



Exploring the Push and Pull of the Dark Side of Occupation

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Introductions

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Aims:

- Considering a broader understanding of occupation
- Looking at how and why dark occupations might become part of lives
- Exploring how you might use the information dark occupations provide



Lets introduce ourselves and
discover our personal aims
for the session...





So, what is the dark side of occupation?

- The dark side of occupation is a concept in its relative infancy.
- It challenges occupational therapy to think beyond its traditional focus on health and wellbeing (Kiepek & Magalhaes, 2011).
- Occupation must be viewed as many-sided and multifaceted – with recognition that there may be a dark side to occupation (Twinley & Addidle, 2012).
- Occupations may not always be deemed prosocial, healthy or productive – but may still have meaning and purpose (Twinley, 2013; 2017).

What kind
of
occupations
do *you*
consider to
have a dark
side?



The dark side

- Arguably, some occupations may not promote health or wellbeing, which is seen as harmful, disruptive and therefore ‘antisocial’.
- Occupations with a dark side have been under-explored and are poorly understood, rather than being ‘dark’ *per se* (Twinley, 2017).
- The definition of occupation needs to include aspects of doing that are *not* deemed as prosocial, healthy or productive, including non-consensual or deviant sexual acts, drug misuse, alcohol misuse, violence and all other criminal activity (Twinley & Addidle, 2012).
- These occupations may hold meaning for people that engage in them and might even be done for the purpose of relaxation, creativity, celebration and entertainment (Ferrell *et al.* 2008).
- They can still meet the criteria of occupation, in that they give meaning to life; are important determinants of health, well-being and justice; organize behaviour; develop and change over a lifetime; shape and are shaped by environments and have therapeutic potential (Kiepek & Magalhaes, 2011).




Occupations could be one of, or a combination of, the following: anti-social; criminal; deviant; violent; disruptive; harmful; unproductive; non-health-giving; non-health-promoting; addictive and politically, socially, religiously or culturally extreme. Occupations could, to the individual performing them, still be any combination of the following: meaningful, purposeful, creative, engaging, relaxing, enjoyable, entertaining, that can provide a sense of wellbeing and even that are occupational in the sense of being an individual's paid or unpaid work.



What are the **implications** of engagement in these occupations on:

- The individual
- Their family or friends
- Their community
- The wider society



'A matter of degree'

Health,
wellbeing
and personal
productivity

Socio/cultural
expectations
and the
impact on
others

Values and
ethics

So, what is it
that makes an
occupation
appear to have
a dark side?

THE PUSH AND PULL

How much is opportunity, choice and control a feature?

What draws a person towards engagement

OCCUPATION

What pushes a person to engage

Lets take the example **addictions/impulse control disorders** from Keipek and Magalhaes (2011)

Choose **ONE** and consider what **external forces** push the individual towards the occupation and what **internal features** encourage their engagement.

Think about the individuals motivating drivers, the societal pressures, the enablers and the barriers to the occupation.

How much of it is **internally** and **externally** driven?

Pathological gambling	Sexual addiction
Internet disorders	Compulsive shopping
Substance abuse	Eating disorders
Workaholism	Exercise addiction



- For some people, the ‘call of the occupation’ is strong (Reed, Hocking & Smythe, 2010).
- Choice is often central to motivation towards an occupation (Abrahams, 2008; Otsuka, 2008; Galvaan, 2015)
- However, sometimes occupational choice is limited by opportunity, self belief or coercion (WFOT, 2006; Watson, 2011; Galvaan 2012; 2015).
- Sometimes the focus on the occupation prevents an understanding of this ‘push and pull’ dynamic.
- Perceived choice is not the same as *real* choice.

Lets explore:

Same
occupation,
different push
and pull





PROSTITUTION is defined as the practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment (Oxford English Dictionary).

However, there is widespread recognition that the experience of ‘prostitution’ is varied (Hope Ditmore, 2010; Watson, 2011).

Meet these individuals, who are all exchanging sex for something else. What shapes their experience and what is their ‘push and pull.’

What did you discover?

