

## The development of occupational science outside the anglophone sphere: enacting global collaboration.

Lilian Magalhaes<sup>a</sup>, Lisette Farias<sup>b</sup>, Natalia Rivas-Quarneti<sup>c</sup>, Liliana Alvarez<sup>d</sup>, Ana Paula Serrata Malfitano<sup>a</sup>

- a. *Department of Occupational Therapy & Post Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy, Federal University of Sao Carlos, Brazil.*
- b. *Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society, Division of Occupational Therapy, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden*
- c. *Faculty of Health Sciences, University of A Coruna, Spain*
- d. *School of Occupational Therapy, Western University, Canada*

### Abstract

The emergence of occupational science in non-English speaking countries is frequently hampered by diverse barriers to global collaboration, knowledge dissemination, and inclusion in international dialogue. Epistemological, cultural, and institutional resources may explain these barriers, yet these have not been explored within the discipline. This paper discusses three main issues and three priorities for action put forward by participants during sessions held at two separate, international occupational science conferences. The sessions aimed to engage the audience in critical reflexivity and dialogue around the challenges present when non-English speaking countries attempt to develop occupational science scholarship and possible ways to support global collaboration. To stimulate discussion, we used a participatory methodology, 'Metaplan'. The sessions included a statements exercise, reflections presented by the authors, individual reflexivity, and small group debate. The findings are structured as a reflexive dialogue where participants' voices, theory, and the authors' reflections are interwoven to enrich discussion of the issues participants identified and priorities for action. This paper contributes to decolonizing the development of occupational science and promoting an international dialogue that is open to diverse worldviews, by drawing attention to the visible and invisible barriers that limit collaboration and inclusion of the diverse ways in which occupation is understood and enacted worldwide.

*"Dissentir é um dos direitos que faltam à Declaração dos Direitos Humanos"*  
*"To dissent is one of the rights that is missing from the Declaration of Human Rights"*  
*(Saramago, 1922-2010)*

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the main issues and priorities identified by participants taking part in two sessions facilitated by the authors, and thus draw attention to opportunities for decolonizing occupational science knowledge production. The sessions came about in response to our common need to share and discuss our experiences and concerns regarding the development of occupational science outside the Anglophone sphere. To facilitate dialogue and critical reflexivity on potential issues, we organized two sessions that would include individuals from diverse geographical locations.

The sessions were presented at two international occupational science conferences: the 2016 Joint Research Conference of the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA (SSO:USA) and the Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists (CSOS) in Portland, Maine, United States and the 2017 Conference of Occupational Science Europe in Hildesheim, Germany. The session participants included occupational therapists, occupational scientists, and graduate students in health and rehabilitation sciences from countries

and regions in which occupational science is well-established, as an educational program or established department, as well as from countries where occupational science does not exist or is under development. Participants represented views from North America (Canada and United States), Europe (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal), South America (Colombia, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil), Africa (South Africa), and Australasia (Australia and New Zealand).

It is important to recognize that we came to the sessions with concerns and experiences, and therefore we begin this paper by introducing our perspectives on cultural, language/communication, and power issues interfering with global collaboration from a decolonizing (Santos, 2006; Santos, Nunes, & Meneses, 2007) and critical occupational science perspective (Farias, Laliberte Rudman, & Magalhães, 2016; Laliberte Rudman, 2013, 2018; Magalhães, 2012). Then, we provide an overview of the sessions and describe the methodology used to enact dialogue. We draw on the main issues and priorities for action articulated by the participants, discussing them in relation to theory and the authors' experiences. Finally, we conclude by advocating for the inclusion of new voices in the international debate, as well as for widening the epistemological perspectives within the field.

