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Submission date: 14-Jun-2021 12:05PM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 1606218203

File name: eisure_travel_a_lived_experience_of_persons_with_disability.docx (83.37K)

Word count: 6857

Character count: 41169

TITLE: Rediscovering identity through leisure travel: a lived experience of persons with disability

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Travelogues of non-disabled travellers state that travelling offers one an opportunity for constructing new identities. This meaning ascribed to travelling led the researcher to pose the question: what is the shared, lived experience of travelling for people with disabilities? The objectives of this study were to describe and explore the overall experiences of travelling for people with disabilities, explore how people with disabilities make sense of their experiences of travelling, and to explore the meaning that travelling hold for people with disabilities. The theoretical framework that underpin this study is the Peron-Environment-Occupation Model and the Model of Human Occupation. A Hermeneutical Phenomenological research design within a qualitative approach was utilised. **Method:** Through purposive sampling, six participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was applied to analyse data. **Results:** The findings presented three themes, namely: *A Double edged sword* which highlights the contradictory effects of travelling, followed by *People are part of the package*, which emphasises the participants' interpretations of the role that society plays in disability, and lastly the *Pilgrimage to self-discovery*, as means to rediscover their 'self'. **Conclusion:** The study provides insight into how travelling, as a leisure occupation, facilitated rediscovery of a new identity for people with disabilities.

Keywords: Disability, Disablism, Hermeneutic Phenomenonology, Leisure, Leisure Travelling, Occupation, Occupational Identity, Occupational Justice, Occupational Performance, Travelling

Introduction

Joe Gebbia, the co-founder of a company called Air B&B, alluded to the idea that travelling “is one of the most powerful forms of growth and learning that somebody can experience”¹. Drawing on the empirical research from travelogues of non-disabled travellers, it is reported that they attest to becoming “physically open and emotionally responsive to new experiences” and that they view their bodies not only as adaptable, but also as “flexible and contingent”^{2 (p.7)}. It is exactly these characteristics that **caused the researcher to question if the same experiences** such as those experienced by non-disabled travellers, would be simulated when people with disabilities travel.

Occupational Therapists consider humans to be “occupational beings”, who are entirely affected by what one does, thus occupation is key to defining identity^{3 (p.122)}. What one does relates to who one is. Occupation refers to any form of meaningful activity that people do to fill their time, therefore it is regarded as highly personal and unique to the individual⁴. One way in which Occupational Therapists classify occupation is by means of three categories, namely: productivity, self-care and leisure⁵. Leisure as a form of occupation provides opportunities for people to discover individual strengths and confers significance to everyday life⁶. Within Occupational Therapy travelling provides an attractive option as a leisure occupation for people with disabilities. This calls for a more concerted analysis of the essence of **travelling, specifically for people with disabilities.**

People with disabilities have recently shown an increased interest in travelling, proving that they have the same desire to travel and explore as non-disabled people⁷. According to a quantitative market study conducted on ‘disability travel’, Open Doors Organisation⁸ reports that between 2013 to 2015 adults with disabilities took 73 million day and night trips. The European Commission states that people with disabilities in total took 17.6 million trips in 2012⁹. Travelling in totality constitutes **10% of the world’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, which is about US \$7.6 trillion of the world’s economy; nevertheless, people with disabilities are underrepresented in this industry¹⁰. This is partially due to barriers of inaccessibility and societal perception regarding disability. As society grows in disability awareness and people with disabilities proceed to assert positive identities, they are proving to be a growing, profitable target market for the tourism industry¹¹. This emphasises the necessity to investigate the effect of travelling for people with disabilities, who currently comprise 15% of the global population¹².

Although there is a growing interest in travelling for people with disabilities, a more complicated and contingent account emerges when we consider the limited accessible accommodation, stringent flying terms and conditions, and inadequate accessibility at public attraction sites - indicative of occupational injustice. For people with disabilities, going out into public spaces often entails overcoming barriers of daily living; consequently, this continuous challenge lessens their occupational and community participation¹³ resulting in internalised oppression causing them to withdraw from society and leisure

occupation such as travel. The researcher questioned whether travelling could improve people with disabilities' community participation and influence their occupational identity, taking into account that traveling is such a powerful form of growth and learning for non-disabled people. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question: **what is the common or shared lived experience of leisure travelling for people with disabilities?**

Primarily **the current study** depicts travelling as a leisure occupation, a first in the field of Occupational Therapy and the realms of health. As a result, limited literature is available causing the researcher to draw on studies from other fields such as Tourism, Sociology and Psychology in order to find a means of relating travelling to the health context.

