

Occupational Therapy: Understanding Factors That Lead to Successful Community Participation for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Danila Cepa, DHS, OTR/L, Marie-Claude Touchette, MHS, OTR/L, Hannah Schwartz, OTS, Marissa Lawrence, OTS, Kathleen Boyle, OTS, Haley Kinsey, OTS, Christie Lichosyt, OTS

Elmhurst College, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Master of Occupational Therapy Program, Elmhurst, Illinois

Introduction

Background:

- The Elmhurst Learning and Success Academy is a program that allows students to learn skills within a postsecondary education environment.
- Limited opportunities for community integration and participation for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) often exist in our society. Studies have shown, however, that by completing a postsecondary certificate program, individuals with differing abilities increase their opportunities for meaningful engagement in the community.

Purpose:

- To lay a foundation for future research in both occupational therapy and education, that can expand upon the existing literature pertaining to young adults with intellectual disabilities. This study focuses on their perceived community involvement, including their roles, routines, and habits associated with maintaining meaningful employment and living independently upon program completion.

Aim of the Study:

- Identify targeted life skills contributing to or hindering community participation and workforce integration from the perspective of young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities having completed a post-secondary program.

Literature Review

Factors Affecting Transition to Adulthood:

- Services should focus on maximizing life-long functioning instead of preparing students to succeed in specific environments. This allows individuals with IDD to thrive in a variety of settings using their acquired life skills instead of developing skills that are job and time specific and that do not allow for transferability.
- A focus on self-determination, problem-solving and relationship building helps prepare students for lifelong workplace integration and participation.
- Participation in post-secondary education programs help students acquire or solidify skills for successful workforce integration as well as gain important life experience.

Postsecondary Education and Community Participation

- There is a growing need to understand the factors facilitating successful workplace integration and for outcomes supporting post-secondary education programs for individuals with IDD.

Interprofessional Collaboration Contributing to a Successful Transition

- Transition planning is essential for success in postsecondary education and adulthood for individuals with IDD
- Assist students by fostering independence in self-management, adaptive equipment, and assistive technology
- Coach students on the development of productive habits and provide adaptive equipment that supports full participation and independence in school-related activities
- Including students in goal setting to facilitate success in academics and in developing life skills ensures that the process remains meaningful to students and teaches them to take initiative and ownership in their future

Models Guiding Research: Model of Human Occupation (Figure 1) and Canadian Model of Occupational Performance (Figure 2)

