

Equity in Occupational Therapy Education: Disability Community

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Background

- AOTA Academic Programs Annual Data Report
 - 23,436 students enrolled across 196 accredited MSOT and OTD programs
 - This document reports on race, gender and ethnicity in students and faculty. Disability is not reported (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, 2022)
- CDC estimates up to 27% of the population has a disability (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023)
- ADA definition of Disability: indicates that an individual has a record of, presently has, is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2020)
 - Students may identify with the following:
 - Learning Disabilities
 - Physical Disabilities
 - Social Disabilities
 - Mental Health related Disabilities
- Disability is a minority group and “Disability,” “Disabled,” and “Having a disability” can be charged and complicated identities for people in the United States (Vogel et al, 2022), therefore use preferred language of the students you work with
- ACOTE & AOTA’s vision statement is “committed to creating opportunities to foster inclusivity, participation, and representation” (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, 2022)
- This poster explores the current state of equity in Occupational Therapy Education for students within the Disability Community, and invites conversation on how we can advance it further.

Models of Disability

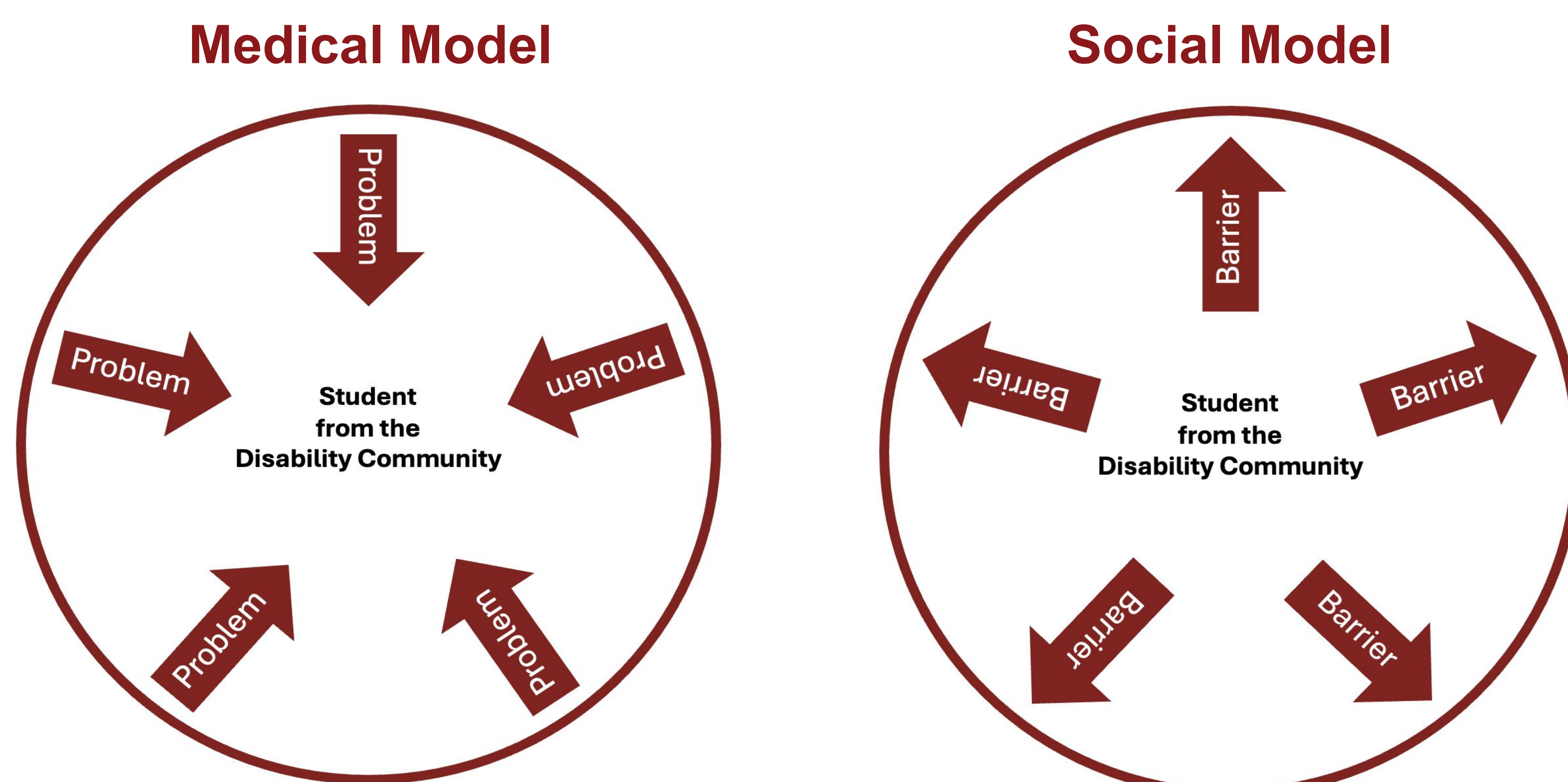


Figure 1: Medical Model: A large circle with the words “Student with Disability” in the center. This text is surrounded by 6 arrows pointing inwards with the word “problem” written on each arrow. Social Model: A large circle with the words “Student with Disability” in the center. The text is surrounded by 6 arrows pointing outwards with the term “Barrier” written on each arrow. Figure is adapted from Health Ability Passport, by the Royal College of Nursing, 2023 (<https://www.rcn.org.uk/Get-Help/Member-support-services/Peer-support-services/Health-Ability-Passport>). In the public domain.

The **Medical Model of Disability** understands limitations as coming from within the person themselves. There is an emphasis on remediation and rehabilitation to solve problems by changing the person factors. The **Social Model of Disability** takes the approach that Disability is socially constructed. There is an emphasis on external factors to remove the barriers (Holler et. al., 2021). Educators have flexibility in creating classroom culture, course composition, and assessments. Therefore, there is opportunity to remove and/or decrease the external barriers felt by occupational therapy students from the Disability Community.

