

Critical practice in critical times: Forging relationships between critical theory and socially responsive occupational therapy

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WFOT Congress 2018

Introductions



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Building an International
Network for Critical
Perspectives in
Occupational Science and
Therapy



Debbie
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Key Objectives

- Describe the difference between critique and criticism in relation to theories and practices of occupation.
- Describe the common elements that characterize critical theoretical perspectives.
- Examine how the use of critical perspectives is advantageous for occupation-focused practice, education, and scholarship.
- Identify 1-2 critical theorists/critical theories and their relevance for socially responsive occupational therapy.
- Develop international contacts with other practitioners, scholars, and educators who are interested in exploring and incorporating critical theoretical perspectives into their work.

Agenda

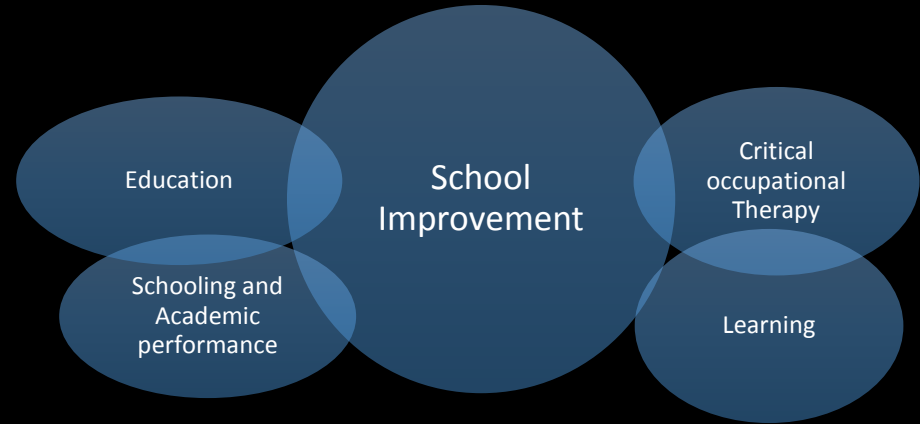
- Overview of key premises of 'critical theoretical perspectives' (6 min)
- Example 1: Schools Improvement Initiative (5 min)
- Example 2: Possibilities and Boundaries in Long-term Unemployment (5 min)
- Glasses activity: "Trying on" different perspectives (15 min)
- Break (10 min)
- Table activity: Getting to know 3 theoretical perspectives (30 min)
- Q&A/Wrap up: Where do we go from here? (15 min)



 **OVERVIEW OF CRITICAL
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

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Example 1: Galvaan and Silbert (2017) Schools Improvement Initiative



- Landscape of higher education

(Galvaan, Gretschel and Peters, 2015)

Example 2:
Critically-
informed
approach

Interdisciplinary
collaborations
and community-
university
partnerships



OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS



Ummangaliso




Intshayelelo

Sivuyiseni

Example 1: Critical theoretical perspective - Decoloniality (Maldonado-Torres 2007:243)

Coloniality	Colonialism	Decoloniality
Coloniality refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism.	Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire.	Decoloniality seeks to “disentangle ex-colonised parts of the world from coloniality” (Mignolo, 2011). Decolonial epistemic perspectives

- 
- A photograph of a densely populated informal settlement, likely a favela or shanty town. The buildings are small, colorful, and built on a hillside. In the background, a large mountain range is visible under a cloudy sky. A paved road runs through the settlement, with a few people walking on it. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.
- Disciplines sharing theory and practice
 - Developing programmes of actions in collaboration with community members
 - Students and community members questioning and constructing knowledge
 - Occupational choice and learning: influence of socio-political and historical conditions on everyday experiences.

