

Abstracts

(in alphabetical order of last names)

Please note: the following pages contain the abstract of all the theses of the students graduating in March, but not all the theses will be presented in the seminar

Achahbar Hanifa (Jan 2023)

Educators' and students' perceptions of how cultural diversity is represented in texts used in an occupational therapy programme in the Netherlands: A collaborative critical discourse analysis

Background: Due to the trends associated with globalization, discussions regarding increasing diversity are taking place in societies as well as at institutions of higher education. However, there is limited knowledge of how cultural diversity is portrayed and perceived by educators and students in occupational therapy (OT) education, and this knowledge is important to inclusive education.

Aim: This study seeks to analyse how cultural diversity is portrayed in texts used in the first academic year of an OT undergraduate programme in the Netherlands and how diversity is perceived by students and educators.

Methods: Compulsory documents and books used in the first academic year were selected based on semi-structured interviews. A qualitative study was conducted inspired by collaborative critical discourse analysis. The analysis conducted with students and educators was inspired by Bacchi's 'what's the problem represented to be?' (WPR) approach to analyse the texts. The analysis was carried out through two focus groups.

Findings: 'Problematizations' were identified and are divided into three themes: 1) cultural discourse: black–white, 2) stereotyping: the Dutchman and 'the other' and 3) representation of cultural diversity in case studies and the classroom.

Conclusion: Individuals who do not belong to the dominant culture within a society are presented as 'the other', while a superiority is ascribed to the dominant culture. Furthermore, the other is framed as inferior or racialized. In 6 case studies, there is no representation of cultural diversity. To conclude, texts are designed for 'the white student'.

Keywords: Higher education, collaborative critical discourse analysis, cultural diversity

Amacher Michael (October 2022)

Participation in a Swiss classroom from a pupil's perspective:

Experiences of shared occupations in relation to inclusive education – through the lens of doing, being, becoming and belonging

Background: In Switzerland, there is a strong push for more inclusive education. However, since the discussion mainly revolves around pupils with a disability, it is not acknowledged that pupils face barriers to participation in school life for many other reasons. Furthermore, pupils' voices on this issue are underrepresented, and it is therefore unclear what their actual needs are.

Aim: This study aims to explore pupils' experiences in a mainstream Swiss classroom on participation and inclusive education.

Methods: An interpretive case study design was used with alternative approaches from the positivist embedded case study design. Nine pupils aged nine to ten (four female, five male) from a Swiss fourth-grade regular class participated in the study. To capture the pupils' experiences, a quantitative screening questionnaire was first used, which was then analysed using descriptive statistics. Further, a qualitative drawing and writing session, semi-structured interview and member reflection were used, which were then analysed using reflective thematic analysis.

Results and conclusion: The pupils described several aspects that promote and hinder participation in shared occupations. Their perception of belonging plays a central role in their active participation in school life and well-being. Participating in shared occupations in the school context is vital for pupils' well-being. While teachers are essential for implementing shared occupations, occupational therapists play an important supportive role for pupils and teachers in facilitating inclusive learning opportunities.

Keywords: Children's voice, school class, well-being, health

Burkart Aline (October 2022)

Measuring Participation and Environment in Children and Adolescents with CP in Switzerland

Known-Groups and Convergent Validity of the German Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth in Children with Cerebral Palsy in Switzerland

Introduction: Participation is the most important outcome in the rehabilitation of children with cerebral palsy (CP). It is closely interrelated with environment and can be measured with the Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth (PEM-CY). No studies about the measurement properties of the German Version of the PEM-CY have been carried out to date with Children with Cerebral Palsy. The construct validity of newly translated measurement should be analysed.

Aim: This study researched the construct validity of the German PEM-CY in Children with CP between 5 and 17 years in Switzerland.

Method: Parents of children with CP and of children without disability aged 5-17 years living in the German part of Switzerland answered the PEM-CY, Child and Adolescent Scale of Environment (CASE), Child and Adolescent Scale of Participation (CASP) and demographic questions. We analysed construct validity statistically through hypothesis testing on known-groups and convergent validity.

Results: The PEM-CY can detect differences between children with CP and without disabilities. The PEM-CY could not measure differences in age groups or MACS levels. Correlations between PEM-CY and the CASP, and the PEM-CY and the CASE suggest that the measures assess similar constructs.

Conclusion: Hypotheses concerning diagnostic groups and convergent validity could partly be confirmed. Methodological issues make it necessary to make cautious interpretations of the results. Further studies with bigger and more balanced samples are needed to make more valid, reliable, and generalizable statements about the construct validity of the German PEM-CY.

Keywords: PEM-CY, Participation, Environment, Validity, Cerebral Palsy, Switzerland

Marion Gecaj (Jan 2023)

Occupational balance in young adults with cancer in Switzerland

Aim: Explore and describe the lived experience of occupational balance among young adults with cancer in a sample from Switzerland.

Background: In a life period characterized by self-determination and independence, cancer influences adolescents and young adults (AYA) in several aspects. An occupational disruption is observable due to multiple factors. As they face changes in roles and activities, the occupational balance concept is relevant to explore their experience.