### **The Underpinnings of Cultural Dissonance and the Power Dynamics of Knowledge**

Culture, as defined by Santos and colleagues (2007), is a site of contention rather than a dispassionate concept: "a central strategic concept in the definition of identities and alterity in the contemporary world, a resource for the affirmation of difference and the demand for its recognition, as well as a field of struggle and contradiction" (p. XXI). This perspective implies that culture is related to knowledge generation and dissemination in the sense that as cultures struggle to be recognized, their traditions and ways of knowledge are overshadowed by mainstream or dominant traditions. Nonetheless, "the epistemic diversity of the world is potentially infinite" (Santos et al., 2007, p. XLV) and thus knowledge is never complete because "all ignorance is ignorant of a certain knowledge, and all knowledge is the overcoming of a particular ignorance. There is no complete knowledge" (Santos et al., 2007, p. XLV). Thus, disputing the dominance of Western traditions and Eurocentric perspectives of knowledge, scholars have argued for decolonizing knowledge in order to recognize diverse ways of knowing as legitimate (Savransky, 2017).

In the context of occupational science, Eurocentrism has been criticized by scholars such as Kantartzis and Molineux (2011), who argued that the emergence of occupational science in the United States and its rapid spread to countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom implies that its development has been largely influenced by the values of these English-speaking countries. In this way, occupational science has naturally incorporated understandings of occupation informed by the religious, economic, political, and educational ideas of a Western, Anglophone, capitalist, industrial, and Christian view of reality (Kantartzis & Molineux, 2011).

In an attempt to contribute to the efforts that seek to develop a socially responsive discipline, Laliberte Rudman (2014) proposed the adoption of the sociology of imagination, inspired by Wright Mills, to creatively disrupt hegemonic structures. That means that a new kind of imagination can contribute to the struggle for social change by conceiving reality as an ethical and political problem, thereby opening spaces to foster new viewpoints and include diverse ways of knowing. As articulated by Savransky (2017):

*What is at stake is the cultivation of an imagination that can move beyond the concern with how others come to 'know' the world, and can affirm the realities of movements and collectives for whom the possibility of another world matters. (p. 22)*

For Santos (2006), cultural translation was a key concept to enact a truly global production and dissemination of knowledge that would challenge hegemonic structures. Santos et al. (2007)

adverted to the inseparable link between knowledge and practices, granting that an authentic dialogue depends on global acknowledgment of the equal value of the numerous ways of knowing (often referred to as cognitive justice). As Santos (2006) emphasized, the only way to social justice is through cognitive justice, that is, through the search for an authentic intercultural (global) dialogue by which multiple epistemologies are taken into consideration.

Given the necessity of such dialogue, Santos proposed enacting 'contact zones', described as different places of encounter for a possible dialogue. However, from Santos' (2006) standpoint, the effectiveness of cultural translation requires not only opportunities and possibilities for enacting an authentic dialogue but also political willingness, and "intelectuales fuertemente enraizados en las prácticas y saberes que representan, teniendo de ellos una comprensión profunda y crítica" [intellectuals strongly deep-rooted in practices and knowledge which they represent, with a deep comprehension and critique] (p. 102).

While it has been recognized that a Western and Anglophone orientation narrows occupational science's development and understandings of occupation, there is a need to extend this dialogue to reflect on the ways in which this orientation has hindered intercultural and global collaboration. Critically reflecting on the dissemination of occupational science to other languages and cultures, it is possible to argue that this 'translation' has carried meanings of occupations that are mostly familiar to people in the English-speaking world, and in many cases, it has neglected other knowledges previously existing within the receiving cultures (e.g. indigenous, rural, popular knowledge)

Having this perspective in mind, we adopted a participatory approach and several strategies to facilitate critical reflexivity and dialogue (Farias,2017; Rivas-Quarneti, Magalhães, & Movilla Fernández,2017) regarding language/communication and contextual issues potentially hindering the development of occupational science outside the Anglophone sphere. In the next section, we describe these strategies in detail.

## **Methodology**

The conference sessions were used as encounter opportunities or contact zones (Santos,2006) to trigger a critical and participatory dialogue about enacting global collaboration within occupational science. As mentioned earlier, the sessions were based on our experiential knowledge and positionalities as occupational scientists educated outside the Anglophone sphere (Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Spain) but with experience studying and/or working in Anglophone contexts (Canada and various European countries). Currently, we are developing occupation-based work in both Anglophone and non-Anglophone spheres. These experiences have made us aware of multiple challenges and opportunities for the development of occupational science embedded in different sociopolitical and historical contexts. For instance, when translating occupational science concepts into practice, we have faced challenges, such as explaining the role and contribution of occupational science to other professionals/disciplines, having to classify occupational science into social and/or biomedical sciences, and coping with scarce research funding.

