dahlberg et al. [32]. This process involved a whole-parts-whole type of holistic examination of the interview texts until the constituents or themes of the experience were revealed. The research team collaborated to summarize the essence of the experience with the themes generated. This process served as a vertical analysis for each individual questionnaire received.

Finally, a horizontal analysis across all surveys was completed to

develop the common description of the experience of performing a STED talk monologue on professional identity. Once this process was completed, a summary of the common description and themes from the performance were shared with the students for review, serving as a resonance round to determine whether or not the common description resonated with the experiences of the student participants. This process also helped ensure dependability and credibility across all student reflections. A similar process was used to analyze the reflective descriptions of the community members attending the performances. This common description summary was shared with community members who attended the STED talk monologues. Saturation was reached by community members after receiving comments from 10 individuals. This process was a means to solidify credibility and trustworthiness of the description for the community experience.

Results

Four themes emerged from the student survey and focus group data regarding what students learned about themselves. These themes included: 1) Overcoming vulnerability; 2) Gaining greater confidence and growth; 3) Understanding advocacy, and 4) Realizing a passion for the profession. Table 3 presents exemplars for lessons students learned about themselves in the experience.

Students learned from their classmates as well as from the experience of presenting the monologue. Lessons from classmates included: 1) Openness to others' lived experiences, and 2) Embodying roles as future leaders. Themes from the community experience of the monologues included: 1) Hope for the future generation of physical therapists; 2) Leaders who will influence; and 3) Eyes opened to the PT profession. See Table 4 for themes and exemplars regarding lessons learned from STED talk monologues of classmates.

Students were initially both anxious and excited about the prospect of speaking publically about their professional identity. It is one thing to understand and act on the behaviors of the profession but quite another experience to articulate personal beliefs about professional identity in a public forum. Students felt the support of community among classmates and were excited to share stories of their personal journey into the profession of physical therapy. Students reported it was easier than was initially thought to speak passionately about a topic in a public realm despite not having been good public speakers previously.

Students described how phenomenological existentials of lived time, space, body, and relationality were experienced during their monologues. Some students enjoyed having the eyes of the audience on them while others were not so comfortable with that experience of being thrown in front of a group. Focus group discussions revealed the challenges of having all eyes on oneself when speaking. It was then that students grasped the concept of being thrown in front of others. At times students felt as if they were objects being examined and judged by the audience during their monologues. Students described how fast time seemed to pass when speaking yet how slow time lagged while waiting for their turn to speak. Descriptions of space, body, and relationality were discussed in the focus groups. Students described what it was like to be in front of a group sharing something very important. Students reported they felt nervous, had sweaty palms, and felt their hearts beating in their chest. Some students experienced visceral reactions of illness momentarily or feelings of shame or embarrassment when initially performing their monologue, yet later those feelings transitioned to a sense of accomplishment and success as students progressed and finished the monologues.

Overcoming Vulnerability

I learned it is incredibly nerve wracking to present in front of people about something I am passionate about. It is hard to be vulnerable in that situation. I learned that I am braver than I think and that I feel comfortable talking in front of my classmates.

I learned about myself that I have grown so much since I started this program and I can stand up in front of the class and say exactly what I'm passionate about. This whole semester I thought this TED talk was ridiculous and I did not want to do it. But Dr. Xxxx proved me wrong again. This ended up being my favorite assignment. I'm not a good speaker but it was fun talking about whatever I wanted and to listen to my classmates.

Gaining Greater Confidence and Growth

WE ARE READY. Ready to graduate, be professionals and be positive deviants! I learned that through this task that I want to be a voice for change and be active in my profession.

I learned how much more comfortable I am speaking about something I am truly passionate about. I felt so much more confident when I was speaking than I usually do.

I learned that I actually enjoy performing and listening to TED talks. I learned that self-reflecting on what I believe in is important for my personal and professional growth. I realize how much more I have to offer and further appreciate how much I can continue to learn from my experiences and those of my peers.

I found an area of PT that I am passionate for and feel like I could talk for ages about. When I created this TED talk I also learned how to step outside of my comfort zone and present my heart to the class.

Understanding Advocacy

I want to find solutions for the complications and problems with the PT profession and health care in general. I don't believe in just complaining and pointing out what is wrong or not working without having a solution to offer as well. I have realized that I want to become more involved in my community and advocacy boards.