Exploring Access Creation

Classroom Culture	Addressing Access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect that there will be students from the Disability Community in your classes and FW placements • Invite OTs from the Disability Community as class speakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible tools: i.e. Braille or electric goniometers • Audio describe images in presentations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use language that incorporates OTs as being a part of the Disability Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore relaxed classrooms that promote movement

Let’s Apply the Social Model to these Scenarios

Using the Social Model of Disability, what ideas do you have to increase access for the following OT students?

Tyson	Adrienne	Stefon
An OT student with a learning disability working to prepare for planning and scheduling his first semester of graduate school education	An OT student with low vision/ blindness working to complete the goniometry module	An OT student with a unilateral congenital limb difference at R shoulder level working on transfers in a Level II FW placement in acute care

Who are other students you have had, or could imagine having, and what are ways to increase access for them? Submit your suggestions on our linktree QR code under “Resources and References”

Student Experiences

- Complicated experiences navigating accommodations
- Students felt they were working extra hard to keep up with coursework (Velde et al., 2005)
- A lot of pressure was felt by the students to “work around it” or figure out how to make their education work for them (Velde et al., 2005)
- Students experienced delayed access to course work via required modifications (Guitard et al., 2010)
- Marginalized students felt tokenized by being the “first” or the “only” one in their program (Beagan et al., 2022)
- Students felt isolated in their experience (Beagan et al., 2022)
- Students felt worn down in the repetitiveness of asking for their needs to be met (Beagan, et al., 2022)
- Students felt an expectation of incompetence from their educators (Beagan et al., 2022)

Implications

- The unique perspective of OT practitioners who are part of the Disability Community is a tremendous asset to our professional community (Velde, et al., 2005; Vogel et al., 2022)
- OTs from the Disability Community have first hand experience of accommodations and adaptations that are immensely impactful for our clients (Vogel et al., 2022)

References and Resources



Scan the above QR code for:

- Audio description of poster content
- Scenario submissions
- Disability resources
- References

