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A theory of Occupational Agency: An international investigation of occupational therapists' negotiations

Dr. Michelle Perryman-Fox, Dr. Karen Morris, Prof. Diane Cox,

Dr. Virginia Stoffel and Dr. Julie Taylor

World Federation of Occupational Therapists
31st August 2022

Why do this research? The Consequences of Negotiation



Unable to hear
the client's
voice

Therapists
leaving
the
profession

Therapists
questioning
their
belonging

Reduced Client
and therapeutic
outcomes

Therapists
feeling
unwelcome
in the
profession

Reduced
Therapist
wellbeing
feeling burnt
out and
“disingenuous”

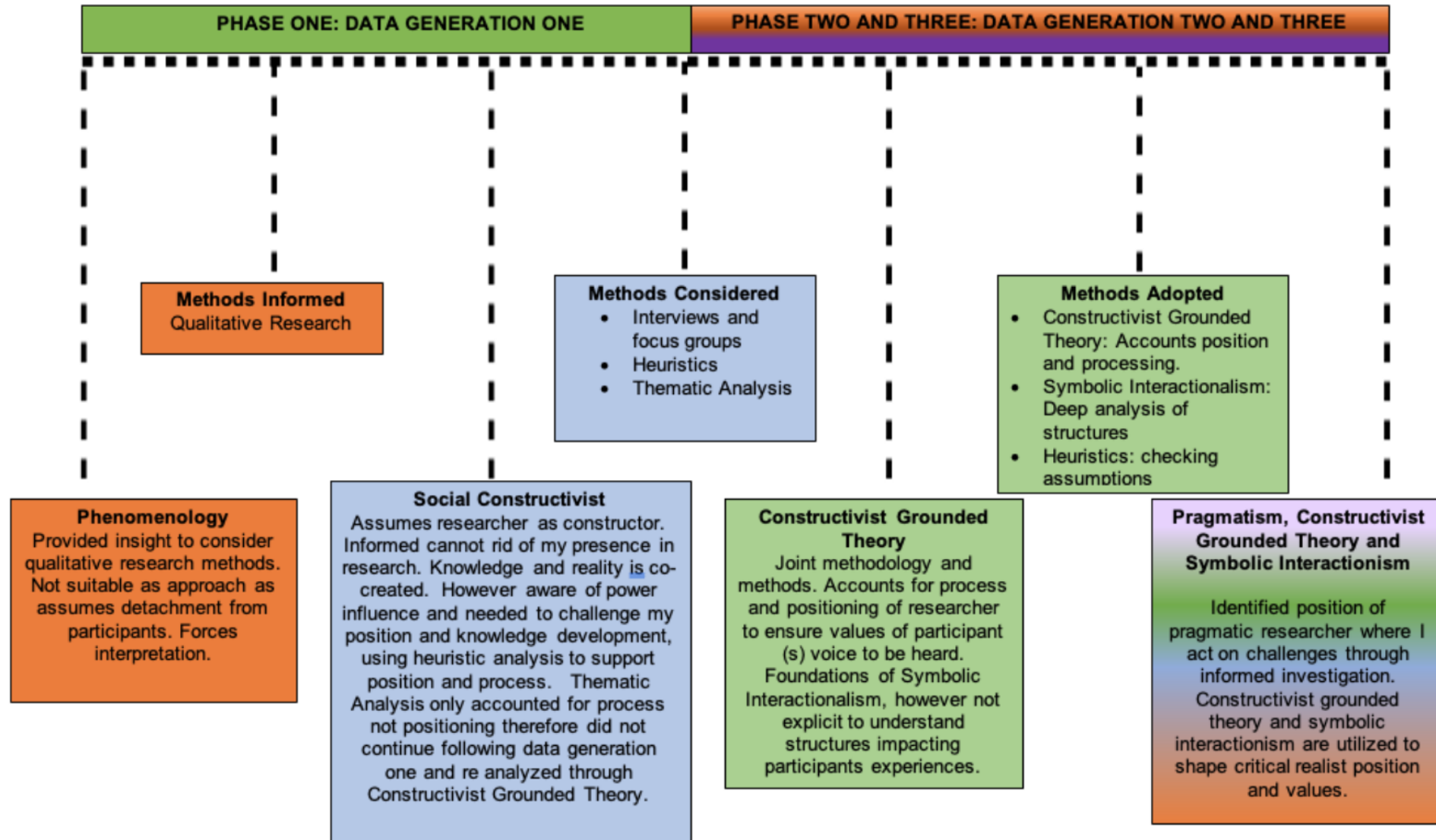
Profession divided
continuously by our
inner world,
external reality and
the need to engage
within imaginative
processes