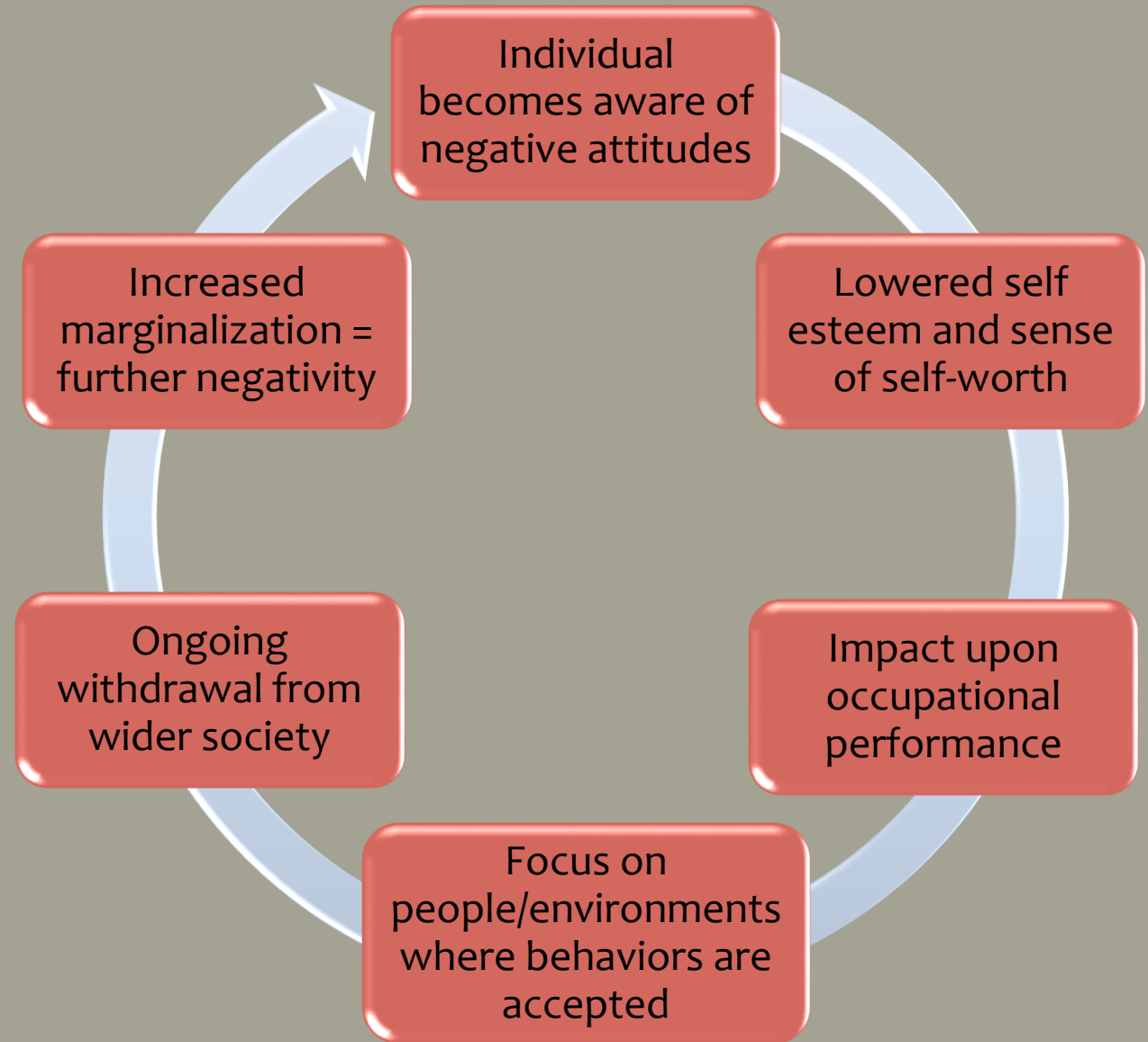


My concern

- Assumptions are often made about the levels of **choice** and **control** people have over their behaviours.
- Even where people have options, they may not always see them or be able to utilise them.
- This leads to **blame** for behaviours, and the challenge they create for others.
- This often undermines public **empathy** for people who engage in occupations with a dark side.



- External responses to the individual's choice of occupation can have wide reaching implications.
- This may be part of the dynamic which excludes certain groups (actively or passively) from therapy, and makes them hard-to-reach.
- We need to consider how we perceive people on the basis of their occupational 'choices' AND make our therapies inclusive and accessible.





‘Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is’

(Jung, 1938, p.131).

Things which may have an apparent 'dark side,' and may be born of destructive feelings and experiences, can have purpose and meaning we may not always see.

Understanding the occupation means understanding its specific meaning for the individual.

WARNING

**This clip contains
strong language**

‘We will all work with people who do things that we might not approve of; this does not mean we can ignore these occupations and what they mean to the person doing them’ (Twinley, 2017).



With that in mind:

- Don't be frightened to look at the dark side – what does it tell you about the individual?
- You don't have to like an occupation to acknowledge it and work with it.
- *Use* the understanding the dark can give and help people to understand their occupational lives better, explore alternative options or minimise harm.

Think about your own workplaces: what occupations do you shy away from? How might you better understand those clients? How might this influence your relationship and therapy?

We cannot be truly **holistic, client-centred** and **occupation-focussed** without acknowledging a broad range of occupations as experienced by a broad range of individuals.

If we think about occupation as something positive, productive and health-giving, we are **neglecting** the self-damaging, deviant or disrupted (Pierce, 2012).

By widening and deepening our understanding of occupations we can make our profession more **socially relevant** (Pierce, 2012) and **personally inclusive to more people** (Twinley & Addidle, 2012)





Thank you for listening.
Please feel free to get in touch on
h.c.hart@tees.ac.uk or explore
further at [#thedarksideofoccupation](https://twitter.com/thedarksideofoccupation)

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