

WORLD FEDERATION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS' CONGRESS
2018

BUILDING GLOBALLY RELEVANT
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FROM THE
STRENGTH OF OUR DIVERSITY

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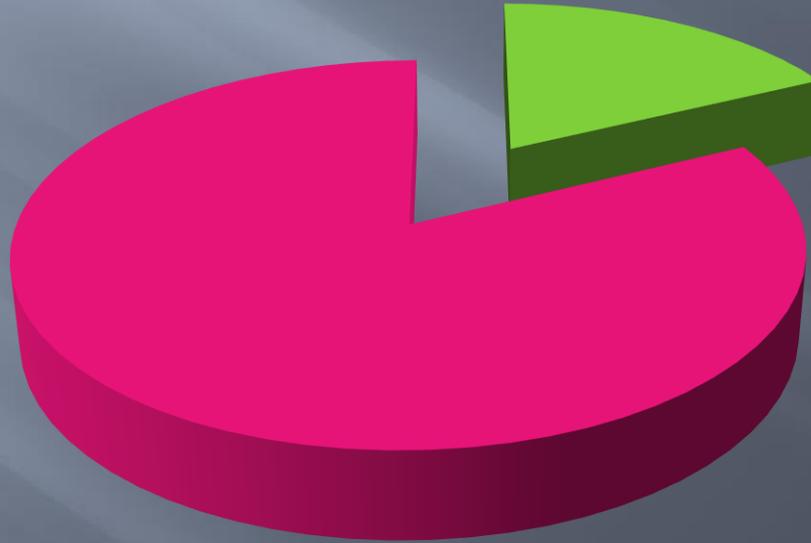
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World Federation of Occupational Therapists: 2018 Congress Theme

“Connected in diversity;
Positioned for impact”

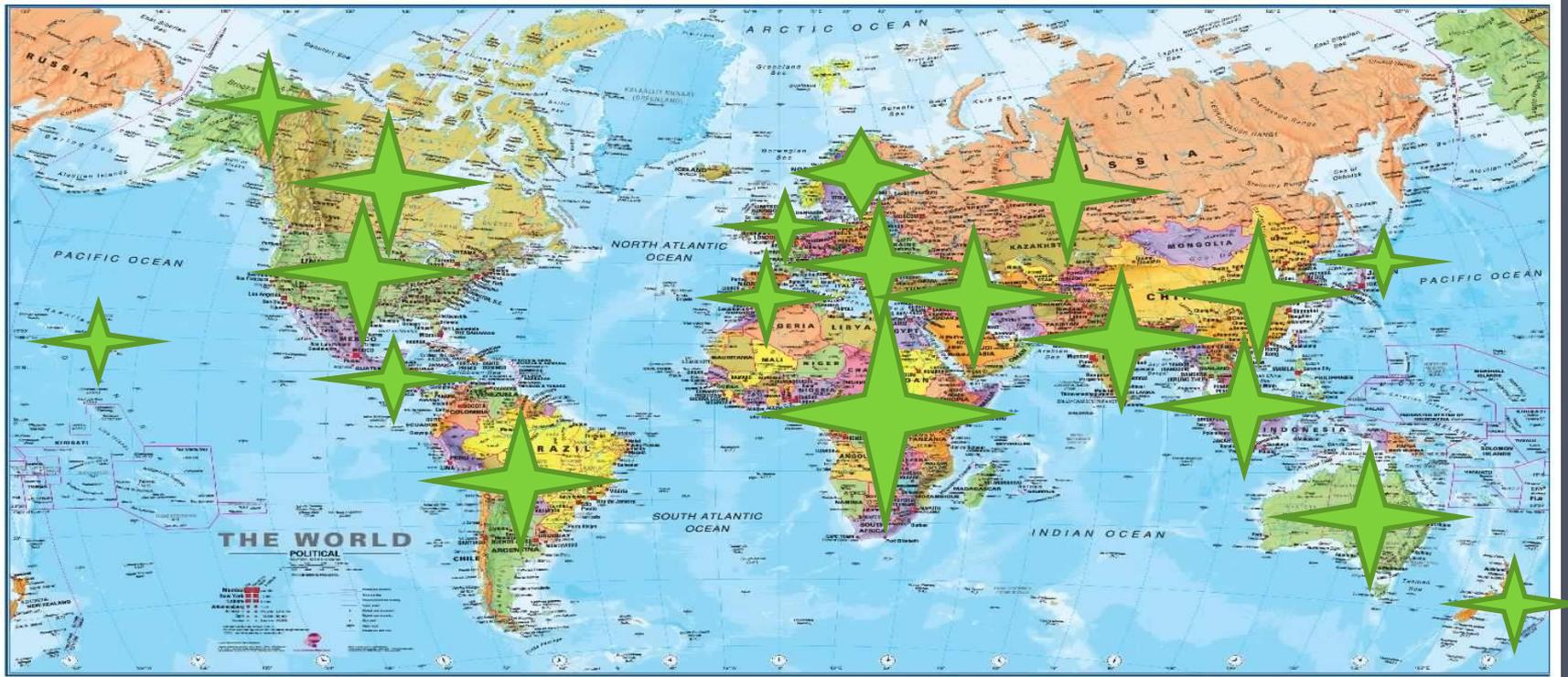
“Western”/ “Northern” world
< 20% of global population