At the same time, we have attempted to shift these challenges into opportunities to prompt learning and develop of innovative ways to understanding occupation. For example, funding scarcity has triggered innovative thinking and helped us to strengthen collaborations and use alternative resources depending on the context. Therefore, understanding and sharing these challenges and opportunities seemed fundamental for us to enact a truly intercultural occupational science and embrace its potential. We believe that contact zones are strategic and important occasions to expand these intercultural and global occupational science dialogues.

We identified two up-coming international occupational science conferences in the North American and European contexts as important contact zones. The former is generally identified as a well-established occupational science context; whereas the latter has been recently presented as a "patchwork quilt" for occupational science (Roberts,2017 , p. 17). This metaphor portrays the language, culture and environmental diversity that characterises the uneven development of occupational science in Europe.

We conducted the same session in English although the European session was held in a country where English is not the first/dominant language. Approximately 30 participants attended the North American session and 25 participated in the European session. The purposes of both sessions were to a) engage the audience in a critical dialogue around the diverse ways in which occupational science is developing outside the Anglophone sphere; b) enable critical reflexivity about the opportunities and challenges present in non-English speaking countries attempting to develop occupational science, and c) reveal language/communication and contextual factors that may hinder or facilitate global collaboration amongst occupational scientists.

To accomplish these aims we used a sequential participatory approach. The sessions were structured in three stages that built upon each other. The stages contributed to generating 1) critical reflexivity, that allowed participants to critically explore taken for granted assumptions (stages 1 and 2), and 2) critical dialogue and democratic agreement on the issues that shape opportunities for global collaboration and potential strategies that would expand such collaboration within occupational science (Stage 3). Prior to beginning each session, the authors presented their positionalities, the methodologies to be used during the sessions, and requested participants for their consent to use the (anonymous) information collected in both sessions to support scholarly activities. To finalize each session, the authors shared closing remarks (See Table 1 for the structure of the forums).

**Table 1. . Session Overview**

<b>Session 1: 4th Joint Research Conference of the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA (SSO:USA) and the Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists (CSOS) – Portland, Maine. September 29, 2016</b>					
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	
Introduction to the session	Introduction to the methodology Metaplan	Statements exercise using Plickers	Reflections on: - Cultural translation  - Diversity within diversity  - Language barriers	- Metaplan  - Individual Reflection  - Share and discussion in groups  - Sharing issues and strategies  - Voting for priorities for action	Closing Remarks

**Session 2: 4<sup>th</sup> Conference of Occupational Science Europe – Hildesheim, Germany. September 8, 2017**

	Stage 1	Stage 2		Stage 3	
Introduction to the session	Statements exercise using Plickers	Reflections on: - Cultural translation - Diversity within diversity - Language barriers	Introduction to the methodology Metaplan	- Metaplan - Individual Reflection - Share and discussion in groups - Sharing issues and strategies - Voting for priorities for action	Closing Remarks

***Stage 1: Statements exercise***

For stage one, a Power Point presentation with a series of value statements was used to ask participants about their perceptions. The statements were based on our experiences of interactions with stakeholders in our countries of origin as well as abroad. Participants could choose between the following options to respond to the statements a) the majority of people (agree with the statement), b) several people, c) a minority of people and d) I do not have a formed opinion. The statements allowed us, as presenters, and the participants to examine their perceptions regarding the topic and develop a baseline (See Tables 2 and 3 for the statements presented at each session).

The participants answered each statement by using Plickers™, which are an audience participation system that does not require participants to have access to or operate information and communication technologies. Instead, participants are provided with a paper card containing a pictogram. We used the Plickers free app to scan the room and get a live poll of the audience's responses (each card is unique and thus allows for anonymous participation). Using this system eliminates the need for technology literacy or a smartphone, and therefore it supported the participation goals for this stage by increasing access and equity in the exercise. After scanning the responses, we shared the context in which we encountered the statements and the reasoning underpinning each one of them. Tables 2 and 3 shows the response rates for each option, for each of the two sessions.