Figure 1: Model of Human Occupation

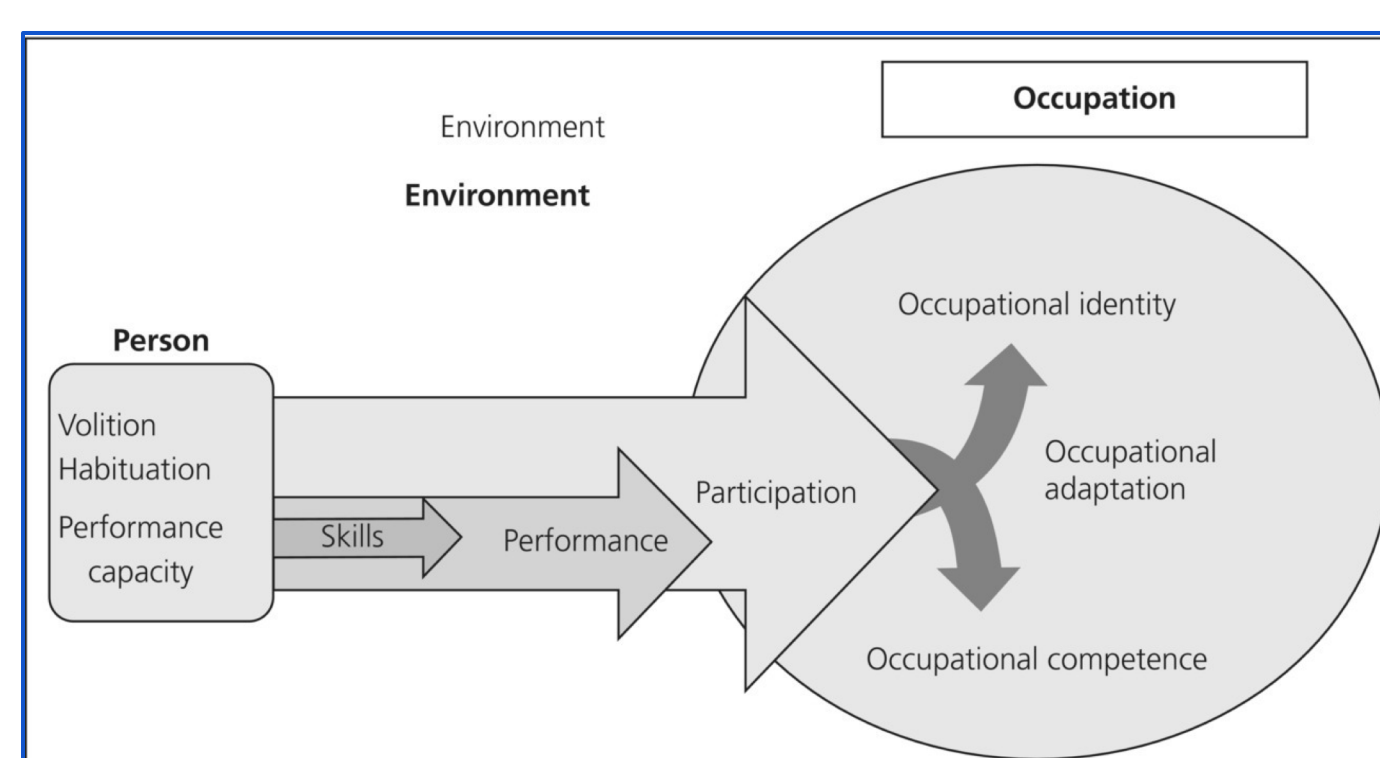
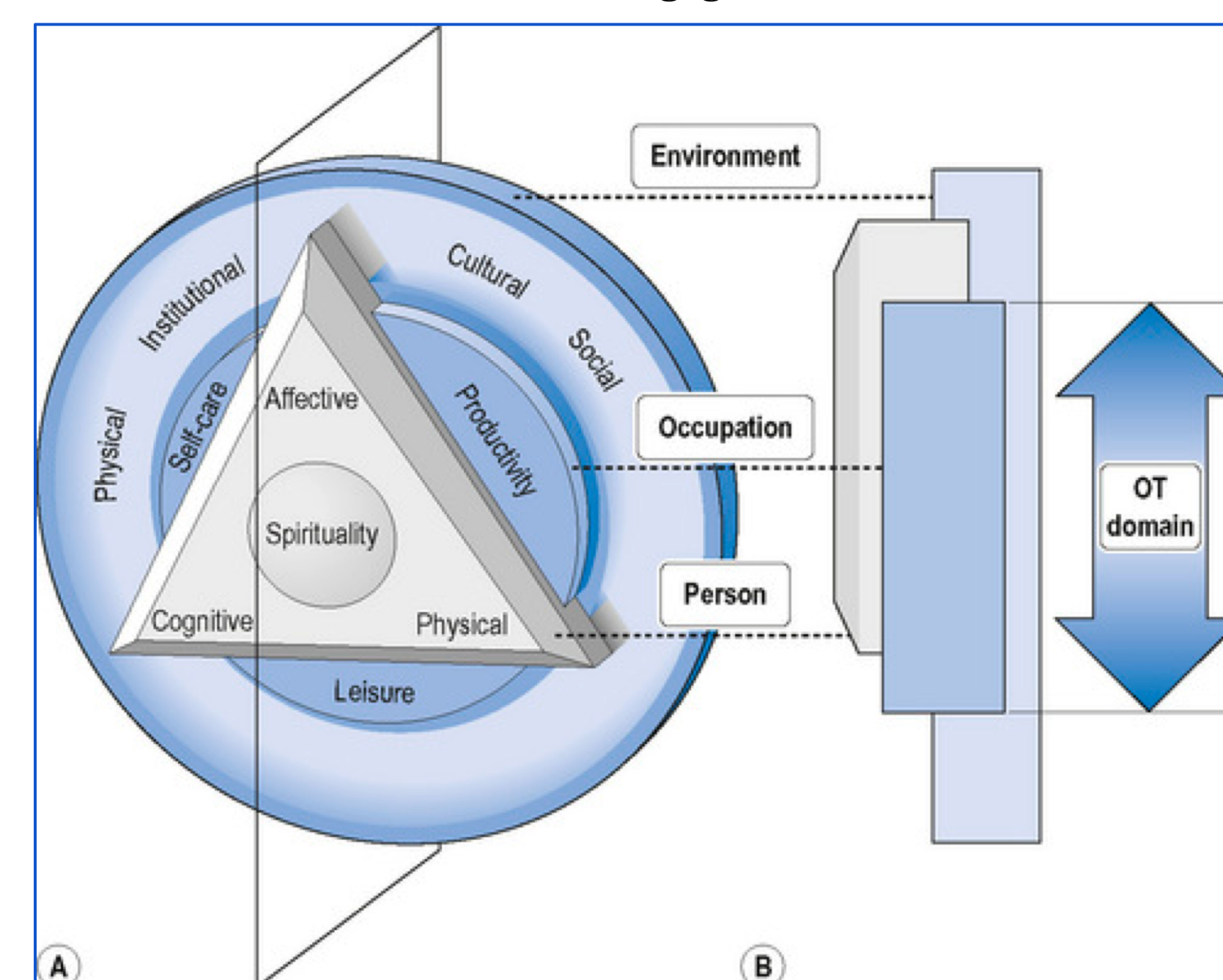