Considering travelling as therapeutic intervention, the researcher made use of a social approach to travelling as a leisure occupation. The Socio-Relational model in conjunction with the Occupational Therapy Models (Person-Environment-Occupation Model and the **Model of Human Occupation**) were **used as a theoretical framework to discover the true essence of travelling for people with disabilities, as experienced by them.**

7 The aim of the **study was to explore the lived experiences of leisure travelling for people with disabilities.** The four objectives were to: Explore the purpose of travelling for people with disabilities; **Describe and explore the overall experience of travelling as experienced by people with disabilities;** Exploring **how people with disabilities perceive, understand, and make sense of their experiences of travelling;** Explore **the meaning that travelling has for people with disabilities.**

The study provides insight into travelling as a leisure occupation for people with disabilities and contributes to an understanding of how travelling has facilitated them in developing a new identity. It further provides new insights into how travelling assists in the discovery of individual strengths and the generation of positive emotions. Lastly, it encourages Occupational Therapists to promote appropriate leisure programmes as a means of therapeutic intervention to enhance occupational identity and promote optimal occupational performance.

Literature Review

Travelling has not previously been considered as a probable intervention within Occupational Therapy. Therefore, the researcher explored literature that addresses the benefits of leisure as an occupation. Articles pertaining to the travelogues of non-disabled travellers and to disability studies are reviewed in order to define disability within a human rights and social justice framework.

How one defines disability is crucial when formulating ideologies and philosophies about life, particularly on aspects of impairment and disablism – a term used to characterise discrimination against people with disabilities¹⁴. Occupational Therapists explicitly distinguish between impairment and disability. Disability is a state that occurs as a result of society restricting people with impairment from engaging in main stream activities due to inaccessibility as well as discrimination and social exclusion. Recognising this, South Africa⁵ ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2009 in an attempt to overcome these challenges and improve equality for all¹⁵.

¹⁹ The Social Model and the Social-relational Models explain this perspective of disability well, as identity and ideology are interlinked with socialisation¹⁴. These two models affirm the societal and the personal impact of disability²². The Social Model defines disability¹⁶ as “the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities”^{16(p.14)}. With society as the main cause of disability, the Social Model advocate that liberation involves networking with other people with disabilities, creating positive selfhood and developing an inclusive disability community whilst focusing on a just economic policy¹⁶. Consequently, the Social Model falls short of replacing negative thinking with healthy productive thought patterns. In this manner the Social Model resists transformation, as little association has been made between impairment and age, traditions, culture and language and failing to theorise the experiences of people with disabilities¹⁷. The Social-Relational Model extends the Social Model as it argues that one should accept that society is generally inaccessible, and that living with an impairment is, in itself, the personal challenge of the individual. The Social-Relational Model insists on the importance of people with disabilities owning their inner struggles in order to heal¹⁴

Grounded in the Occupational Performance Model, Occupational Therapists understand the impact that disability has on a person's identity. As described in the Person-Environment-Occupation Model¹⁸, when one acquires a disability it causes an interruption in one's everyday life activities, this change in activities of daily living (ADLs) induces an imbalance between the person, *how he/she views him/herself*; environment – *accessibility of the space and societal response* and occupation – *what the individual does, the method in which it is performed and the meaning attributed to it*. When an individual's life is altered following an injury, occupation will be redefined, altered, adapted and rearranged¹⁹. The PEO Model, describe the interaction between person, occupation and environment as an “enabling-disabling” process that assists one to adapt to change¹⁸. Ideally one wants to achieve a harmonious ²⁰ transactional relationship between the person, the environment and occupation¹⁸. The harmonious interaction between these three components endorses a balanced lifestyle and optimal occupational performance. One way this can be achieved is through altering one's environment as it can greatly influence one's occupational performance¹⁸

Emphasising the person-specific approach within Occupational Therapy, the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) is useful when considering the environment, roles and routines, performance skill and personal interests from individuals' perspectives. MOHO explains that readjusting to the environment as well as reviving normal occupational development²⁰ will assist one to reconstruct one's identity. As established by Hammel²¹ and Doroud,²² occupations give meaning to one's life²¹ and prove to be fundamental in the reconstruction of identity²².

