



**University of Salford**  
A Greater Manchester University



# Knocking on the door: how do students enter the disciplinary community of practice?



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# Ways of thinking and practicing (Entwistle (2005))





# Communities of practice



- “ ...a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice.”

Lave & Wenger (1991, p 98)



# Is prosthetics and orthotics a community of practice?



- Mutual engagement – shared practice
- Joint enterprise – providing prosthetic and orthotic management
- Shared repertoire – “P&O speak”, standard procedures, user stories, tools (physical and cognitive)





# Legitimate peripheral participation



- “It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. “  
Lave & Wenger (1991, p29)
- Identity is developed through participation in a community (Wenger 1998)
- Used to explain how learning occurs in the workplace





# How do students become a prosthetist/orthotist?



- *What aspects do students identify as developments in their progression towards becoming a prosthetist/orthotist?*
- *Does this happen during formal learning (years 1 – 3) as well as placement learning (year 4)?*





# Method

- Students on the prosthetics and orthotics course at Salford
- 3 focus groups
  - 1<sup>st</sup> year, 3 students
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 2 students
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 4 students
  - Transcribed verbatim
- 4<sup>th</sup> years on placement
  - Postal focus groups
- Thematic analysis



## Seeing like a prosthetist/orthotist

*"I think, during our practical, trans-tibial, the concept of abduction and adduction and stuff, where you can, actually change things to say make the limb more abducted or something and then you actually see the outcome, to help the patient walk and that's kind of, actually makes you feel like a professional, you can actually do the job, kind of thing"*

*Craig, year 1*

*The "prosthetist/orthotist's eye" is definitely something I think I've developed over the past year although before coming on placement I was very blind! There are still things I miss and feel annoyed when this happens but when I do notice things and know how to rectify them (like gait deviations) I feel great like I'm really progressing."*

*Linda, year 4*





## Seeing...

*"... [there are] people in front of you in the street and you can see how their trainers are, sort of, really caved in on one side and you think I know what's wrong with you"*

*Amanda, year 1*



# Negotiating what a prosthetist/orthotist is

- *"The lectures looking at other professions, makes you feel a bit more like a group when you pick up those sort of concepts of what other people are doing..."*

*Craig, year 1*

*"...through talking to other p/o's and other members of the MDT you gather a more clear understanding of your role and the impact you can have not only on the patient but also on other members of the MDT who dominate the patients treatment following your intervention ..."*

*Alex, year 4*



## Negotiating...

- *... "I was like a child in a toy shop. It was just like oh come on lets just get my hands on everything. I was trying everything out and that made me feel part of something, part of a huge big, load of people and I met people at BAPO who'd obviously had stands in the exhibition at ISPO [International Society of Prosthetics and Orthotics] and it was "oh weren't you at .." and that made you feel part of something."*

*Amanda, year 1*



## Negotiating...

- *"...there's two people on our course [who] went to a bad limb centre and they had a horrible time and there was a girl who was considering dropping out because it was such a negative experience for her. But we were trying to explain that there not all like that and it's only from going to, it's only from experience that you can say that."*

*Karen, year 1*



## Doing rather than being told

*"I think everyone's more comfortable in the workshop. People just, the first year in the workshop it was like a bunch of mannequins stood round and everyone just looking at their toolboxes and looking at the machines and sort of scared. And now people are fighting over the oven, because they want to whap their bit of plastic in and grab it and drape it. If Frank isn't about then I'll drape it myself, you know, I'll just jump in, they're more... they want to get a move on "*

*Greg, year 2*



## Doing...

- *...when we're asked to assess our own work. Whereas normally we'd come and check with you, but assessing it ourselves makes you feel like you've got a bit more responsibility I suppose*  
*Alice, year 3*
- *"And you hand it over and he [the lecturer] goes "that's good that", you know, and I'm like "I did that all by myself". It's only a cast, but I did it all by myself. It's a good feeling"*  
*Karen, year 1*



# Speaking as a prosthetist/orthotist

*"Language is definitely an aspect of the course that helps you attain a feeling of progression into your chosen career"*

*Alex, year 4*

- *"... it was really hard at first, ...[I'm thinking] why don't you [the lecturer] just say forwards and backwards and up and down? It'd be so much easier and then you understand why once you start using them yourself. But again you do only start using them properly in 2nd year really, at the end of 2nd year"*

*Julia, year 3*



## Speaking...

- *"... like in first year you have like: name, date of birth, side of amputation and you just literally used to sit with your head down until you're let out kind of thing. Whereas now you can just have a joke "*

*Stacy, year 3*

- *"... language is very important and helps with integration into the MDT and improves understanding of what everyone's talking about"*

*Linda, year 4*





## Developing beliefs, values, attitudes

*"...that guy the other day, and he had like all his toes amputated and he was really nice man. And it was so nice of him to come in and show us his feet and everything. But I was with the foot that [had] all the toes amputated and they were really infected and really, really smelt bad and I think you have to kind of learn to get a face not to show that anything smells or anything"*

*Ellen, year 3*



## Developing...

*"I'd say most of the lecturers here they will give you a reason and they'll, how can I put it? ... try and remind you as a person how you would feel if you were stood there, you know, with your bottom half stripped off and stuff like that. Things [like] that, yeah, and also because we're casting each other you feel that yourself."*

*Mia, year 2*



# A prosthetist/orthotist

- *“I felt like that [a prosthetist/orthotist] when we did, was it trans-humeral, Adam [her son] came and I was showing him my arm and he said “what’s that?” and I said “it’s an arm I made today” and he just sat looking at it and he went “you’re clever you, Mum” and I went “I know I am” and I thought I can do it. I felt like one then”*

*Alice, year 3*



# Discussion

- Prosthetic and orthotic students appear to be legitimately participating on the periphery of the community of practice
- Should language be an explicit outcome
- Cognitive and practical skills develop both at university and during placement
- Their identity as a prosthetist/orthotist occurs throughout the course





# Conclusion

- Legitimate peripheral participation does not occur only in work place learning
- The prosthetic and orthotic students enter a community of practice in year 1 and gradually move towards becoming full members through seeing and speaking as a prosthetist orthotist, negotiating what a prosthetist/orthotist is, doing rather than being told, and developing the beliefs, values and attitudes
- Make “ways of thinking and practicing” explicit