"West"/ rest





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All theories are inevitably value-laden,
because theorists formulate their ideas
within specific social, political and
historical contexts

(Collins, 1991; Maslow, 1987; Said, 1979, Young, 1990)

Majority of research concerning disability derives from urban regions of Western Europe and North America

yet

- ❑ >80% of disabled people live in Global South;
- ❑ Of whom most live in rural areas;
- ❑ High proportion endure severe poverty

Occupational science's research participants

Predominantly:

- ▣ Adult
- ▣ Middle class
- ▣ Non-disabled
- ▣ White
- ▣ Anglophone
- ▣ Women
- ▣ Residing in “Western” world

“Northern theory”

Embeds the viewpoints,
perspectives and problems of
Northern Europe & North
America’s urban societies



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Occupational therapy's theorists:

Primarily:

- ▣ well-educated,
- ▣ urban,
- ▣ middle class,
- ▣ middle aged,
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- ▣ White,
- ▣ Anglophones,
- ▣ Judeo-Christian backgrounds

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=

A minority
population within
the minority
world!

When dominant groups fail to recognize their perspectives *as perspectives* they view their experiences, values & perspectives:

- as universal
- as neutral and objective

Ideology

“a system of ideas, beliefs and assumptions that operates below one’s level of conscious awareness and, by being taken for granted, appears to constitute normal common sense”

(Hammell, 2006, p. 205)

Neoliberalism

a political ideology, a mode of governance and an approach to policy that aims “to advance the market as the most efficient mechanism for organizing virtually all aspects of human & social life”

(Esposito & Perez, 2014, p. 418)

The neoliberal agenda

- ▣ Cut taxes
- ▣ Reduce government spending on health & social care
- ▣ Slash regulations
- ▣ Foster a social, legal & political environment favourable to private business

Neoliberal values

- ▣ Individualism
- ▣ Individual freedom & self-interest
- ▣ Individual choice & responsibility
- ▣ Independence & self-reliance
- ▣ People are to blame for their ill-health & social problems
- ▣ “Productivism” - people are worth what they produce

“it is only when we understand that social inequalities are human creations designed to benefit a few that we can see the possibilities for challenging inequality”

(Pease, 2010, p. 14)

Neoliberalism “has become incorporated into the common-sense way we interpret, live in and understand the world”

(Harvey, 2006, p. 145)

Neoliberal ideology

Independence is admirable,
aspirational and universally
valued!