Conflicted
professional
philosophies.
time,
transitions and
reflection

Therapist lack
of identity in
professional
role



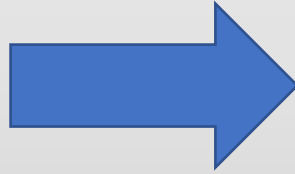
Methodology & Methods



Findings

Please Profession See Me

- **When:** January 2020
- **What:** A creative memo of research analysis concerning the experiences of occupational therapists' agency, negotiations of engagement and practice
- **Who:** 14 participants from three countries, United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia



YET.... Here's what we know..

- Occupational therapists hope to live coherently (HTLC) through their professional values and philosophy.
- There are two structures or systems of the therapist that transact to stimulate negotiation of engagement in occupation.
- The negotiations impact the health and wellbeing of the therapist and subsequently, the client.



What is Occupational Agency?

Occupation is: The meaningful things we do everyday.

Agency is: The capacity of “individuals” to act independently and make their own free choices (Giddens, 1984).

Occupational Agency is: The negotiation, which accounts for the human engagement in occupation and the performance outcomes of it.

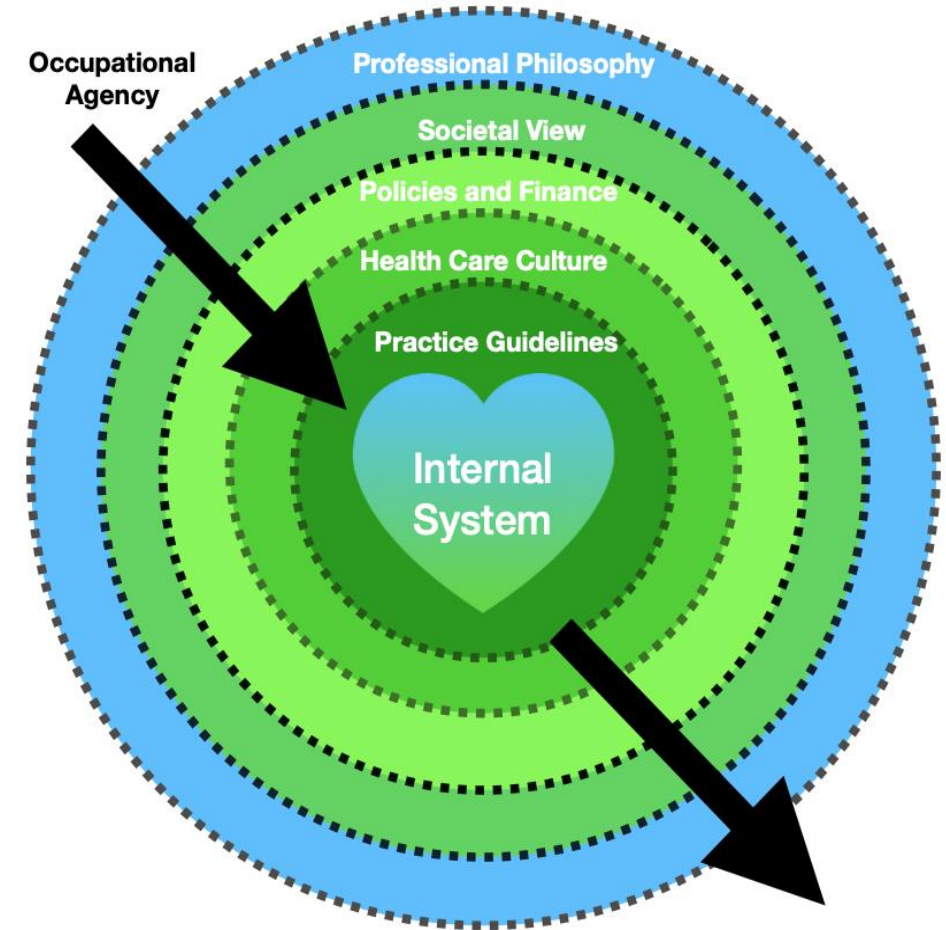
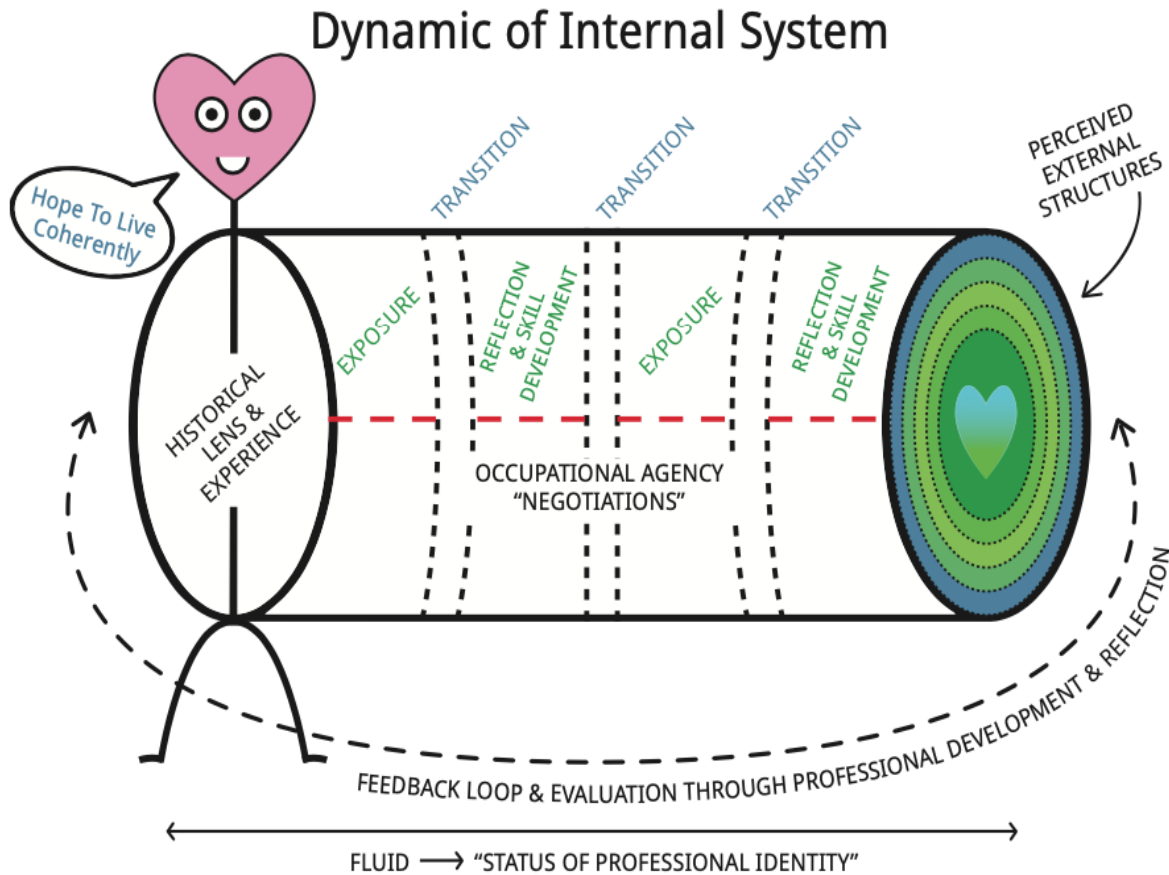