Furthermore, the MOHO guides insight into the influences of the environment; in this case travelling in a particular environment or setting, which could offer or restrict opportunities for occupational performance. Thus travelling as a leisure occupation can be used to reconstruct identity. As Taylor¹⁹ states "people create who they are through occupations which connect them to their world and culture"¹⁹. Kielhofner (23 p.124) elaborates on how individuals are "occupational beings" who create meaning and construct identity through engaging in occupation. Adapting to life-altering circumstances is fundamental to an individual's well-being and engaging in meaningful occupations, such as leisure, can assist with transitioning through these life changes¹⁹.

Occupational science was used to explore the concept of leisure travelling as an occupation. In order to provide scientific evidence to clinically apply occupation in practice²⁴. Analysing and adapting activities to purposely apply these within the environment in order to optimise occupational performance and reconstruct identity is firmly exclusively the scope of Occupational Therapists. Travelling as leisure occupation, to the Occupational Therapist, is seen as a multifaceted phenomenon. In order to comprehend the therapeutic value of occupation one must consider occupation within its ethnographic context, considering its spatiotemporal dimensions as well as its significance to the client¹⁹. For an activity such as travelling to be classified as a leisure activity it should allow the individual to have freedom of choice. To be able to choose freely one's leisure activities greatly contributes to a sense of control and identity²⁵. Moreover, some leisure activities are more beneficial than others, so it is imperative to match personal interests with preference²⁶ which promotes autonomy. James Wise states that "if there is no chance for selection there is no freedom"^{27(p.21)}. Travelling, similar to leisure, must be intrinsically satisfying. Iwasaki²⁸ and Pagán²⁹ states that taking a vacation is important for people with disabilities to become self-reliant, independent and confident. Solitary leisure provides an opportunity for self-reflection which in turn contributes to identity development and aids in transcending negative life events²⁵.

Learning as a result of travelling is personal and strongly tied to individual interests and motivations and the nature of learning from a tourist experience only emerges over space and time as an interpretation that these experiences transpire³⁰. The tourism industry emphasises that it is their responsibility to "engage travellers in transformative learning experiences"^{30(p.920)}. With the client-centred approach of Occupational Therapy, Occupational Therapists are proficient in aptly aligning occupation to optimise growth and influence not just occupational performance, but occupational identity of the individual. For

that reason, the researcher challenges Falk's statement as ¹⁵ it is rather the responsibility of Occupational Therapists to engage clients in transformative learning experiences, such as travelling, as they are more credible and proficient in adapting occupation and the environment for amelioration.

The literature review revealed that the majority of people living with a disability continue to face human rights violations and social injustices due to inaccessible societal structures and travelling for many people not being equally accessible. Apart from the health system predominantly viewing disability from a Medical Model perspective, the Social-Relational Model highlights the importance of facilitating agency in people with disabilities, promoting a positive selfhood and contesting society's stereotypes. Considering the science of occupation, leisure travel can be seen as a leisure occupation; a multifaceted phenomenon applied as a pleasurable distraction from negative life events that can facilitate reconstruction of occupational identity. Therefore, the 21st century traveller seeks new learning experiences which are unequivocally linked to travelling and adventure. Studies show that growth and learning occur in response to changes in one's environment. Travelling predominantly provides an enriched environment that can serve as a platform for learning. However, despite the various benefits mentioned of leisure, the relationship between travelling and how it is experienced by people with disabilities was yet to be identified.

Methodology

In line with the philosophical worldview of social constructivism, the researcher believes that individuals seek understanding of the world they live in³¹ and that subjective meanings are developed from the occupations in which they choose to engage. Therefore, a qualitative research approach with an interpretivism orientation was chosen for the study as this approach revolves around how people experience and make sense of their realities³². This allowed the researcher primarily to explore how people with disabilities regard travelling and the manner in which they experience it, along with the meaning they attribute to travelling. A hermeneutical phenomenological design allowed ¹¹ the researcher to gain an understanding and revelation of the travelling experience of people with disabilities by making use of structures of consciousness as informed by Creswell, who states that the "reality of an object is inextricably related to one's consciousness of it"³¹(p.77). As the participants reflect on travelling and converse about the deeper meanings they attribute to it, their reality of the experience transpires. However, the researcher does acknowledge that one can merely attempt to interpret the participants' lived experience and endeavour to linguistically present it, as the true phenomenon can only be experienced by the participants themselves³³.