Interdependence

Valued by majority of global population who

- ▣ Value fulfilment of responsibilities to others
- ▣ Do not devalue dependence
- ▣ For whom “independence” is an alien concept

“The aim of the most important occupations
is interdependence”

(Martín, et al., 2015, p. 86)

“All occupations are divisible into
3 categories”

Activities of daily living, work, play

or

Self-care, productivity, leisure

3 occupational categories

Lack supportive evidence,
inapplicable across the life-span,
devoid of context, simplistic,
individualistic, exclusionary, value-
laden, culturally-specific, artificially
restrictive & culturally unsafe

**“All occupations are divisible into
3 categories”**

Examining the evidence

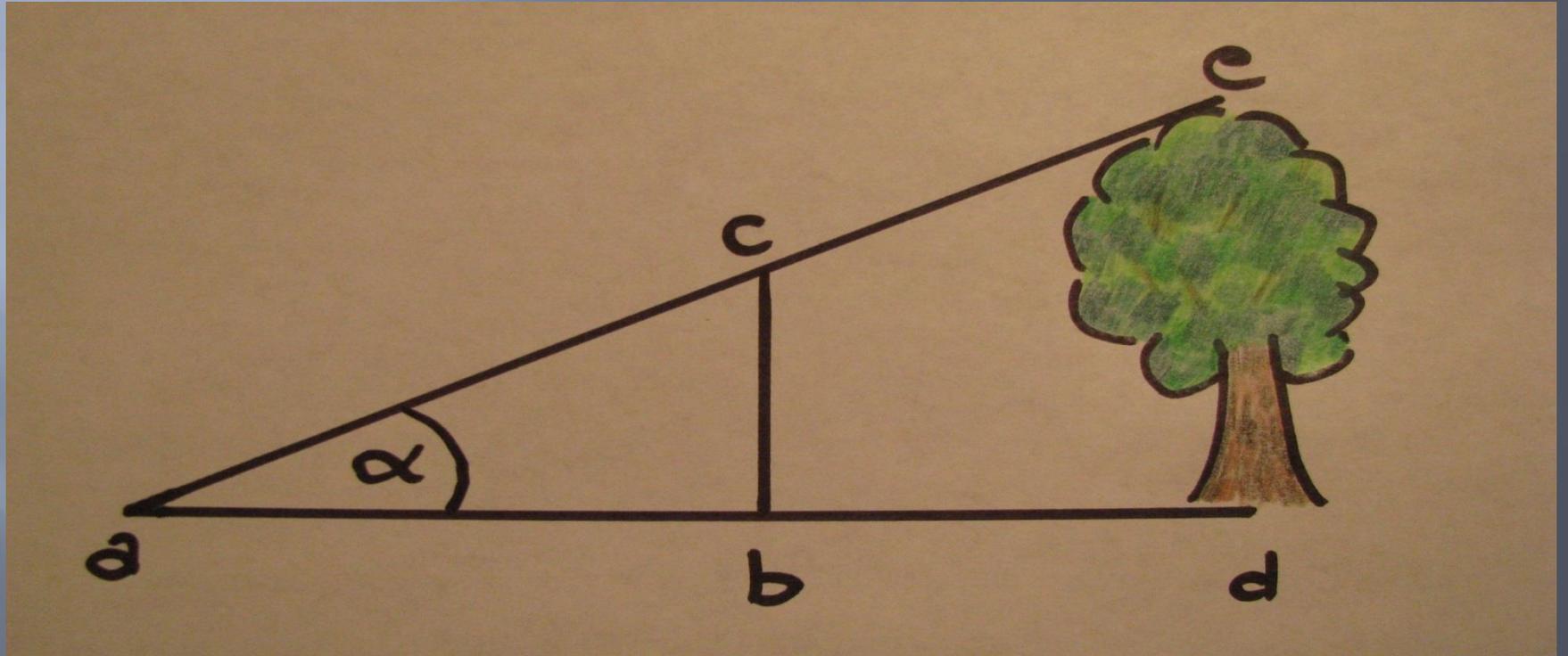
Occupational therapists assert

Individuals “choose, shape
and orchestrate their
everyday occupations”