Figure 2: Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement

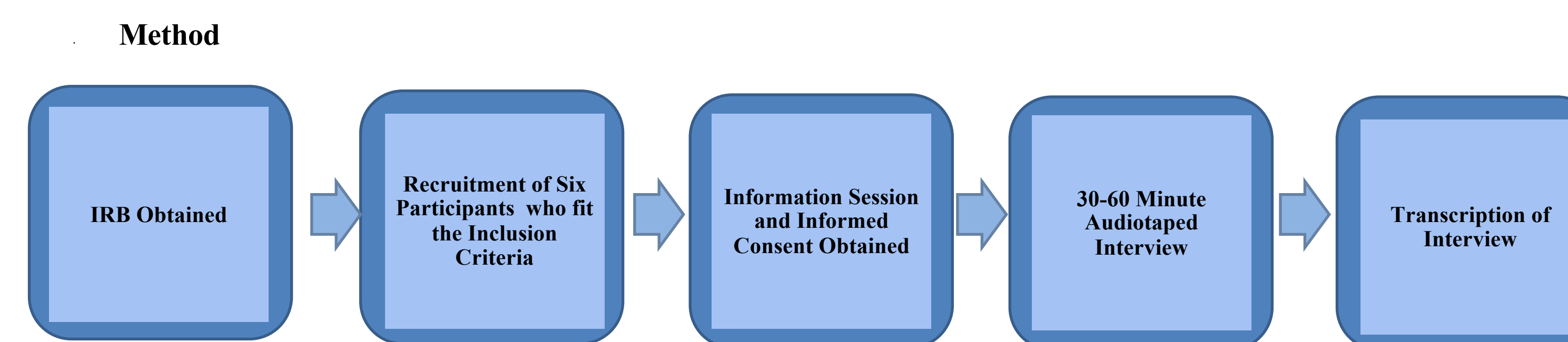


Methodology

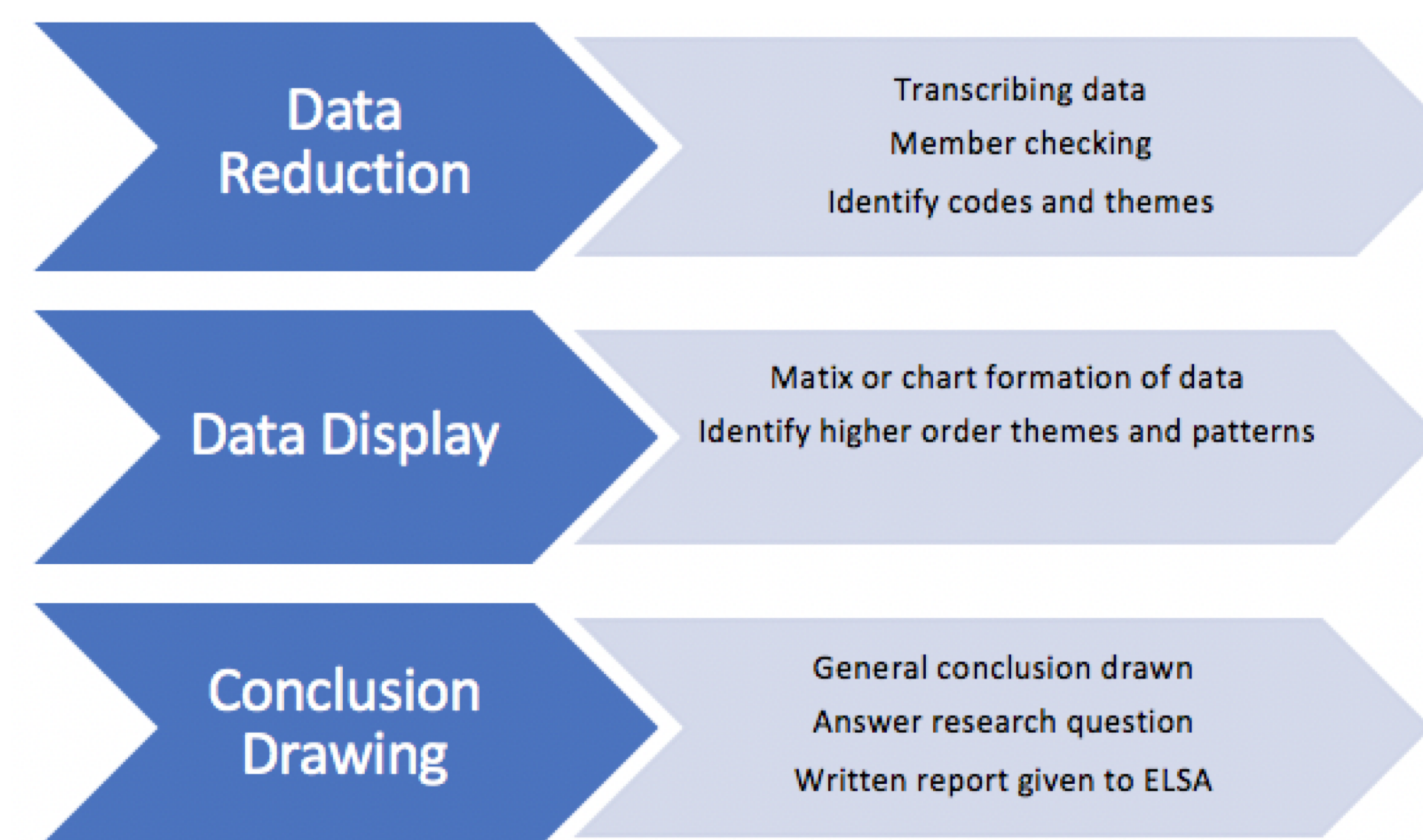
Research Design: Qualitative Phenomenological Pilot Study

Convenience Sample of Participants: We plan to seek a convenient sample of 6 participants. Inclusion criteria consists of individuals from the ELSA program who have graduated within academic years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 and are between ages 22 and 32. Three categories of participants.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Two participants who are currently employed and living independently	Two participants who are currently employed and living with others for support	Two participants who are currently unemployed and depend on others for support



Data Analysis



Methodology Cont,



The COPM is a client-centered assessment that uses a semi-structured interview to determine meaningful occupations to the client. Using the COPM, the client rates meaningful occupation on a performance and a satisfaction numeric scale. It addresses all areas of a client's life, including leisure, self-care, and productivity, while remaining open-ended and enabling the occupational therapist to obtain client-specific information.

For this study, the COPM will help identify the areas of concerns from a performance and satisfaction perspective. Researchers will then use a semi-structured interview to obtain a greater depth of information regarding factors contributing to or hindering community participation and workplace integration.