**Table 2. . Statement Exercise Responses I**

Session 1: 4 <sup>th</sup> Joint Research Conference of the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA (SSO:USA) and the Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists (CSOS) – Portland, Maine. September 29, 2016				
Statements	Response options			
“We have been doing occupational science long before it was formally recognized in the US”	21%	37%	21%	21%
“Finally, we have our own place, where we can study and name our practices from an occupational perspective”	5.5%	44.5%	50%	0
“I am not convinced that occupational science is advancing occupational therapy practices and theories”	52.7%	5.3%	31.5%	10.5%
“Occupational science is embedded in the nature of what we do as occupational therapists”	5.8%	23.3%	47.6%	23.3%

**Table 3. Statement Exercise Responses II**

Session 2: 4 <sup>th</sup> Conference of Occupational Science Europe – Hildesheim, Germany. September 8, 2017		
Statements	Response options	
	A: True	B: False
“A universal understanding of occupation is achievable across the globe”	62%	38%
“Occupational science is going to compete with occupational therapy, which may hinder the occupational therapy’s chances of improvement”	14%	86%
“Occupational science is embedded in the nature of what we do as occupational therapists”	69%	31%
“I am not convinced that occupational science is advancing occupational therapy practices and theories”	23%	73%
“Not all the OS concepts and definitions apply to the context in which I work and do research”	79%	21%
“Finally, we have our own place, where we can study and name our practices from an occupational perspective”	42%	58%
“We have been doing occupational science long before it was formally recognized in the US”	71%	29%

## ***Stage 2: Reflection presentations***

Following the statements exercise, and building on the baseline of participants' perceptions around the topic, we proceeded to present a series of three brief presentations outlining our critical reflections with regards to the topic. These presentations included:

### *Cultural translation*

This reflection invited participants to consider that the construction of a knowledge base that aspires to reach global audiences, such as occupational science, might be problematic. Roadblocks are mostly inscribed within a colonialist/emancipatory predicament. Thus, cultural translation of occupational science must be articulated acknowledging power (colonialist) dynamics that invite a collective dialogue around what it means to be working from a pluralistic epistemological perspective

### *Diversity within diversity*

This presentation introduced the notion of diversity 'outside' of the Anglophone sphere. For example, although Latin America is often referred to as one, there is no such thing as one Latin American culture. Instead, there is a coexistence of heterogeneous peoples whose lives are intertwined through a shared history but different challenges, developments, and understandings. Occupational science has developed in different ways across nations and populations. Thus, geographic, social, and cultural developments, and in many cases even armed conflicts, have shaped the development of the discipline. Not surprisingly, the resulting beliefs and developments around occupational science differ greatly across countries, regions, and peoples.

### *Language barriers*

This presentation invited participants to integrate a critical reflexive stance and interrogate the perspectives and conditions that influence how knowledge claims are embraced and constructed (Kinsella, 2012; Kinsella & Whiteford, 2009). This stance enables a critical understanding of the consequences of phenomena related to the development of occupational science, namely: the dominance of the English language in the discipline's literature, the predominant focus in English-based journals, and the resulting advantage of English-speaking countries when producing and disseminating knowledge from their perspective. Together, these factors have resulted in occupational science focus being shaped by the perspectives and concerns of English-speaking countries.

## ***Stage 3: Metaplan - Collective reflections***

Building on the collective knowledge and reflections developed during stages 1 and 2, this final stage invited participants to discuss the main barriers hindering international collaboration, as well as potential strategies to overcome such barriers. For this purpose, we used 'Metaplan', a collaborative approach that promotes identification of key issues and finds alternatives to change the realities in which participants are embedded, by a continuous visualization of the discussion (Hughes, Saadi, Madoz, & Gonzalez, 2009). We chose this approach as it provides an opportunity for every participant to engage in the discussion, supporting processes of awareness raising and co-creation of alternatives or solutions. Additionally, Metaplan is time-efficient and low cost (materials needed are often markers, stickers, paper cards and paper or canvas) (Rivas-Quarneti et al., 2017).