The hermeneutical phenomenological design, innate to a qualitative research approach, allows for the researcher to become infused with the participants' discourse of their lived experience of travelling, while concurrently constructing their interpretations that engender a deeper understanding of the occupation of travelling. As people are unique individuals and experience the world in unique ways, they create their

own realities, consequently resulting in 'multiple realities'³⁴. In his view of phenomenology Heidegger³⁵ concluded that the essence of something, in this instance travelling, can only be discovered when it is consciously encountered and reflected upon by the individual³⁵.

This study was conducted with participants who travelled for leisure in South Africa. South Africa's international standards and global recognition provide numerous opportunities for travelling and experiencing new cultures and activities. As this country provides an array of leisure travelling options whereby the individuals can freely choose leisure activities according to their interests. A sample of six participants was carefully selected with the following inclusion criteria: 18 years or older, have travelled within South Africa to a new environment for a minimum of one night, and explored new activities while on holiday. With the main focus being on extracting rich data from each participant during in-depth, semi structured interviews³², the study required participants to reflect on, and articulate, their past experience of travelling (see Table I). ¹² For this reason, people with mental and/or cognitive impairments were excluded from the study as impairment in memory, abstract thinking and reasoning may have prevented detailed recall of their lived experiences. During interviews, reflective notes were made and active listening techniques such as paraphrasing, clarifying, reflecting and summarising utilised. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed soon afterwards so as to retain information regarding participants' non-verbal behaviour during the interviews.

Table 1: Interview questions and prompts

The principals of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) were applied during data analysis in an attempt to stand in the shoes of the participants³² and conversely to give a "third-person view of a first-person account"^{36(p.110)}. IPA is concerned with the ontological questioning of existence in itself ³² and thus in this study, the person who travels was regarded as the principal subject opposed to travelling³⁶. IPA culminates in a dual interpretation process of, firstly, the participants' interpretation of the meaning they attribute to travelling, followed by the researcher's understanding of the participants' connotation of travelling³². The researcher made use of Pietkiewicz and Smith (32 p.12) stages of IPA namely: ²¹ 1 - "Multiple reading and making notes" 2 - Identifying emerging themes and 3 - "Seeking relationships and clustering themes"^{32(p.12)}.

During stage (1) "Multiple reading and making notes" ¹⁸ ^{32(p.12)} - the researcher immersed herself in the data through transcribing, reading and listening to the audio-taped interviews a number of times, while noting anything of interest in the data, and specific thoughts and reflections by the participants about certain issues to gain a complete sense of each interview. During this time, distinctive phrases and insights, were noted in the left-hand margin³⁷. With stage (2) Identifying emerging themes, focus shifts to transform the researcher's notes into emerging themes³². This stage is repeated until the researcher is able to make a theoretical link with detailed and dynamic themes³⁷. In stage (3) "Seeking

relationships and clustering themes”: the connections between the themes were identified, clustered together and labelled with descriptive titles to form the final themes^{32(p.12)}. Conclusively a comprehensive description of travelling for people with disabilities was written as the researcher interpreted “what” and “how” they experienced travelling^{34(p.79)}.

To ensure the rigour and trustworthiness, dependability was adhered to by having an audit trail with transcriptions, audiotapes, field notes and journaling. Credibility was maintained through member checking where the participants confirmed the transcribed data. Transferability was upheld through providing detailed descriptions of the participants and methodology in order to outline practical application in other contexts and confirmability was achieved by including rich quotes directly derived from the data collected)³⁸. Prior to commencing the study, a research proposal was submitted for ethical clearance and approval was received - HS/16/6/17. Lastly all the data was stored in a password-protected digital folder and will be kept for five years after completion of the study and destroyed thereafter.

Findings

Ingrained in the nature of hermeneutical phenomenology, the data portrays multiple realities of the participants’ experiences of travelling, as each experience is interwoven with their past and current circumstances as well as their culture. The participants’ interpretation of their meaning of travelling is evidently interlinked with their personal journey and life experiences (see Table II).