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study is to assess perceived successes and challenges of individuals having completed a non-degree seeking, certificate program. The study aims to identify the factors that impact community integration and participation of alumni of the ELSA program. The alumni's perspective on what they have taken from the program, such as various skills or strategies, and how they implemented them in their daily lives will provide an understanding of their current level of independence. Data gained from participants will give insight into what skills obtained by alumni from the ELSA program have carried over into their day to day lives. Data gathered through this study can be used to provide faculty of the ELSA program with program outcomes and provide consultative occupational therapy strategies for encouraging occupational engagement for individuals with IDD.

Limitations

A qualitative study design was selected for this study as a way to further explore success and challenges to community participation from the perspective of individuals with IDD having completed a specific post-secondary program. As such, results cannot be generalized to other populations. The results of this study should instead be used to inform and guide further research on the topic.

Implications for Practice

Based on this study, occupational therapists can develop and implement a collaborative approach to post-secondary education programs to further address the needs of individuals with IDD. By implementing a collaboration between education professionals and occupational therapy practitioners, we can provide a more holistic approach to care where each client is provided with individual support based on their specific needs. This study's results can serve as a guide for occupational therapy educators and practitioners to further define their roles in this emerging practice area.

References

References available upon request.
Correspondence: Marie-Claude Touchette, MHS, OTR/L
marie-claude.touchette@elmhurst.edu