To enact critical reflexivity and discussion, participants were asked to reflect on the following trigger questions based on their current realities: What are the main difficulties that occupational science is facing to enact global collaboration? What can we do? Then, participants were divided into small groups and asked to: a) individually write their answers to the trigger questions on a

card, b) share their card responses, c) discuss and agree on a couple of key barriers that are necessary to tackle, d) write the barriers on a new paper card; e) discuss and propose a couple of creative alternatives to change these barriers, and f) write the identified issues and alternatives for change on a new piece of paper and hang this paper on the wall (in the case of the US session) or write the identified issues and alternatives on a canvas (in the case if the European session) visible to the rest of the participants. Following these steps, and using an open floor strategy, a group representative briefly presented their group process, identified issues and strategies for change.

After these presentations, participants were invited to individually think about all the presented issues and strategies for a couple of minutes, and then were asked to use their stickers to choose between the ideas that had been put forward, placing stickers on the issues and strategies that they considered most relevant (i.e. one sticker per issue and strategy, six stickers for selecting three issues and three strategies). As a result, a visual response to the trigger questions was democratically created by the groups.

For the conference in the European context, and given that the session allowed for live online streaming, we incorporated an online participation platform via Today'sMeet (<https://todaysmeet.com/>). Today'sMeet enables the creation of chat rooms around specific topics that can be monitored in real time. Through this tool, we provided an opportunity for participants not in attendance to not only observe the live stream but engage in the workshop. We read out responses on Today'sMeet to contribute to the dialogue throughout the forum. Online participants made 13 contributions to the discussion. Participants in this online forum expressed agreement with the need for multiple strategies to bridge the gaps, including language and cultural brokering. Specifically, this group of participants expressed the need for scientific publications that enable multi-language publications as a strategic initiative to create a multicultural body of knowledge around occupational science.

## **Issues and Priorities for Action**

The points outlined in this section reflect the main issues and priorities for action selected by the participants from both sessions. Some points overlap, while others present more than one explanatory cause. This overlapping shows that issues interfering with global collaboration are complex and transcend translation into different languages, which is often recommended as an unquestioned solution. It is worth noticing that some participants at the US session and most of participants at the European session have another first language than English. This may have affected our interpretation and analysis of participants' comments and meanings. However, we believe that the discussion in small groups, the open debate, and use of diverse ways of communication (e.g. Plickers™, Today'sMeet and stickers) helped participants to clarify what they meant and summarize their concerns in the best way possible.

### ***Issue 1: Visible and invisible barriers to communication***

Participants from non-English speaking countries shared that breaking language barriers to enacting global collaboration is imperative. Yet, they highlighted that by language barriers they were referring to systems of meanings and taken-for-granted assumptions that go beyond linguistics. Language barriers encompass visible and invisible elements that hinder knowledge sharing, mobilization, and dialogue. Visible challenges include access to English literature and knowledge presented in English only at international conferences, networking in English, and accessing resources for translation. Further, invisible barriers are related to elements that maintain power differentials by disseminating the ideas, values, and norms of a dominant group as common-sense, natural, and correct (Alasuutari, 2004).

According to participants, power differences are perpetuated due to a lack of exploration of what people in specific countries or geographical regions mean by occupation, the factors that influence their disciplinary identity and development, and the type of research that is privileged within that context. Recognizing this diversity is essential to challenging the dominance of specific theoretical approaches and assumptions within the discipline. This lack of perceived difference in



meanings and assumptions also hinders individuals and groups from developing their own understandings of occupation, since it is often assumed that all occupational scientists share the same understandings about human occupation and occupational science scholarship. Thus, although there is a growing desire for enacting global collaboration among scholars, promoting dialogue without recognizing this diversity of understandings only reinforces the dominance of the ideas, meanings, and values of one group (Kantartzis & Molineux, [2011](#)).