Example 1: Effects of applying decolonial perspective

Shift from

- medicalised
- Individualist interpretations of humans in context

Towards

- Seeing the flawed logic of 'progress' and development
- Recognition of how hierarchies of oppression perpetuates poverty and inequality

Example 1: Challenges taking up decolonial perspective

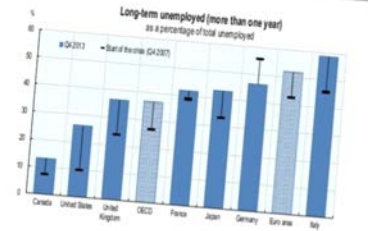
- Risking to produce knowledge as collective(s) and communities rather than only individuals
- Recognising oppression and privileged positions of knowing and being in everyday life



Example 2: Governmentality theory

Possibilities and Boundaries in the Socio-political Shaping of Long-term Unemployment

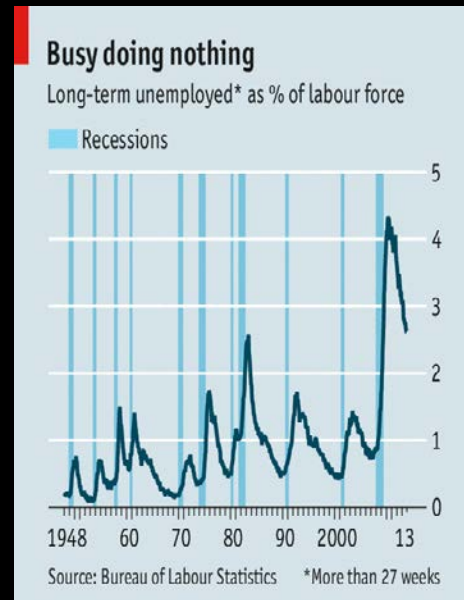
Long-term unemployment remains persistently high.



D. Laliberte Rudman, R. Aldrich, S. Huot, L. Magãlhaes, in partnership with Goodwill Industries

Example 2: Neoliberal understanding of long-term unemployment

- Individualize ‘problem’ of, and solutions for, long-term unemployment
 - individual deficiencies, activation and ‘employability’
 - responsabilizing ethos justifies surveillance and benefit restrictions
- Homogenize the ‘long-term unemployed’
 - obscure differences in relation to age, immigrant status, criminal history, gender, etc.
- Emphasis on ‘work first’



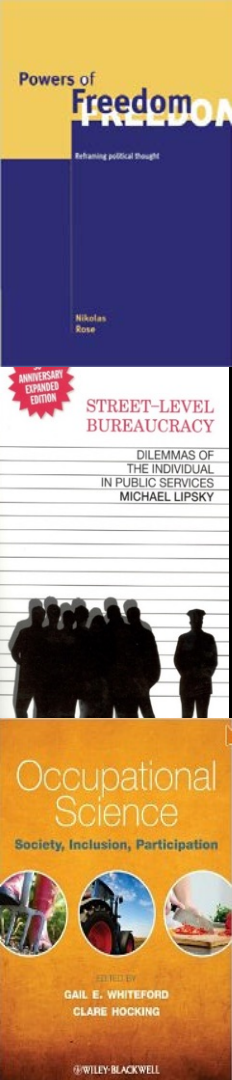
Example 2: Critical theoretical perspective – Governmentality (Rose et al., 2006)

“To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of actions of others” (Foucault, 1982)

- Possibilities for subjectivity and occupation

“As soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and very possible”

(Foucault, 1988, p.156)



