

Occupational Justice & Injustice

A Perspective on Child Rights From a Pediatric Therapy Viewpoint



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Occupational Justice vs Injustice

- **Occupational injustice** derives from the concept of occupational justice. It was created in 1997 by occupational therapists Ann Wilcock of Australia and Elizabeth Townsend of Canada.
- Occupational injustice occurs when a person is **denied**, **excluded** from, or **deprived** of opportunity to pursue meaningful occupations, or when unchosen occupations are imposed upon them, thus limiting life satisfaction.

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Occupational Justice & Injustice

- The construct of occupational justice stems from human rights but focuses on the inherent right of individuals to participate in occupations, construed as their personally meaningful and goal-directed use of time. Through this participation, occupational rights contribute to fulfillment and self-actualization.

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Occupational Justice & Injustice

- The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) state that occupational justice is part of the domain of occupational therapy and that occupational justice is “an aspect of contexts and environments and an outcome of intervention” (AOTA, 2014, p. S9)

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Occupational Injustice

As a particular application of social justice, occupational injustice occurs when a person:

- is denied, excluded from, or deprived of opportunity to pursue meaningful occupations or when unchosen occupations are imposed upon them, thus limiting life satisfaction.



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Occupational Rights

The construct of occupational rights stems from [human rights](#) but focuses on the inherent right of individuals to participate in occupations, construed as their personally meaningful and goal-directed use of time. Through this participation, occupational rights contribute to fulfillment and [self-actualization](#).



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Occupational Justice & Injustice

Groups of people that may be vulnerable to experiencing occupational injustices:

* cultural, religious, and ethnic minority groups

* child laborers

* the unemployed

* prisoners

* persons with substance use disorder

* residents of institutions

* refugees

* women



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Framework of Occupational Justice (FOJ)

- **Perspective of justice or injustice in everyday occupations**
- **Emphasizes the inclusion of every individual in an occupationally just world**
- **Individuals can do what they decide to be the most meaningful and useful to themselves, family, communities, and nations**
- **Inter-relationships of structural factors and contextual factors support or restrict occupational outcomes and occupational rights**

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Structural factors & contextual factors support or restrict occupational outcomes & occupational rights

- **STRUCTURAL FACTORS:**
 - Underlying occupational determinants (i.e., type of economy, regional/national/international policies)
 - occupational instruments or programs (i.e., health and community support, income support, education, employment)
- **CONTEXTUAL FACTORS:**
 - age, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, etc



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Structural Factors are Affected by Contextual Factors

- **Contribute to conditions of occupational justice**
- **Lead to occupational outcomes (i.e., justice or injustice)**
 - **Examples of occupational outcomes:**
 - **Meaning**
 - **Participation**
 - **Choice**
 - **Balance**

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How Does Sensory Integration Fit with Justice?

- **Child chooses activities during therapy session**
 - **Child collaborates with therapist**
- **Child shares control with therapist – child is not completely controlled by therapist**
 - **Therapy is a play experience for the child:**
 - **Activities are child-selected**
- **Therapist responds to child's interests, while ensuring safety and success**

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How Does Sensory Integration Fit with Justice?

- Lead to **occupational outcomes** (i.e., justice or injustice)
 - Examples of occupational justice outcomes:
 - **Meaning**
 - **Participation**
 - **Choice**
 - **Balance of structure and freedom**
 - **Skills for life**
 - **Confidence & belief in self as competent**

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Four Types of Occupational Injustice

- **Occupational alienation:** sense of estrangement or isolation when occupations are not meaningful
- **Occupational deprivation:** prolonged restriction from participation in necessary or meaningful activities due to circumstances outside the individual's control
- **Occupational imbalance:** stress or boredom due to an inappropriate level of occupational engagement
- **Occupational marginalization:** a form of occupational injustice that occurs when the decision-making process is taken away from people attempting to participate in occupations

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Critical Occupational Perspective

“Offers new insights into social issues related to occupational justices, such as **injustice of exclusion from everyday occupations** experienced by clients who suffer from mental illness”

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Three Key Points to Advocate Occupational Justice

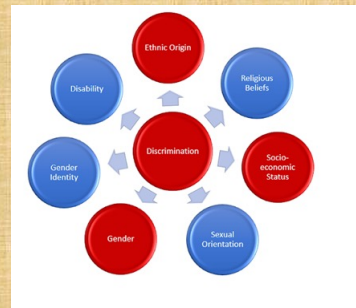
1. Justice requires societal accountability for **including all persons in everyday occupations**, without injustice.
2. Societies **create institutional changes** in housing, employment, community recreation, and other policies.
3. Justice advances when societies **develop programming and conditions to truly engage adults who have mental health issues with ordinary people to support their participation.**

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Summary & Purpose: *Framework of Occupational Justice*

This framework aims to develop
a just society
with inclusion of all citizens in
everyday occupations

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Justice With Children:
“Strengthening justice systems
for children:
Challenges, including
disengagement from violent
extremism”

Towards 2024 – Justice With Children



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**Occupational Justice & Injustice
in the Provision of Services to Children:**

An Ethical Challenge to Some Applications of
Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

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**An Occupational Justice Challenge
to Some Applications of
Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**

My Notes from YouTube Live event on Jan 29, 2022:
ETHICAL ISSUES IN ABA: PAST & PRESENT

Sponsored by New Jersey Autism Center for
Excellence

Aly McCarthy & Jen Schonger

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ETHICAL ISSUES with ABA: PAST & PRESENT

Ethical Concerns

Ableism: The notion that **we have to intervene**; makes assumptions re what is a good life

Autism Industrial Complex: There is a lot of money to be made

Institutionalization of ABA: The only option for many families

Focus on Diagnosis: It would be more helpful to focus on specific needs, instead of diagnosis

Major Ethical Concern: Tries to force or endorse one view of correct behavior

Infringes on Person's "Sense of Self": Individual interests and skills are generally ignored

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ETHICAL ISSUES with ABA: PAST & PRESENT

Bioethics Issues

Potential Conflict of Interest (COI) Issue: 84% of ABA studies were authored by ABA experts

Harm may not be immediately evident: Cooperstein research: PTSD may result

Claims to treat speech/language/communication but are not SLPs:
encroachment on another profession

OTs report: In ABA you are told to teach child to ignore sensations arising in the CNS (including interoceptive information), and as a result, children start disassociating

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ETHICAL ISSUES with ABA: PAST & PRESENT

Professional Issues

ABA for 20-40 hours/week: Presented as the Gold Standard

Parents need to have oversight: ABA constantly in home → increased burden & stress

OTs & PTs defer to ABA if not trained on, or familiar with, how to work with child with ASD: because it is said to be the “Gold Standard”

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ETHICAL ISSUES with ABA: PAST & PRESENT

Identity & Inclusion Issues

Does not focus on talents, skills, and interests: These factors influence ability to develop work skills in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, and contribute to one’s sense of self-worth

Ignores or minimizes some important life experiences: Sustaining friendships with peers, participation in community events, flexibility in social skills for working and playing with others, ability to navigate in the community, ability to “bounce back” from negative experiences (resilience), initiation of helping others

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