The participants also associated invisible barriers with a lack of communication between occupational science and occupational therapy research and knowledge. Particularly, participants from countries in which occupational science does not exist or is under development raised concerns regarding a perceived lack of awareness of occupational science contributions to occupational therapy practice and development. Lacking an academic culture and tradition of occupational science, and a strong association with a few theoretical concepts such as occupational justice, were forwarded as a possible sources of this ambiguity among participants from countries/regions in Europe, South America, and Asia. Thus, although participants emphasized the interdisciplinary potential of occupational science contributions, this ambiguity was described as hindering individuals from having a dialogue with occupational science knowledge and transferring its knowledge to occupational therapy education, research, and practice. Further, this perceived lack of communication and knowledge mobilization between occupational science and occupational therapy was described as a barrier to advocating for the integration of occupational science into educational curricula and promoting its development in contexts where the discipline is non-existent or emerging.

### ***Issue 2: Dominance of the language and issues relevant to one audience***

Another important issue shared by participants from non-English speaking countries is the perpetuation of the English language as the norm for knowledge dissemination. Concepts that describe what people do reflect particular meanings and traditions that might differ depending on which language is used. For most participants, translation alone does not solve the inconsistencies in meanings and therefore breaking this norm is imperative. Participants also emphasized that the problem is not only the language preference but the potential erasure of occupations and meanings that do not have a direct translation to English. Thus, unconsciously overlooking traditions and occupational issues because these do not have a direct translation to English also uncovers the need for involving more people and languages in knowledge generation, as well as finding alternative ways of dissemination (Hsiung, [2012](#))

Participants at the USA/Canada session added that academic politics in North America tend to privilege scholarship that positions Anglophone and Western styles of communication as superior. Similarly, participants at the session in Germany suggested that the dominance of English language reinforces a hierarchical separation between knowledge written/disseminated in English compared to other languages. This perceived inferior position of knowledge and research written in other languages and the historically superior status of journals that exclusively publish in English points to a need of changes within the established venues of publication in occupational science. Further, this issue speaks to the need to request journals and other venues to publish in more than one language to promote the inclusion of other audiences and issues that are relevant for them. Without these parallel publications, scholars and students frequently depend on poor translations that in turn lead to potential misunderstandings and further marginalization.

### ***Issue 3: Uni-directional dialogue and knowledge mobilization***

Participants from both sessions proposed that an important issue interfering with global collaboration is the lack of a two-way dialogue. This means that the communication enacted between members of countries/regions in which occupational science is well-established and scholars from countries/regions where the discipline is emerging or non-existent in the professional curricula is often in the form of a one-way communication. As described by the participants, this one-way dialogue often focuses on a uni-directional translation exercise consisting of 'teaching' other countries/regions how to do occupational science instead of

engaging with the occupational perspectives and research developed in the recipient country/region.

One problem with this uni-directional communication is that it risks perpetuating a colonial legacy, as well as power relations between countries/regions and institutions. According to participants, neglecting these power relations not only risks reinforcing the supremacy of locations in which occupational science is well-established but also perpetuates an illusion of consensus/universalism within the discipline. As articulated by the participants, maintaining an illusion of intellectual consensus (Hammell, [2011](#)) risks privileging dominant theories and understandings of occupation and those who propose them, while ignoring or silencing the perspectives of occupational scientists outside the Western Anglophone world.

Similarly, uni-directional dialogue perpetuates the belief that one culture is superior and the standard by which others should be judged (Hammell, [2011](#)). Participants from both sessions highlighted that this uni-directional dialogue conflicts with purposes of collaboration since it involuntarily overlooks alternative cultural perspectives on occupation, neglecting to explore the implications of mainstream models and theories for other cultures/groups. The participants from the USA/Canada session added that this type of communication reflects a potential ignorance regarding the existence of other perspectives and disinterest in what others mean by occupational science and occupation, how others enact research and practice, and what type of science is privileged within other contexts. As such, some participants at the USA/Canada session pointed out that unexamined assumptions and culture of occupational science to a certain extent might support ethnocentrism, privilege, and power differentials. Further, participants at both sessions also articulated the ways in which they envision possibilities for global collaboration. These ideas are summarized below.