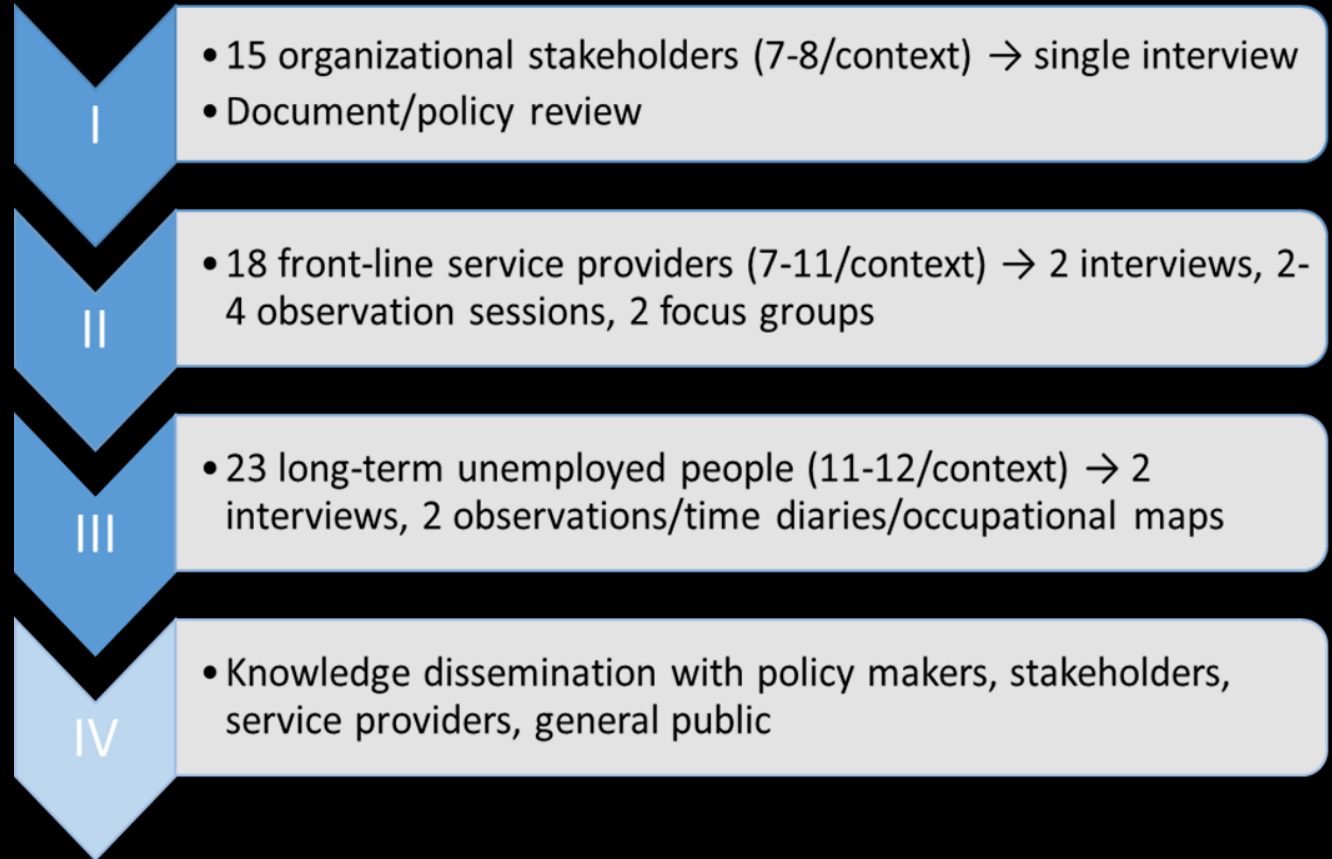
Example 2: Critically-Informed Methodology

- Collaborative ethnography (Lassiter & Campbell, 2010)

- Ongoing input from community-based partners (Goodwill Industries)

- Multiple levels of investigation and approaches

- Policy, discourse, service provision, everyday lives



Example 2: Effects of applying governmentality theory

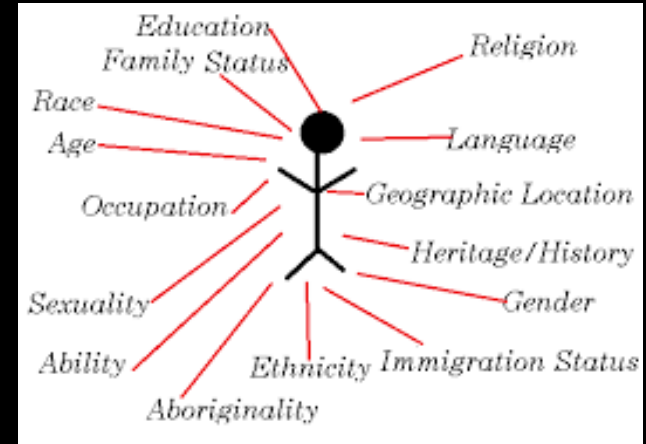
- **Revealed** contradictions between ‘individualizing’ problem frames/solutions and complexities of people’s occupational lives
 - e.g. ‘activated but stuck’ (Laliberte Rudman & Aldrich, 2016)
- **Challenged** failure to attend to/account for people as occupational beings
 - e.g. narrow view of people as entrepreneurial subjects who employ an economic rationale to guide self-governance (Rose, 1999)
- **Captured** range of occupations people engage in enables a counter-discourse to dominant constructions of ‘dependency’ and inactivity
 - e.g. resource-seeking occupations (Aldrich, Dickie & Laliberte Rudman, 2017)