Table II – Meaning of travelling to the participants

However, during data analysis three themes emerged which represents the unique lived experiences of travelling for the participants. The first theme *Double-edged sword* highlights the contradictory effects that travelling can have (Figure 1). It deals with the participants’ mixed feelings and ambivalence about travelling. The participants motivated for people with disabilities to travel but at the same time they pointed out the risks involved. It soon became evident that akin to the two sides of a doubled edged sword, travelling can cut both ways. It can be an exhilarating experience that grants the participants much delight

Figure 1: Theme One – Double-edged sword

and excitement but it can also lead to despair and feelings of inadequacy. This can be compared to a bird taking flight and experiencing freedom, it has to face the challenge by stepping out of the safety of its nest and taking a chance by spreading its wings and learning how to fly, similar to the participants having to face new environments of inaccessibility which restrict their choice and cause other stressors. As stated in the words of one of the participants: *“Travelling has two extremes. It can make you feel free, like free from things that bind you and boundaries, or on the other side it can constrict you more and make you feel out of place in circumstances where it is not accessible”*

{*Flight*, p. 21}. Travelling is without a doubt a double-edged sword; it entails some sacrifices to be made and risks to take but there is also the possibility of experiencing freedom.

In Theme 2 - **1** *People are part of the package*, emphasises the participants' interpretations of the immense role that society plays in disability (Figure 2). That being human inevitably links us to society. This concept was raised when participants depicted some challenges in travelling as a person with a disability. Throughout their journeys the participants discovered that people can make them feel more accepted and included, but people can also ostracise one another.

Participant Dali feels that it is society and people that uphold disability: *"As I say, disability is not a disability; it is the people around you that are the disability. And you must learn how to handle those*

Figure 2: Theme Two – People are part of the package *people. At the end of the day rehabilitation isn't a personal thing; it is a freaking general thing. You must learn how to handle people. So firstly, accept yourself and then learn how to manage yourself and then be able to maintain it consistently, maintenance around other people"* {Dali, p. 15}.

Despite people with disabilities having to accept their own impairment and fighting daily battles regarding inaccessibility, it is people that often cause them to feel more disabled. For this reason, they had to learn to deal with people, they had to learn to manage their responses and maintain a constant mentality pertaining to social discrimination. Travelling poses as a method through which one can develop such skilfulness in order to effectively manage inappropriate responses from people. Through travelling and being exposed to a variety of people and their responses, it helps people who have disabilities to build not only a reference of inappropriate actions by non-disabled people, but also in assisting to develop a repertoire of responses. One of the participants, Dali, continues to use travelling as an opportunity to improve his skill in dealing with social discrimination and exclusion: *"I can perfect my stage skill with strangers. Like the things I say I'll observe how they respond...okay maybe I should state it differently next time and watch how they respond then. To the next person I will say the same thing just in a different way. Okay I think this way works better. So, when you travel you can do more of this type of thing"* {Dali, p. 13}.

Last and most prominent theme 3 - *Pilgrimage to self-discovery* entails the physical journey of exploring new activities and the steps how they discovered a new self (Figure 3). They elaborated that travelling prompts them to take chances and to step out of their place of safety, where they had to learn how to deal with incidents, and it is travelling that endorses exploration of new activities and growth. Travelling exposed the participants to a higher occurrence of incidents in unfamiliar spaces and inaccessibility which could be very discouraging. They could either confront or steer away from these challenges, but unfortunately cannot be avoided. However, if they do decide to adapt to the inaccessibility, they feel that

Figure 3: Theme Three – Pilgrimage to self- discovery they have mastered the task at hand and are left with a sense of empowerment. Travelling essentially

allowed them to learn and grow from overcoming obstacles which in turn lead to accepting an altered identity.

The identified themes can be traced (and highlighted) in the words of one of the participants as stated below:

*"...one should travel for leisure, because if you don't put yourself outside of your everyday normal activities (**stepping out of your comfort zone - Theme 3**), you are not going to test your abilities and see what your actual skill is (**streamlining and dealing with obstacles – Theme 3**) doing new things, new adaptations. You are familiar with the people around you and close to you (**people are part of the package - Theme 2**), so you are in a comfort zone in your everyday living. Therefore, the more you travel and do not have to concentrate on your responsibilities (**freedom of the mind, routine and stressors – Theme 1**), but can just relax and look at what is around you (**experiencing new encounters which cannot be found in a book – Theme 3**); the quicker and easier you'll adapt to your new situation and sudden disability (**accepting an altered identity – Theme 3**)" {Dali, p.1}.*

All of the participants suggest and recommend that people with disabilities should travel. Travelling forces one to find alternative means to overcoming inaccessibility, and the participants agree that the more one travels the quicker and easier one will adapt to a disability.