Locating Occupational Agency in the Engagement Process

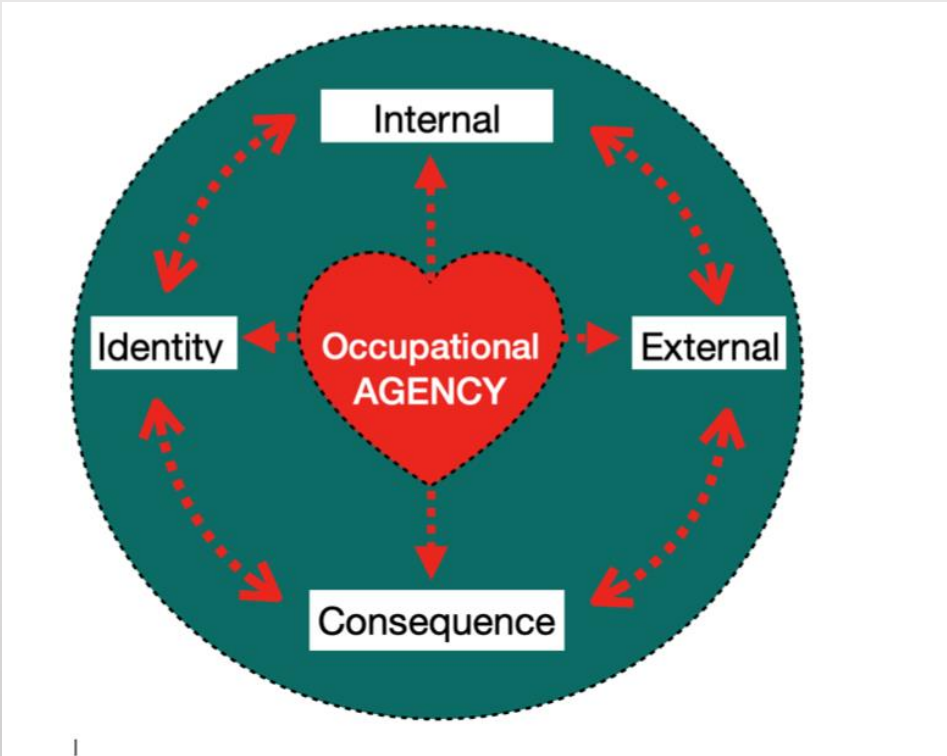
The creative reflective and reflexive process of negotiation of occupational therapist's agency



The Dynamic of the Internal and Perceived External Structures



Implications For Practice



- **Occupational Agency** enables us to understand **negotiations** which accounts for human engagement in occupation and the performance outcomes of it.
- Occupational therapists negotiate their professional “occupations” too. These negotiations are identified as either as a barrier or facilitator to our philosophical intentions as a profession.
- The essential need is to **reflect and be reflexive** in our practice to ensure we act with **humility** when doing occupational therapy and being therapeutic within our interactions with our teams and the people with whom we work.
- The aim is to act meaningfully and purposefully to enable health and wellbeing globally through **MEANINGFUL OCCUPATION**.



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with support from..**



With special thanks to....

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Professor Diane Cox
Dr. Karen Morris
Dr. Julie Taylor
Dr. Virginia Stoffel
Dr. Duncan Pentland

and Finally...

“ To all those who have contributed to my thought
processes over the years, to open my eyes and develop my
lens to enable me to interpret the world as I see it”

*****References available on request**