Example 2: Challenges taking up governmentality perspective in research

- Identifying and critiquing what is taken-for-granted
- Critiquing the uptake of discourse and seeing how discourse can be at odds with people's actions/intents

Exercise: Turning the critical glasses & gaze inward

- You interpret your world in relation to your intersecting social identities, positioning within society, lived experiences, and knowledge
- Wearing critical glasses requires engaging in an ongoing process of critical reflexivity - that is, turning the lens inward – about intersectionality (Gerlach, 2015)



Exercise: Turning the critical glasses & gaze outward

Passage 1

“Many times I felt victimised by people accusing my ancestors of enslaving peoples. What I have come to realise from this block is that maybe I am not as exempt as I would like to be. I too have benefited from white privilege. The only reason that I have been able to go to university was because of a distant relative leaving my mother some money, but this too is white privilege, the fact that my parents have been raised with the education and ability to survive whilst saving money, even when things were tight never having to go into survival mode the way that the residents of Site B have had to.”

Passage 2

“You know you get yourself worked up for the reviews, right and trying...You have to get the bank statement...all this paperwork, you have to put together. Job search papers and she didn't even really look at them. So it made me start thinking, well, why am I bothering? Like, why I am I even keeping track of this...It gets depressing. I've got five folders just from the last ... year of jobs I've applied for...And then I read it and think it's not worth doing, there's no sense beating your head against the wall...So...there's this disconnect, like she [the welfare worker] really doesn't know me, they don't know me, you know [I'm] just a number...”

Exercise: Turning the critical glasses & gaze outward - Decoloniality

- **Coloniality**

- Coloniality of knowledge, being and power maintains asymmetric power relations and social inequalities (Quijano, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011)
- Questioning euro-American knowledges and ways of knowing as being universal
- Questioning the way that extraordinary events are normalised as being part of the experiences of some people



Exercise: Turning the critical glasses & gaze outward - Governmentality

- **Governing**

- Enacted by various agencies and authorities
- “Insertion of a certain way of thinking and doing within the fabric of everyday life” (Kendall & Wickham, 2004, p. 143)
- Aim is to shape everyday conduct

- **Subjectivity**

- Who people should strive to be as individuals and as parts of collectives



Exercise: Turning the critical glasses & gaze outward

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Exercise: Turning the critical glasses & gaze
outward

Reflections/Questions?

Exploring how critical theoretical perspectives can enhance your practice

	What are some of the key elements of this perspective?	What does this perspective make visible?	How can this perspective enhance your current/future projects?	What challenges do you anticipate in using this perspective?
Decolonial theory				
Feminist theory				
Governmentality theory				

Worksheet developed for Aldrich et al. 2018 WFOT in-congress workshop: Critical practice in critical times: Forging relationships between critical theory and socially responsive occupational therapy

Exercise: Getting to know 3 critical perspectives

What are some of the key elements of this perspective?

- How does this theory apply to the work you do, whether as practitioners, educators, or scholars, in relation to the applied socially responsive understanding of occupation and occupational therapy?

Exercise: Getting to know 3 critical perspectives

What does this perspective make visible?

- Use the outline of the theory to examine some of features of your work.
- Discuss what it might mean to apply the broad principles of these theories to your work.
- Can you identify limitations, gaps in knowledge or differences in perspective that may need further exploration?

Exercise: Getting to know 3 critical perspectives

How can this perspective enhance your current/future projects?

- What difference might it make to incorporate these theories into research design, education, or the formulation of practice?
- How might the perspectives be used in combination to examine socially responsive practice or understandings of occupation?
- What else is needed to make these critical perspectives useful to you?

Exercise: Getting to know 3 critical perspectives

What challenges do you anticipate in using this perspective?

- Do you see challenges or opportunities for using these perspectives in making your own work socially responsive, and how do you think those challenges might be addressed?
- What changes might you need or could you make?
- What objectives do you foresee being able to identify and how would you know you have achieved them?

Q&A

Wrap-Up

Where do we go from here?

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