Methods: An interpretative phenomenological analysis was used. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a convenient homogeneous sample of 3 young adults. An inductive analysis was undertaken to build themes and meanings.

Findings: Three main themes emerged from the analysis 1) The perceived consequences of cancer influencing occupational balance 2) Engaging in occupations to find balance 3) Experiencing imbalance.

Discussion / Conclusion: Consequences of cancer influence occupational balance. Changes appear in daily activities through a process of prioritization related to the significance attached to occupations. Engagement in occupations helps to navigate through cancer and reach a satisfying occupational balance. However, imbalance is experienced when participants compare themselves to peers. Their rhythm is incompatible with normal life. They need to provide extra energy to reach norms. An interpersonal/societal perspective of occupational balance could provide a wider understanding of the experience of occupational balance.

Keywords: young adults - cancer- activities - occupational balance

Groves Jordyn (October 2022)

Exploring the experience of diabetic peripheral neuropathy in the hands on occupational engagement: a qualitative systematic review

Background: Research into the experience of occupational engagement in persons with diabetic peripheral neuropathy (DPN) is needed due to the growing population diagnosed with diabetes worldwide. Occupational engagement is imperative to maintaining well-being, however little is known about the experience of engagement in persons with DPN, with limited research available.

Method: A qualitative systematic review was conducted and a thematic analysis of the data completed in order to explore the experience of engagement in occupations through existing data.

Results: The findings showed persons suffering with DPN reported issues with sleep, feelings of isolation, difficulties in relationships, and distraction from responsibilities. The most significant finding was that pain was reportedly a distraction from engaging in occupations. This is in contrast to occupational therapy literature that encourages occupational engagement as a treatment modality in order to maintain well-being and health.

Conclusion: This new finding is significant as it challenges current understandings and thinking around occupational engagement. If pain causes a distraction from being able to engage in occupations, then occupational therapy approaches to treatment need to be reconsidered.

Keywords: diabetic peripheral neuropathy, occupational engagement, pain, qualitative systematic review

Revazishvili Ana (October 2022)

Relevance of Professional Occupational Therapy Education Program to the Local Context in Georgia: Critical Participatory Action Research

Background: Today's fast-paced life puts health-promoting professions in a challenging position, especially after a broader definition of health. Wilcock argues that social issues affect more people than we realize and cannot be medically "cured" in the way some physical illnesses can. Scholars have tried to define the constantly developing role of the occupational therapy profession. Acknowledgment of the impact of various factors and localization in education helps the profession become more accommodating to the local context. To start the localization process first appraisal of the professional education program is suggested.

Research Question: How does occupational therapy education program prepare professionals for local community needs in the context of Georgian society?

Study Design and Methodology: Co-researchers have explored local professional educational occupational therapy program through critical participatory action research design with a critical constructivism lens. Action and data collection methods used with different learning community members were: photovoice, semi-structured interviews and World Café.

Findings and discussion: Three main themes and four categories emerged from collected data: 1. Learning by doing – ready for the pediatric field a) Learning by doing – ready for the real-world b) Preparing pediatric OT practitioners 2. Making learning attainable [to students] and supported [by teachers] a) Lack of accessible and applicable literature b) Support on and off the field 3. Belonging to the supportive community. CPAR showed that collaboration between current and former students and educators could be the reflective process that leads to a fruitful discussion on important and relevant topics for all parties involved. The process led to creating a shared knowledge that can be a stepping stone toward future problem-solving processes in academia.

Keywords: Critical Participatory Action Research, Localization, professional Education

Schohl Philipp (October 2022)

*Cross-Cultural Validity of the PEDI-CAT in Germany and Switzerland:
Comparison of Item Hierarchies in a sample of 4-8 old children*

Background: The Pediatric Evaluation of Disability Inventory – Computer Adaptive Test (PEDI-CAT) is a parent-reported assessment addressing activities of daily life for children and adolescents from 6 months to 21 years. Based on Item Response Theory, it yields many advantages for occupation-centred practice. The German and other translated versions use the original US-American normative data. Similar functioning though cannot be guaranteed. This project examines the PEDI-CAT's cross-cultural validity, investigating differences in item hierarchies per domain.

Method: A cross-sectional design was incorporated, collecting data (n=112) from parents of children aged 4-8 years in Germany and Switzerland. A Rasch Analysis generated measures for item difficulties. Correlation coefficients, scatter plots and comparisons of item hierarchies were created for each domain, comparing US with German-Speaking difficulties.

Results/ Findings: The Social/ Cognitive domain provided both the highest correlation between German and US, as well as the least changes in the item hierarchy. The Daily Activities and Responsibility domain showed similar correlation, the Daily Activities domain had more hierarchical changes. The Mobility Domain showed both a lower correlation coefficient and high number of fluctuations in the item hierarchy.

Conclusion: The project yielded first insights into the cross-cultural use of the PEDI-CAT. Differences in areas like traffic, nutrition or the use of digital devices could be detected across domains. A larger sample with a broader age range are needed for further research.