What I learned about myself is I will transform society some way, somehow. I learned the importance of reflection and how important it is for self-growth. I also learned that I must "be the voice for my patients" profession.

I learned that through this task that I want to be a voice for change and be active in my profession.

Realizing a Passion for the Profession

I learned that I actually enjoy TED talks. I learned that self-reflecting on what I believe in is important for my personal and professional growth.

I have learned that I am more passionate about PT and more powerful that I believed. I think I'm more comfortable with expressing that passion for my profession now.

I learned how passionate I am about my patients with mental health impairments. I realized that through my cousin's memory, I can make a difference in how the public views mental illness.

I learned that I am for once in my life "passionate" about a specific area of PT.

Table 3: Themes on lessons learned about self.

Openness to Others' Lived Experiences

I really enjoyed this. I feel like I learned so much about my classmates. I learned what is important to them and how much they care. I really liked Xxxx's speech and felt like I really got a great insight on how the DR was.

I learned a lot about my classmates' struggles that they have gone through - and their personal passion about PT.

I have learned my classmates are so much more diverse than I had known. Every person has their own unique journey, stories, and experiences. I'm so glad we did this!

It's amazing to see how our class has opened up to each other & shared personal information. This wouldn't have happened our first year. We ARE Ready!!!

I learned how passionate my classmates are about advocacy and physical therapy. I learned that one of my classmates can rap! It was great learning about everyone's physical therapy beliefs.

These talks have been very refreshing. I feel rejuvenated. I definitely think this is something the program can continue on with and expand on in the future. It's nothing other programs and students do to look in on. I think it would be a positive experience for everyone.

As I learned from my class there are many hidden talents that they possess. It was interesting to see the many different things that led them to the final year of PT school.

What I learned about my classmates is that many of us have the same views but have so many different ways of expressing the ideas. I love seeing everyone's ideas & views!

Wow! I am so impressed with the passion and desire to promote our profession that was expressed in these (S)TED talks. I discovered hidden talents and passionate hearts that lie within every individual within my class. I truly feel so proud to be a member of this class and program.

Embodying Roles as Future Leaders

Just how eloquent we all are and how we CAN and WILL very well be leaders in our PT community. That we will all impact PT society and society itself in a positive way.

How strongly experiences have affected my classmates. How thoughtful of professional, all members are/will be/continue to be. I learned how passionate we all are at making the world a better place.

I am truly amazed and overwhelmed by the passion and ideas that my peers shared today. I am so proud of this class and to see how far we have come since our first semester!

My classmates are very passionate and creative in representing the physical therapy field. My classmates will make for exceptional clinicians and future leaders.

Table 4: Themes on lessons learned from classmates.

Lessons learned from the monologues dealt with seeing classmates in a new light. Students in the focus group expressed a greater openness to how they viewed their classmates and a deeper connection to members of the class. Students were not aware of personal challenges faced by classmates during their professional journey. Students described how different the stories were in each monologue yet the essence of becoming professionals was the same; it was one of becoming new again and seeing things in a new light. Taking on professional identity and advocacy were now viewed as something exciting and positive. Students reported in focus group discussions that these students would transform and influence society through leadership and advocacy.

The community listened to the monologues and found a deep connection to the new physical therapists. See Table 5 for exemplars of lessons learned by community members in attendance at the STED talk monologues. A new sense of hope for the future healthcare providers was expressed after listening to the monologues. A connection to the profession of physical therapy and an understanding of the profession also occurred after listening to the monologues. Community members reported gaining a deeper understanding of how difficult the journey of becoming a physical therapist professional can be and they were grateful for this opportunity of community learning.

Discussion

Thomas and Pollio suggest that phenomenology provides the researcher with first-person perspectives, permitting the researcher and others to enter the lifeworld of the person living an experience [30]. A powerful personal connection is then made such that shared meaning and understanding occur. This type of qualitative research connects us to our participants in such a way that we enter into a relationship of reciprocity where we move away from doing things to our participants, to a relationship where we connect to the experiences of our participants.

