

Special Issue: Occupational science and the politics of knowledge: Towards resistance and dialogue for social transformation [Guest editorial]

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Editorial

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Occupation has been defined in many ways in occupational science, but perhaps the key aspect of the dimensions of doing, being, becoming, and belonging (Wilcock & Hocking, 2025) is the experiences: feeling and responding, negotiating and navigating the variety of environments and contexts encountered in everyday life. From a reflective stance, these dimensions connect the transactions of occupation across time, space, history, ~~people~~, and economic and political landscapes ~~that shape and are determining and shaping by~~ what people can or cannot do in their contexts (Laliberte Rudman, 2010). In this issue of the *Journal of Occupational Science*, Lilian Magalhães explores conciliatory occupations, critically examining collective practices through the Latin American epistemologies of *sentipensar* (*think-feeling*) and *corazonar* (*with heart*) ~~to evoke evoking~~ a Freirean ~~evocation~~ ~~sense~~ of hope through conscientization (Magalhães, 2025). These directions attend to a ~~sense~~ ~~of a~~ plural science ~~which is~~ based in natural tools, ~~and the uses of~~ experience and feeling, a ~~sensitive and exploratory~~ ~~to develop an expansive~~ awareness of the everyday, ~~resistant and~~ ~~expansive rather than reductive.~~ Ultimately, ~~Magalhaes (2025),~~ calls for occupational

science to embrace dialogue and hope as tools for building inclusive, respectful, and solidaristic communities. (Magalhaes, 2025).

This issue also pays tribute to Elizabeth Yerxa, featuring a compilation of contributions from around the world. For instance, Nayar (2025) narrates Dr Yerxa's pioneering vision to establish a science of human occupation. Yerxa's lifelong inquiry into what it means to be an "occupational human" and her call to address the big questions of human engagement shaped this intellectual legacy. Her writings emphasise holism, interdisciplinarity, and the pursuit of knowledge that promotes human flourishing and ethical practice. This ethical stance resonates throughout all the papers in this issue, because these in studies which collectively reinforce the urgent need for occupational science to critically engage with issues of justice, identity, and social structure, as well as the plurality of knowledge. These important ideas call for demand a mindfulness to be applied to occupation when called upon to distinguishing what is reported of occupation and how it is constructed from what is true. In this volume Many of the contributions to this issue are concerned with consider how the language of science feeds power. They examine how hegemonies use the language of science (often sciences which have been conceived in the Western tradition of cultural assumptions) to justify and rationalise the unjust. For example, To exclude or omit from institutional processes for young people all that is unmeasurable yet allows them to experience all the processes of doing, being, becoming and belonging. These dimensions of occupation are essential to building the internal narrative of an occupational identity identities, to constructing resistances and enact them, creating spaces to for belonging and aspirations to for hope (Warren & Watson, 2025; Teufelhart et al., 2025).

Cuevas-Garciuno et al. (2025) study highlights a vital truth: scientific discourse is never unbiased. When research depicts juvenile law offenders through dominant narratives, it risks reinforcing occupational injustices by pathologising identities and limiting access to

meaningful occupations. These discourses, upheld in daily practices, normalise exclusion and reinforce stigma, portraying youth as “deviant” rather than as subjects with rights and potential. Doing, being, becoming, and belonging imply a subjective phenomenological narrative. It suggests that experiences have particularities that, although similar, are ultimately not generalisable. This calls for experiences to be witnessed by those individuals who have undergone them, and also signifies that multiple truths or testimonies must coexist as representations of everyday life. “Deviancy”, or as Warren Watson says (2025, p. 3) “deviations” are consequences of experiences, for example, of institutional life (Teufelhart et al., 2025; Cuevas-Garciuno et al., 2025). Such patterns are not necessarily negative; they might reveal alternative occupational trajectories followed by individuals or which are possible in different communities. For Farias et al. (2025) ~~are clear in their dialogue that~~ the particularities of social experiences shape occupations of motherhood in ways that are personal and cannot be universalised. Klimek and Boyle (2025) develop a concept of *occupational capital* ~~as something which is also shaped by emerging from~~ the UK’s prison system and its mechanisms for rehabilitation. Occupational science must ~~face this issue of representation by adopting critical, contextually aware approaches that challenge these~~ overarching narratives ~~and develop alternative knowledge rooted in context, dignity, and justice.~~ A science of occupation cannot be limited by perspectives of doing, being, becoming and belonging that only reflect the reductive perspectives of others on the contextual richness of one’s experience. Given occupational science’s roots in pragmatism (Morrison, 2021), it might be useful to invoke a pragmatist overlooked in the discipline: WEB Du Bois (2007/1903), who developed the concept of double consciousness ~~in relation to the prevention the full experience of true identity because black Americans are always impacted by the dominance of the prevailing white culture. Double consciousness prevents the full expression of true identity because people are always impacted by the dominance of the~~

~~prevailing culture~~. This has a significance across race, class and gender perspectives and knowledge of it underpins an intersectional approach to occupation (Thomas, 2025). Rather than frame narratives that ~~might can~~ be untruthful, confining and ~~that replicating replicate~~ injustices through what they ignore (Du Bois 2007/1903), the occupational scientist's duties are clear: ~~to go beyond not to~~ merely ~~reproducing reproduce~~ the status quo ~~and but~~ promote an expansive and emancipating scholarship that encourages participation and social transformation (Thomas, 2025).

Using the experiences of the arts-based activist Gran Fury collective, which campaigned around AIDS/HIV, Mitchell and Lavalley (2025) take up this problem ~~in the scientific discourse of occupational science: that~~ of addressing the continued reassertion of ~~hegemonic power which the hegemony is able to reproduce, enabling it to continue repression. This is often through which presents sing the individual minority~~ interests of minorities as ~~different to the majority, as a potential threat threatening to the to the majority's more economic and social significant interests of stability and the economy~~. This monolithic approach belies the plurality of occupations which Farias et al. (2025) address. ~~Amidst~~, diverse realities and everyday experiences ~~which Farias et al. (2025) address, whereas, only~~ an intersectional approach to occupation can address class, status, and social categories, which are always moving. ~~Farias et al. (2025) Rather than dismissing earlier contributions, the paper advocates~~ for dialogue and methodological diversity to advance occupational science towards more inclusive and nuanced understandings of people's lives.

Two studies were conducted in contexts marked by inequality, racism, and poverty in Brazil. In the first study, Santos et al. (2025) explore how newly qualified occupational therapists' education and practice are shaped by a global dialogue but are also influenced by their local sociopolitical realities of inequality, racism, violence, and poverty. They suggest

that a critical and contextualised approach to occupational injustice should take account of the sociocultural contexts of professional practice. It also calls for building bridges between global theory and sociopolitical realities. In the second study, [Miranda et al. \(2025\)](#) amplify the voices of Black women living in peripheral communities, revealing how intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class shape and constrain their everyday lives. Both contributions challenge the discipline to move beyond abstract theorisation and embrace intersectional, culturally responsive frameworks that confront systemic inequities and promote occupational justice as a lived, actionable commitment.

In its brief history, occupational science has rapidly developed as an exploration of human occupation. It has opened doors on a huge plurality, challenging categorisations and universal definitions, but perhaps, and more exciting, to explore, experience, and to witness in the spirit of its founders' interests in human flourishing and ethical practices.

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Field Code Changed

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