Discussion

⁶ The aim of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of travel for people with disabilities. This was achieved through the following four objectives: explore the purpose of travelling for people with disabilities; ¹ describe and explore the overall experience of travelling as experienced by people with disabilities; followed by, exploring how people with disabilities perceive, understand, and make sense of their experiences of travelling and lastly explore the meaning that travelling has for people with disabilities.

The purpose of travelling for people with disabilities

As unique as humans are, so unique were the participants' motives and goals for travelling. Despite having unique reasons for travelling, it emerged that the participants could self-direct which destinations and what meaningful travel activity they wanted to experience. This is parallel with leisure as both is a "self-directed activity which holds meaning and is intrinsically motivating to the individual"^{38(p.109)}. Despite the difference in each participant's internal motivations for travelling, travelling is a medium in which activities can be shaped to match their character and requirements. This highlights travelling as a person-orientated activity, chosen and directed by the individual.

Additionally, all the participants considered travelling as a form of rehabilitation, as it provided them with an opportunity to take control over their own destiny. Deciding to travel and being in control of which destination they wish to visit allowed them to exert freedom of choice - something they felt robbed of when they received post-acute rehabilitation. Travelling provided them with a means of applying what they were taught in rehabilitation, in a non-clinical environment where they were exposed to real elements of society and its inaccessible structures. This explains why they described travelling as real-time therapy. The shared experience by the participants is confirmed by Shi et al.'s (11 p.37) study when she stated that "being able to travel after an injury is a method of rehabilitation"^{11(p.37)}, thus highlighting how travelling, for people with disabilities, promotes autonomy and endorses taking control of one's own destiny.

People with disabilities' experiences of travelling

The participants shared a collection of travel experiences that ranged from seeing beautiful scenery and engaging in adventure activities to exploring new cultures. Through experiencing travel-related activities such as abseiling, safaris, hiking, kayaking and other diverse activities, they engaged in experiential learning, instead of being forced to follow a clinical routine led by a therapist or being confined to their house. As the participants shared the events and happenings, their stories were entangled with tales of inaccessibility. The obstacles pertaining to inaccessibility made it less likely that travelling revolved primarily around fun. The participants mentioned in theme three: Pilgrimage to self-discovery, that they had to be prepared to deal with obstacles such as inaccessibility when they travelled. Their stories highlighted how people with disabilities are marginalised by disablism. The emotional impact of disablism on the participants surfaced, when activities they encountered during their travels put an emphasis on exclusion and discrimination. While these aspects might seem invisible to the fellow non-disabled traveller, it's generally interwoven into society's assumptions towards people with disabilities⁴⁰.

Participants had to learn not to be limited by society's discrimination and injustice, as people are inevitably part of the package. It was through travelling that they learned to appreciate being different in a 'walking' society. Travelling empowered them to not only build a repertoire in dealing with these offences but also provided them with the opportunity to perfect their skills in navigating society's conventional thoughts of what it is to be considered 'normal'. This growing in self-assertiveness built their confidence in navigating being different and managing disablism.

People with disabilities' understanding and sense-making of travelling

The experience of travelling in its totality is more than momentary excitement or just a singular sensuous experience. Travelling signifies something larger than the event itself and embeds growth for the individual. The participants perceive their travel experiences as a medium for breaking barriers,

broadening perspectives and gaining a greater sense of mastery. They could break the mould of disablism that society had assigned to them; they gained a new perspective on how to streamline their daily activities; and through mastering some travelling activities their perception of their own abilities changed. Travelling thus created opportunities whereby the participants could mould and evolve their perspective of their realities. Their perspective regarding their own disability as well as their concept of "self" were amended through a process of cognitive reflection, describing it as a journey or rather a pilgrimage to self-discovery, which assisted them to restore their occupational performance.

As they travelled they experienced new occupations which shifted the balance between person, environment and occupation. Gaining new information from different communities and occupations amended their perspective of self and their disability. From stepping out of their comfort zone to mastering a new activity, broadened their horizons and compelled them to do introspection, resulting in a different perspective on disability and disablism. After travelling, the participants could not go back to their old dimensions of doing everyday activities, as they had expanded their perspective about accessibility, explored a greater variety of occupations and experienced different perspectives of disability. The pilgrimage, as elaborated in Theme Three: The pilgrimage to self-discovery, led them to amend their own concept of disability through reconstructing their identity. Therefore, it became evident that as the participants made sense of their travel experiences, it facilitated them to re-discover their new self. Initially they undertook travelling for leisure but in essence they embarked on a pilgrimage of introspection, readjusting internal perceptions and growth in their occupational identity.