Merleau-Ponty discusses the idea of reciprocity as true communication where a speaker and a listener engage in the story of another [37]. Macann describes the power of connecting with others and transcending personal isolation as the space where one may

experience oneself “as something more than I am given to be by myself” [38]. Merleau-Ponty further states, “We are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we coexist through a common world” [37]. Martin Buber calls this authentic connection between humans “I-Thou” relationships [39]. Thomas and Pollio further discuss the philosophy of Buber.

We experience the world in two different modes: I-It and I-Thou. Every person takes one of two relational stands in regard to the social and natural world, and it is only in this stand that the specific nature of the I exists. Because the pattern of this relationship defines what sort of a person I am at the moment, the I of an I-Thou relationship is different from the I of an I-It relationship. In the case of I-It, the I relates to everything in the world as an object to be sensed, used, or categorized [30].

Thomas and Pollio state, “To achieve a phenomenological understanding of human life, we must consider the way in which human existence is related to its situational context” [30]. Heidegger considers the German term Dasein which is translated as “Being” [40]. Thomas and Pollio consider the deeper meaning in this word which is composed of two parts Da (there) and Sein (being). They believe Heidegger is suggesting that:

Being is never “just” being but always a being in some “there” - that is, always in some place, situation, or context. Dasein is always a being-in-the-world, and the hyphens are as important as the words [30].

In his book, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty reaches a similar conclusion and suggests that we never just receive stimuli from the world or project our ideas onto the world. Perception is always an exchange or reciprocal transaction between our world and us. This concept is what student participants in this study described when being placed in the situation of performing a monologue on professional identity. Performing a monologue on a deeply personal conception of professional identity seemed to give birth to a new person in each student. The new professional identity of the students was brought into existence.

Hope for the Future Generation of Physical Therapists
The future of the profession is bright. We had no idea what amazing students these individuals are. They will go make this university proud. They will change the lives of the patients they will serve.
I am impressed with the quality of individuals these soon-to-be new graduate are. I have faith that they will advocate for me when I have a severe problem. I have hope for when that time comes and I cannot move well. One of these students will be there for me.
These students will change the world for the better. No matter what health system we end up with, we will be taken well care of by the new generation of PTs. They care about us.
Leaders Who Will Influence
I was impressed with how much these students shared about what challenges they have had to overcome to become such influential future leaders. They will make a difference in the lives of so many patients. They will change society as well.
The students are so articulate. They will change the system because of their strong values and beliefs. Not only do they have clinical skills, these students will move mountains as our future leaders in health care.
The students who spoke today were better than any TED talks I have seen on YouTube. These students have found their calling and their voice. Whether they have a loud or quiet voice, they will influence all who are around them.
Eyes Opened to the PT Profession
I am impressed with how these students who seem so professional have had struggles of their own yet they are so confident and generous in sharing their stories with us today. I had no idea about some of the struggles they have had to overcome. They are so strong and resilient.
Some of the students have had to make great sacrifices. I was touched by how they shared their struggles with us and how those struggles shaped them into who the professionals they are today. If life isn't hard enough, PT school is certainly not easy.
Today I learned about how difficult it is to unveil your heart and how powerful that is at the same time. The student speakers who performed today helped me so a greater dimension of who they are as professionals. It is a powerful transition into this profession of PT.

Table 5: Themes on lessons learned from community members.

Heidegger [40] concurs in his discussion on the more technical term *Existenz*, which is composed of two Latin roots: *Ex*, meaning out, and *sistere*, to stand. Thus, the word *ex-sistere* means “to stand out” [30]. One’s existence or being-in-the-world is verified and confirmed by the experience of being a figure against a ground according to Heidegger [40] and in this case, it was the students performing a monologue. Thomas and Pollio [30] suggest that we become aware of our existence when we stand out from our context, from our “there” or *Da* as in *Dasein* or from our world as in being-in-the world. Considering the public setting in this study as ground, we must ask how participants in this study experience their professional and moral selves as figures, against the ground of performing a monologue on professional identity. Choosing the lens of Merleau-Ponty [37] allows us to see a familiar phenomenon of becoming but in a new light as we enter the embodied lived experiences of student physical therapists becoming professionals. Through sharing personal stories, students were doing more than bearing witness to becoming as professionals; they also carry the burden of behaving in an ethical or virtuous manner and declaring so in a public setting or context.