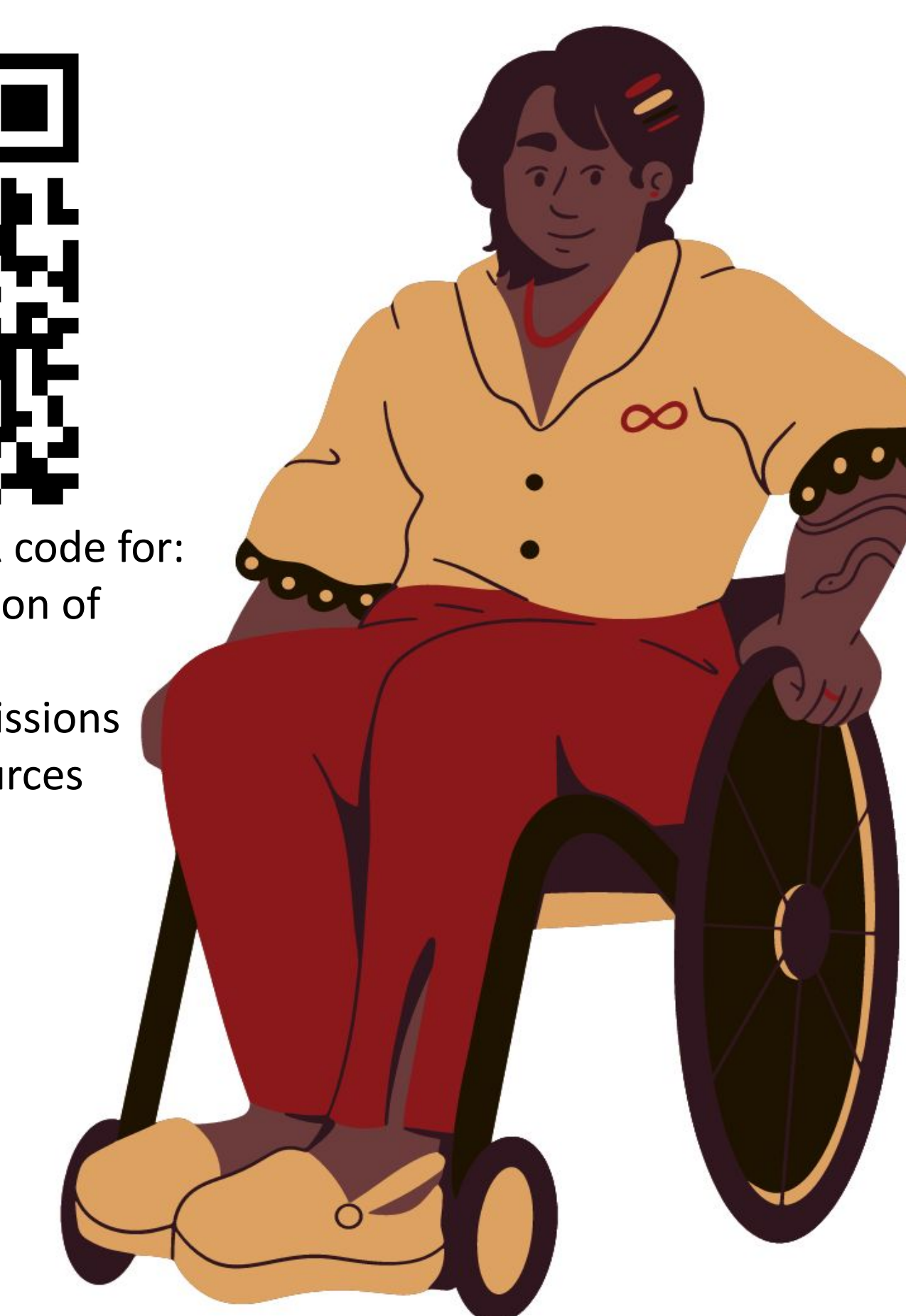


Image 2: Pop art work of an adult femme presenting person using a wheelchair with red pants and a yellow shirt.