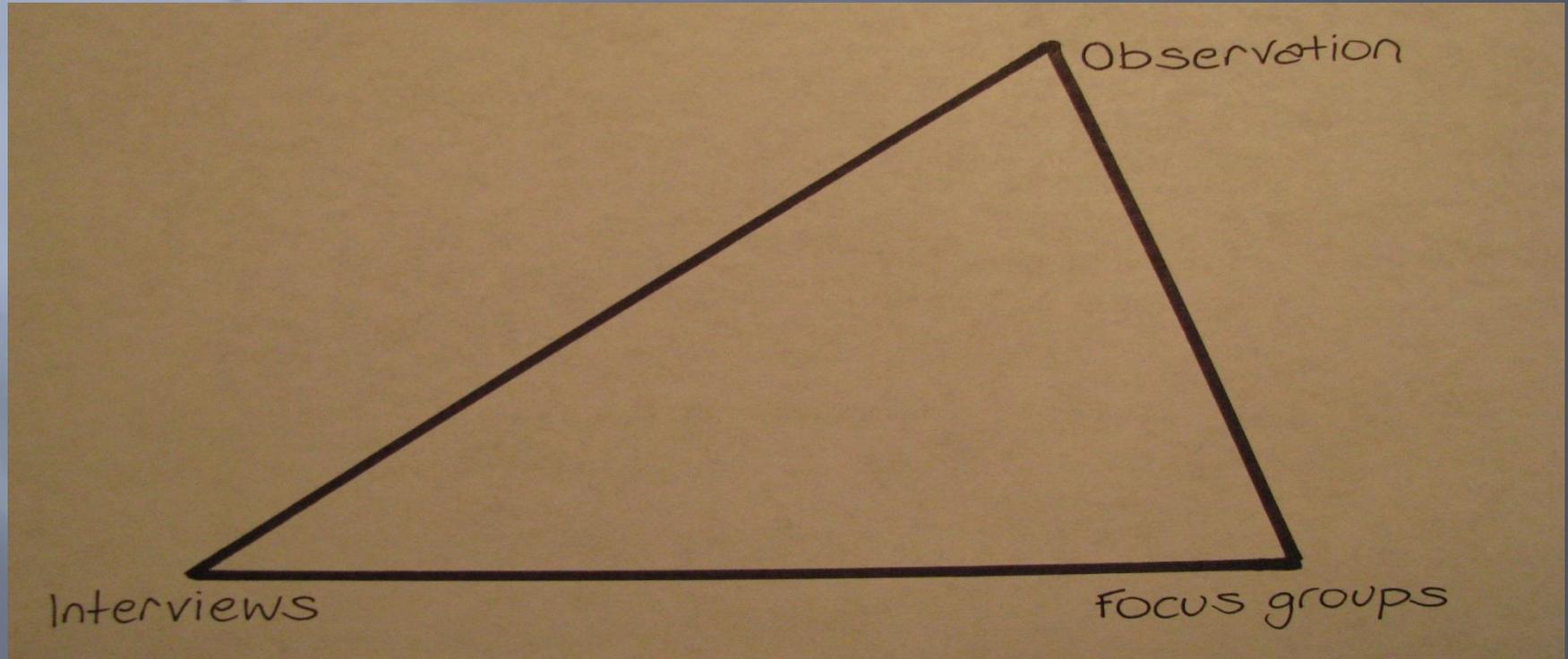
Research evidence shows:

- ▣ Opportunities to choose are unequally distributed
- ▣ Occupations may be co-opted, coerced, compelled
- ▣ Choices may be constrained by structural inequities
- ▣ Choices are made within cultural “templates”