⁹ As the researcher made sense of the participants' making sense of travelling, it can be concluded that a changed environment resulted in convergence of the three circles of the Person-Environment-Occupation Model¹⁸ - the relations between who they are – person, how they do things – occupation and the environment. It reaffirmed what Kielhofner⁴¹ stated more than three decades ago: "an environmental change is the surest way to effect permanent organized change in an open system"^{40(p.732)}. To elucidate, this means that by experiencing a change in the environment and experiencing new occupations, which travelling undoubtedly affects, altered the participants' way in which they perceived themselves and responded within their world.

¹ **The meaning that travelling has for people with disabilities**

Through the process of optimising their occupational performance, the participants were able to rewrite the essential qualities of their occupational identity. As the researcher endeavoured to conclude the true meaning of travelling for the participants, she drew heavily on the components of the Person-Environment-Occupation Model¹⁸, as well as the dynamic human open system of the Model of Human Occupation⁴¹. Finding that for decades travelling has been associated with expeditions, societal development and learning, confirming again that to travel is to embark on a pilgrimage⁴². It can thus be

argued that embarking on this pilgrimage serves as a catalyst for growing and a form of learning that the participants could choose themselves. They could discover who they were and who they wanted to be. In essence through adjusting their human open system on their travel journeys, the participants narrated their life stories and reconstructed their occupational identity.

This study had one main limitation. Four out of the six participants were professional athletes of which three are Paralympians and one a professional surfer. This could be indicative of a higher level of determination and strength in comparison to other people with disabilities. However, in the last decade reasons for travelling have changed dramatically and travelling is now regarded as a form of free-choice learning and a means for discovering one's identity. Broadening perspectives, constructing identities, occupational exploration and gaining closure to disability are only a few benefits experienced by people with disabilities who have decided to travel. Achieving the objectives of the study enabled the researcher to shed some much needed light on the phenomenon of travelling for people with disabilities.

Implications for practice

It was evident from this study that it is of great value for Occupational Therapists to recommend and encourage their clients to engage in travelling as a leisure occupation. Therefore, the following implications for practice are to be considered:

- Occupational Therapists should recommend client appropriate leisure activities. It is of great importance that Occupational Therapists firstly, do not neglect leisure as a valuable part of therapy when focussing on identity restoration as it facilitates personal transformation; and secondly, leisure travelling has proven to be a self-directed activity that aids in buffering the impact of disability and assists in reconstructing occupational identity.
- Travelling is a form of free-choice learning and a means of learning from experience. It provides new information to all senses involved and requires active participation in occupations that hold meaning for the participant. Recommending this type of experiential learning as a therapeutic intervention will promote autonomy and independence.
- As part of community integration Occupational Therapists can start planning a leisure travel trip with eligible clients who have recently been disabled.
- Occupational Therapists should provide support to online sites such as Trip Advisor, Travelstart, Lonely Planet, AirBnB etc. to promote travelling for people with disabilities.
- Accessibility and disability are still broad terms within South Africa. This requires more definitive legislation pertaining to inclusivity and accessible tourism for people with disabilities. Thus a task team should be selected in order to draft a protocol to ensure that accessible tourism becomes a mainstream activity in South Africa.
- Further research is needed to analyse how travelling influences neuroplasticity in people with disabilities. In addition, as hermeneutical phenomenology only allowed the researcher to interpret

the participants' interpretations of their experience linguistically, travelling with the person with a disability whilst documenting his/her experiences through participant observation would allow for real-life context. Thus the researcher recommends that an ethnography design involving participant observation be conducted.

Conclusion

¹ The shared lived experience of travelling for people with disabilities is that it is a pilgrimage of self-discovery, whether it is discovering one's own boundaries, discovering alternative means of doing daily activities or discovering a fresh perspective on one's disability, the participants discovered a new perspective of self. Travelling expanded their sensory, physical and gravitational parameters which enabled them to view themselves and their disability in a new light. The participants in this study did not engage in travelling merely for fun, but for self-discovery. By facing the obstacles pertaining to inaccessibility, they learned to appreciate being different in a one dimensional society and grew stronger in their autonomy by taking control over their destiny. Therefore, travelling proves to be one of the most influential forms of growth and essential to amend one's occupational identity.

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