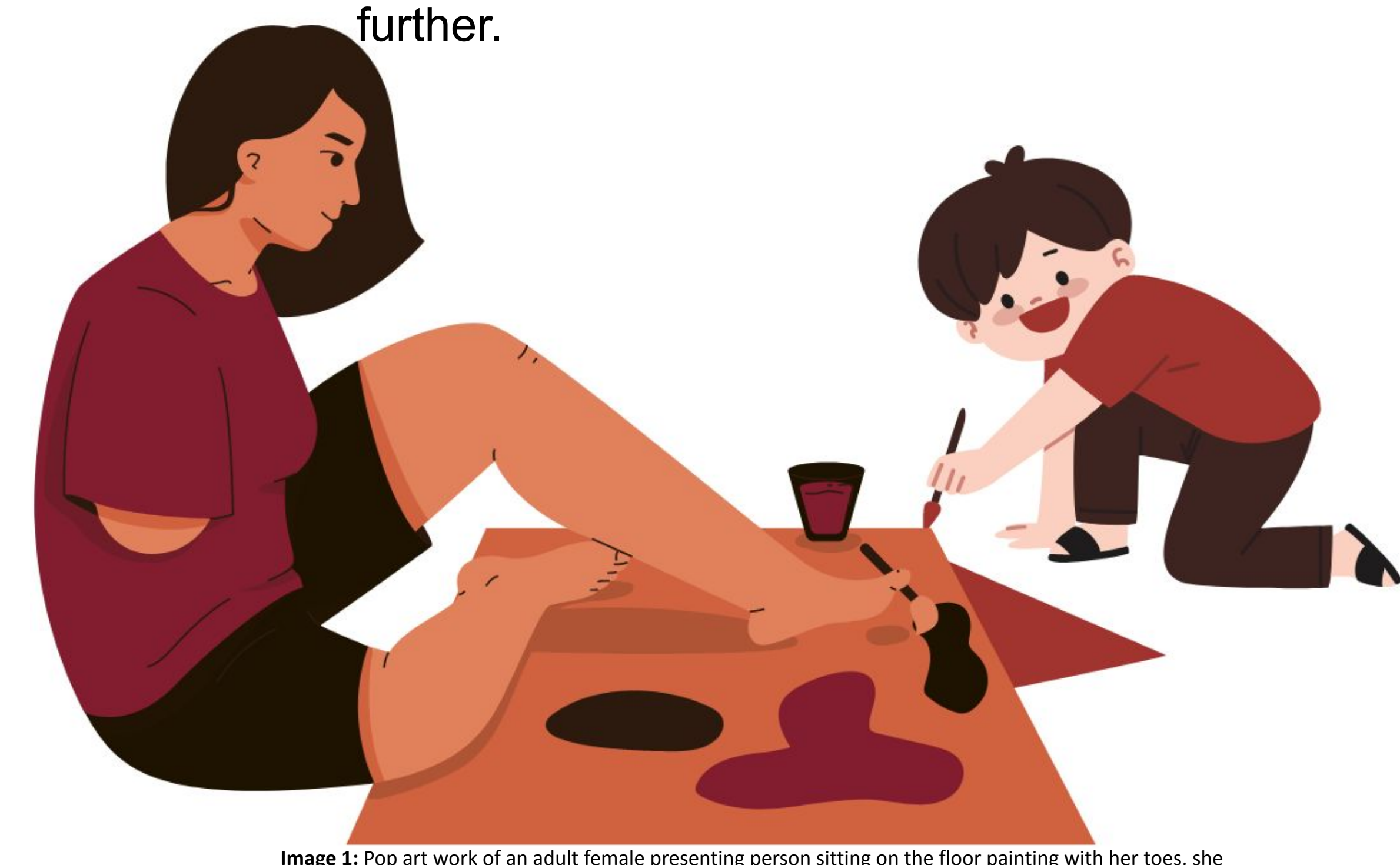


Image 1: Pop art work of an adult femme presenting person sitting on the floor painting with her toes, she paints with a child across from her on paper on the floor, she has a bilateral upper limb difference. The child is kneeling on one leg and painting on paper with left arm.