### ***Priority 1: Develop research that reflects contextual issues in local language***

This priority underscores the need for diverse and contextual understandings of how human occupations are enacted across the world. Participants emphasized that recognizing how knowledge is contextually situated can assist in advancing occupational science in non-English speaking countries/regions and reveal areas of focus that can make a difference in the lives of people in those communities. Developing contextual understandings can also promote awareness of the socio-historical, political, and cultural forces that restrain and/or facilitate the emergence and development of occupational science in professional and educational institutions.

Further, participants recommended reflection on how translation into other languages affects dialogue and dissemination within the same countries/regions and suggested a (re)articulation of occupation-based knowledge and theories in local languages to not only support local perspectives but also uncover what occupational issues have been historically overlooked or lost in translation. Participants in the USA/Canadian session added that to promote this development, education/teaching also needs to be grounded within local and socio-historical contexts.

Theories and perspectives developed by occupational scientists are informed by certain perspectives that reflect the always changing socio-political contexts where they are created, yet educational programs and institutions seem to continue focusing on teaching mainstream theories that only speak to the minority of the global population (i.e. Western, white, middle-class, English-speaking). Therefore, to expand occupational science research and education, it is highly recommended that scholars develop knowledge about human occupation that reflects their local meanings and traditions. As one concrete strategy, participants forwarded the idea of compiling stories of occupation that reflect diverse understandings in ways that break the norms of academic writing and communication styles (through writing in narrative/dialogical style, publishing the same piece in various languages, and allowing writing that promotes other styles of communication such as self-reported or indirect styles).

### ***Priority 2: Support strategic knowledge sharing***

Participants at both sessions proposed that further structured dialogue in international forums is crucial. This call for strategically working with others can help build on the issues forwarded in the sessions presented here and inform avenues for change in occupational science education and research. Some ideas include actively promoting presentation of diverse perspectives, panels and workshops in international forums, initiatives that include dialogue in small groups, and ongoing (virtual or face-to-face) opportunities for reflection on how to include and embrace other contextual understandings of occupation.

Additionally, participants emphasized how the issues raised in the sessions in USA and Germany can serve as a launch pad to further enhance opportunities for global dialogue within educational institutions and academic communities, and inclusion of those who have experienced marginalization because of the dominance of English at scholarly meetings and/or lack of financial resources to attend those meetings. In particular, participants at the session in Germany added that supporting individuals and groups from non-English speaking countries (through virtual networking and support in revising papers for academic publishing) can present opportunities for scholars from countries where occupational science is well-established to familiarize themselves with other perspectives and conceptualizations of occupation.

Given that other associations and groups that support the study of human occupation might follow these recommendations, participants also suggested the creation of funds or grants to support individuals who cannot afford to attend meetings. These financial opportunities are considered crucial for participants to support the inclusion of representatives from diverse countries/regions and their voices within scholarly meetings. Participants also forwarded as a recommendation the promotion of diverse leadership in international and regional associations for the study of occupation, and ongoing support of well-established associations to other emerging groups in countries/regions where occupational science is emerging.

### ***Priority 3: Add occupational science to the educational curricula***

This priority is twofold. First, participants suggested that occupational science is potentially valuable to all social and health/rehabilitation/vocational professions and therefore it is crucial to add it to their corresponding educational programs. This means that occupational science could be established in diverse departments at universities that would benefit from the generation of knowledge about human occupation. Although broad adoption could foster the expansion and sustainability of occupational science in many countries where its purpose has been narrowly identified as generating knowledge to inform occupational therapy, this strategy might hold occupational therapy back in places where the profession has an inferior position due to its historical location in non-academic institutions (e.g. vocational, schools not affiliated to universities). Thus, advocating for the integration of occupational science to occupational therapy or other social and health/rehabilitation/vocational professions will depend on the historical context of occupational science and occupational therapy, and the educational and institutional influences that have hindered or facilitated the emergence of the discipline in each country/region.