Triangulation: geometry

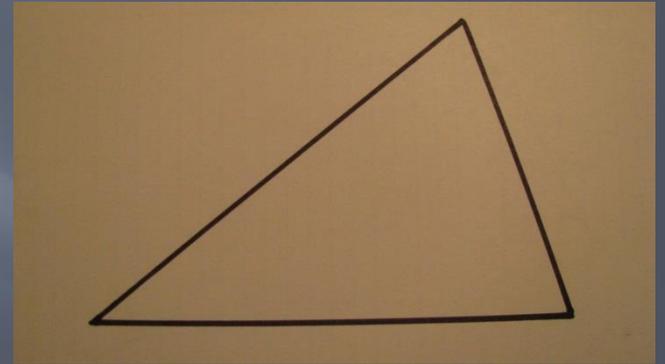


Triangulation: qualitative research methods



Triangulation of Occupational Therapy Theory

Incorporating multiple perspectives from our diverse knowledges



Triangulation of occupational therapy theory from our diverse perspectives

- ▣ Value of occupations that contribute & connect

Triangulation of occupational therapy theory from our diverse perspectives

- ▣ Value of occupations that contribute & connect
- ▣ Value of occupations that foster balance with the natural world

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- ▣ Value of occupations that uphold religious & cultural traditions

Triangulation of occupational therapy theory from our diverse perspectives

- ▣ Value of occupations that contribute & connect
- ▣ Value of occupations that foster balance with the natural world
- ▣ Value to well-being of occupations through which the land is given care
- ▣ Value of occupations that uphold religious & cultural traditions
- ▣ Value of occupations that honour ancestors

What is missing?

- ▣ survival occupations

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- ▣ occupations that contribute to the care & well-being of families & communities

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- ▣ **occupations that strengthen social roles**

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- ▣ **occupations or co-occupations that are shared or collaborative or that foster interdependence**

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- ▣ occupations undertaken to honour ancestors, spiritual traditions and the natural world

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- ▣ occupations undertaken to honour ancestors, spiritual traditions & the natural world
- ▣ **occupations that are motivated by a desire to care for the land and oceans**

What we regard as “common” sense is not common to everyone, but unique, partial and culturally-situated.

Presenting a dominant group's perspectives as universally valid for everyone is an assertion of colonial power

“ the [occupational therapy] profession’s ethnocentricity appears remarkably resilient as Western assumptions, values, and worldviews are perpetuated in largely subtle and silent ways”.

(Gerlach, 2012, p.156)



Only the privileged can indulge in theory that minimizes oppressive economic, cultural, religious, social, political, legal and policy constraints on people's lives

(Hammell, 2011; Hammell & Iwama; 2012)

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986)

“Decolonising the mind”

Cultural humility

(Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998)

- ▣ Developing critical consciousness of our own assumptions, beliefs, values & biases;
- ▣ Understanding how our own perspectives may differ from those of other people;
- ▣ Acknowledging the unearned advantages, privileges & power that derive from multiple dimensions of our own particular social position.

The contemporary history of occupational therapy
“has witnessed the North and the West
being positioned or positioning
themselves both as the source of
inspiration and provider of guidance or
assistance for the South and the East”

(Galheigo, 2011, p.65)

What is occupational therapy's contribution to society?

“enabling the right to engage in meaningful, purposeful occupations, irrespective of medical diagnosis, social stigma or prejudice”

(WFOT, 2014, emphasis added).

WFOT: position statements

“All persons...by virtue of being human, have the right to occupational opportunities necessary to meet human needs, access human rights, and maintain health” (WFOT, 2012)

“The *human right to occupation* ...is ensured by equitable opportunities for participation in occupation, regardless of difference

(WFOT, 2006, emphasis added)

“Capabilities”

People’s *opportunities* to do
what they have the *abilities* to do

(Sen, 1999, 2005)

The international occupational therapy profession *can* be positioned to have a relevant & significant global impact

- ▣ by building from the strength that is our diversity,
- ▣ by working to ensure that all people have the *capabilities* to engage in occupations that contribute to their own well-being & the well-being of their communities

Thank you!

Special thanks to:

- ▣ WFOT 2018 Organising committee
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- ▣ Dr Alison Gerlach, University of Northern British Columbia