

Theorising occupational science in occupational therapy: Learning from the design of Occupation-based community development campaigns

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Introduction: Occupation-based Community Development (ObCD) is a framework designed to guide occupational therapists' reasoning, particularly in community development settings. It proposes the use of critical perspectives and orients practice towards Human Development (Nussbaum, 2011), facilitating participation for people who are part of marginalised groups. In working with groups and communities, the framework proposes four iterative phases that require issues of power to be analysed and addressed.

Objective: To discuss how the use of politically focused occupational science constructs contributes to ongoing theorisation through generating practice-based evidence.

Approach: Final year occupational therapy students at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, contribute, through service learning, to working with marginalised groups of people in under-resourced communities. Students, placed at various service learning placements, facilitate change processes in the form of campaigns. Campaigns facilitated over the past five years were analysed to identify how occupational science constructs informed the occupational therapy process.

Findings: Case narratives illustrate how politically-focused occupational science constructs are applied as an analytic tool, offering further understanding into how social conditions influence the way that human occupation unfolds and may be facilitated in context. These descriptions also outline key aspects of the campaigns, thus explaining the reasoning processes applied and generated during the design phase.

Conclusion: The paper shows that the design of occupational therapy interventions, informed by politically focused occupational science constructs, offers a critical space for knowledge generation within occupational science. This contributes to deepening occupational therapy practice for social change.