Second, there was support from participants at the session in Germany to integrate occupational science in educational curricula at universities, in order to facilitate access to occupational science knowledge. Participants suggested that access to knowledge through university libraries would benefit the development of the discipline by building on and advancing existing occupational science knowledge that is currently unknown/inaccessible in some countries/regions. In turn, greater access to knowledge through universities and/or institutions would serve as a means for occupational scientists to advocate for the development of Ph.D. degrees in occupational science instead of enrolling in Ph.D. in other disciplines (e.g. medical sciences). This would be a huge step forward for occupational scientists as well as for the development of educational programs in occupational science in their countries/regions (e.g. post-graduate diplomas in human occupation research, courses in occupational therapy entry-level education or master programs). Further, improved access to occupational science knowledge would help occupational scientists to disseminate the discipline's potential contributions to other

disciplines and professions, and promote interdisciplinary work with other scholars interested in advancing scholarship in human occupation.

## Discussion

Despite obvious growth, the global expansion of occupational science has been ambiguous, to say the least. In this paper, we describe our humble effort to articulate a dialogue around global collaboration within the discipline. However, this work was not an easy task, as Zavala (2013) reminded us: “the praxis of decolonization is not without contradictions” (p. 57). Firstly, we come originally from the Global South, and therefore very often find ourselves as “outsiders-within” (p. 61), as Zavala put it. Having had the opportunity to work and collaborate in some of the greatest spaces of occupational science knowledge generation in the Global North, we are aware of our privileges but also of our responsibilities and dilemmas. Understandably, we sometimes are seen by our Latino peers as emissaries of a colonial project, while in other circumstances, in the Global North, we are considered to represent a homogenous group that not only does not exist but epitomizes the very idea that we intend to dispute. There is no such a thing as a unique Latin American/Spanish perspective. Nor is there a unique standpoint anywhere else (Prodingler & Stamm, 2012).

Additionally, as we move forward with the discipline’s intent of enacting a democratic and pluralistic perspective, we must be cognizant of the challenges ahead. On one side, the very topic of the hegemony of the Anglophone sphere within occupational science is one that may cause immense discomfort. As Andreotti (2016) asserted about a conversation involving colonialism and its underpinnings, the challenge here includes a cognitive dimension “within an audience’s normalized worldview, especially if this worldview sees itself as neutral, universal, benevolent and unlimited in its capacity to apprehend reality” (p. 105). As such, Andreotti (2016) warned that articulating an effective dialogue related to dissenting perspectives may result in resistance, and therefore suggested “softening of edges if one wants to be effective in inviting people into conversations where their self-image and worldviews will likely not be affirmed” (p. 105).

Along these lines, accepting the hurdles of a decolonizing struggle always leads to change, although some turbulence may arise, not only in the global arena but also within local research venues. That is what Hsiung (2012) meant by questioning hegemonic scholarship within the core (Anglo-American) while confronting local discourses. It entails the way international publications/venues manage the discourses in order to render them understandable by the core audience. In other words, authors from outside the Anglophone sphere must “adopt the gaze of the people in the center, looking at themselves from afar and above” (Alasuutari, 2004, p. 599). Therefore, what we advocate is a conversation that reaches not only international circles but also reflects on the local challenges that must be faced by researchers and practitioners advocating for cognitive justice and social change.

## Final Considerations

In this paper, we have brought the outcomes of two dialogues that took place during international occupational science conferences. Taking advantage of our privileges as ‘outsiders within’, we aimed to initiate a conversation about the contradictions and opportunities of a global dialogue within the discipline. As such, we reported the outcomes of those two encounters, while pointing out some underpinnings and opportunities for decolonizing the knowledge production amongst occupational science researchers and practitioners.

Considering the potential for occupational science to develop a truly diversified and inclusive field, we cite Kazuo Ishiguro, Nobel Laureate in Literature 2018, and his remarkable acceptance speech that summarizes the steps for working towards such an inclusive approach:

*Firstly, we must widen our common literary world to include many more voices from beyond our comfort zones of the elite first world cultures. ... Second: we must take great care not to set too narrowly or conservatively our definitions of what constitutes good literature. (Italics inserted)*

Thus, while generating and disseminating knowledge about human occupation might always present some limitations, we believe that it should be our responsibility as scholars and practitioners to make sure that we advance and develop together: all of us.

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