Students in this study described the challenges faced by developing and performing monologues. It was indeed not the traditional DPT program assignment of a written exam or paper, practical exam, or clinical education assessment. This assignment threw students to the edge of comfort zones and yet allowed students to project their ideas in a very public but safe forum. Heidegger [40] discusses two phenomenological concepts of “thrownness” and “projection” which have relevance to this study. Thomas and Pollio expand on Heidegger’s meanings of these terms as they state.

Each human life comes upon itself in the midst of some situation into which they have been “thrown” beyond the person’s wishes. The task of life then becomes one of dealing with our “thrownness” and “projecting” it forward to new situations in which we realize our genuine and unique possibilities. What is important here is that each human life (or *Dasein*) seeks to become more and more responsible for its own being and becoming, and this can only take place if it projects itself into new situations that offer no initial guarantee of meeting personal expectations. Only by taking a chance is it possible for me (or you) to realize a life that is uniquely mine rather than one concerned with meeting the demands and expectations of convention or of other people [30].

Heidegger suggests, “It is one thing to give a report in which we tell about entities, but another to grasp entities in their Being” [40]. In this monologue project, students did more than simply create a presentation. They became the presentation bearing personal challenges and successes that ultimately led to becoming and being future professional physical therapists. It was an outrageous thing in a Doctor of Physical Therapy curriculum, which Elizabeth Domholdt longed for in her Cerasoli Lecture. It is the authors’ hope that this phenomenological study did just that, described the constituents of Being or *Dasein* for student physical therapists who were becoming professionals as they bore witness to their beliefs in monologue performances.

Strengths and Limitations

There are several strengths and limitations to this study. Strengths of the study include a relatively large sample of reflections from DPT students ($n=40$) and community members ($n=20$) ensuring that a variety of descriptions were obtained. The investigators were experienced at conducting phenomenological research. The perspective of students and audience members were captured in the survey and focus group sessions with the students and the survey with the audience.

A few limitations exist. The researchers acknowledge that the results of this study may not apply to all DPT programs or communities. Asking students to perform monologues may not yield similar responses from students or the community if done at other programs. This assignment may not be seen as valuable in some programs. The medical/rehabilitation humanities are a personal and public medium of expression. The meanings constructed from the monologues may vary depending on the lived experiences of those creating and performing the monologues. Narratives shared in monologues may create new meanings in future studies shedding light on the transformation of becoming physical therapist professionals.

Future Study Recommendations

Researchers may consider investigating how including some form of medical humanities or rehabilitation humanities influences learning in the affective domain of physical therapist students and physical therapist assistant students. The use of performing monologues may help build bridges, dismantle differences between the healthcare professions, and allow improved interprofessional dialogue to occur if students from several allied health programs share narratives in a STED talk monologue format.

Conclusion

Narratives and the arts provide opportunities for deep connections to new ways of thinking about the human condition. Students learned about personal beliefs and values influencing professional identity. Students also saw classmates in a new light. The community learned about and appreciated the work of physical therapists through the experience of attending and listening to student monologues on professional identity. Students and community members were inspired and surprised by the power of narratives in challenging communities to consider a duty to improve the human experience. Through performing a public monologue, students learned new ways to problem solve and consider alternative methods of expressing the essence of professional identity and personal roles as professionals who will transform society. Through the experiential education of attending monologue performances, the community learned about the profession of physical therapy. The community learned about the challenges students faced in answering a calling to the profession of physical therapy. In this study, phenomenology was both a philosophy and a research methodology illuminating the essence of human experiences as students shared narratives and personally bore witness to professional identity in a public space. The monologues were the culmination of all the challenges and successes of becoming professionals and connecting to others. Students and community members learned to see things differently. Macann states, “In learning how to see, we learn how to be, how to be something other than what we were when we remained blind to the new way of seeing [38]. Through the exchange of narratives through monologue, students unveiled their beliefs in the process of declaring their professional intention in a public space. Because of the monologue experience, students and community members felt compelled to make conscious choices to engage in the moment and learn about the other. In doing so, speaker and listener connected deeply to the narratives shared, and as Merleau-Ponty suggests, true communication occurred and involves participants being openly conscious to the experience and to become the experience. “To be an experience is to hold inner communication with the world, the body and other people, to be with them instead of being beside them” [37]. As outrageous as this assignment may sound, it may be just what Elizabeth Domholdt was seeking.

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