Keywords: Pediatric Evaluation of Disability Inventory, PEDI-CAT, Activities of Daily life, Item Response Theory, Cross-Cultural Validity, Item Hierarchy

Sokolich Lauren (Jan 2023)

*The Meanings Found in Focused Interests by Autistic Adults
A Narrative Study*

Background: There is a significant worldwide prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) which has been steadily increasing over the last few decades. With a lack of research done with, and on, autistic adults, there is a crucial need for a broadened and more robust understanding of focused interests for autistic adults. The meaning behind the engagement in this occupation and understanding the real-life contextual consequences for participation could help occupational therapists and scientists approach this subject in a more sensitized manner, therefore serving and representing this overlooked group more effectively and ethically.

Methods: A narrative design was used with three participants including open qualitative interviews with participant observations. Data analysis was done using a narrative analysis method following Ricoeur's three-fold mimesis.

Findings: The findings, presented as short story summaries and vignettes, show how the participants enact meanings in their engagement in their focused interests in various, complex ways in their daily lives.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that meaning is embedded in focused interest activities and that the meanings are enacted by the participants in various intense and complex ways. The use of either a symptomatic or strength-based approach appears to the researcher as an oversimplification. It could be suggested that there is value in first using a narrative approach to gain more information about the focused interests of autistic adults. Spending time to ask questions, observing, participating, and creating safe spaces to adequately understand and respect focused interests not only as symptoms or solutions/ therapy tools but as meaningful parts of autistic people's lives.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Focused Interests, Narrative

Velama Milla (October 2022)

Professional Identity of Occupational Therapists Working in The Field of Hand Therapy in Finland: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Introduction: Occupational therapy has been challenged with its professional identity throughout its history due to the complicated relationship between holistic and medical perspectives on health. The professional identity of OTs working in the field of hand therapy has not been explored before, although this field has been criticized for focusing too much on the biomechanical factors, leaving occupational perspective aside. The aim of this study was to explore how OTs working in the field of hand therapy in Finland give meaning to their professional identity.

Methods: An interpretive phenomenological analysis was chosen as an approach. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews from nine participants and three themes were developed during the data analysis.

Findings: The findings highlighted following themes: 1) occupational therapist in hand therapy – strong but unclear professional identity, 2) developing professional identity as an occupational therapist in hand therapy – a challenging process and 3) Identity of a “hard worker” – part of being an occupational therapist in hand therapy.

Conclusion: Although the participants reported a sense of a strong OT identity, occupational perspective stayed in the background instead of being the center of their practice, revealing unclarity in their professional identity. To support the professional identity of OTs working in hand therapy in Finland, attention should be paid to integrating occupational perspective to hand therapy practice, improving introduction protocols, and functioning of interprofessional teamwork and consider appropriate targeting of OT services in hand therapy.

Keywords: occupational therapy, hand therapy, professional identity, interpretive phenomenological analysis

Weber Sascha (October)

Occupational identity of students during the COVID-19 pandemic

Exploring the experiences of students living on university campus regarding occupational identity and occupational disruption

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic led countries to adopt restrictive measures to mitigate the spread of the virus which disrupted students' daily life. Such unexpected change in occupational engagement has significant potential to affect students' occupational identity. The study aims to explore the experiences of students living on campus, regarding their occupational identity, while facing restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: Interviews from six university students living on campus were analysed using a constant comparative approach, following constructivist grounded theory.

Findings: The analysis resulted in one overarching core category named "From missing out to greater confidence in identity" and in the following five categories: Influence of the centrality of the missed occupation on identity, Not feeling like a student, Live life as normally as possible, Slower life rhythm inducing introspection and better knowledge of oneself and Coming out stronger.

Conclusion: The study suggests that responses to occupational disruption can be positive in terms of occupational identity. Moreover, the disruption from a central occupation to the sense of self is more likely to cause occupational identity disruption, than the disruption from a secondary occupation, which can be "paused" and replaced with other occupations, without generating an occupational identity crisis.

Keywords: occupational identity, university students, occupational disruption, COVID-19 pandemic

Weymann Aninka (Jan 2023)

Enacting occupation-based social transformative practices working with displaced persons in Europe: A critical dialogical study

Background: In response to increasing forced migration across the globe, occupational therapists in Europe are returning to the profession's roots in confronting social and health injustices through occupation-based practices with social transformation as a focus. Different contextual influences determine how occupational therapies in different places are enacted. A lack of theory in supporting such development has been acknowledged by scholars.

Methods: Three participants working with displaced persons in Europe took part on a voluntarily basis. Three dialogical interviews were conducted with each participant. Critical reflexivity was implemented through the exchange of transcripts and critical reflections with participants. A critical realist approach to reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse how these practices are shaped within the European context.

Aim: To explore how occupation-based have been used to enact social transformation with displaced persons in the European context.

Findings: Three dominant themes developed; connecting through cultural and social sensitive communication as social support, recognition through the occupational perspective as professional justification and concerned involvement through personal values as a serious commitment.

Conclusion: Dialogue strived to increase the awareness of how powers exist which bind the practices with displaced persons. Occupational therapists are using their power base as educators to expose occupational therapy students to the client population through which personal change as well as social change on a small scale may be achieved. Reflexivity and collaboration is recommended for these practices.

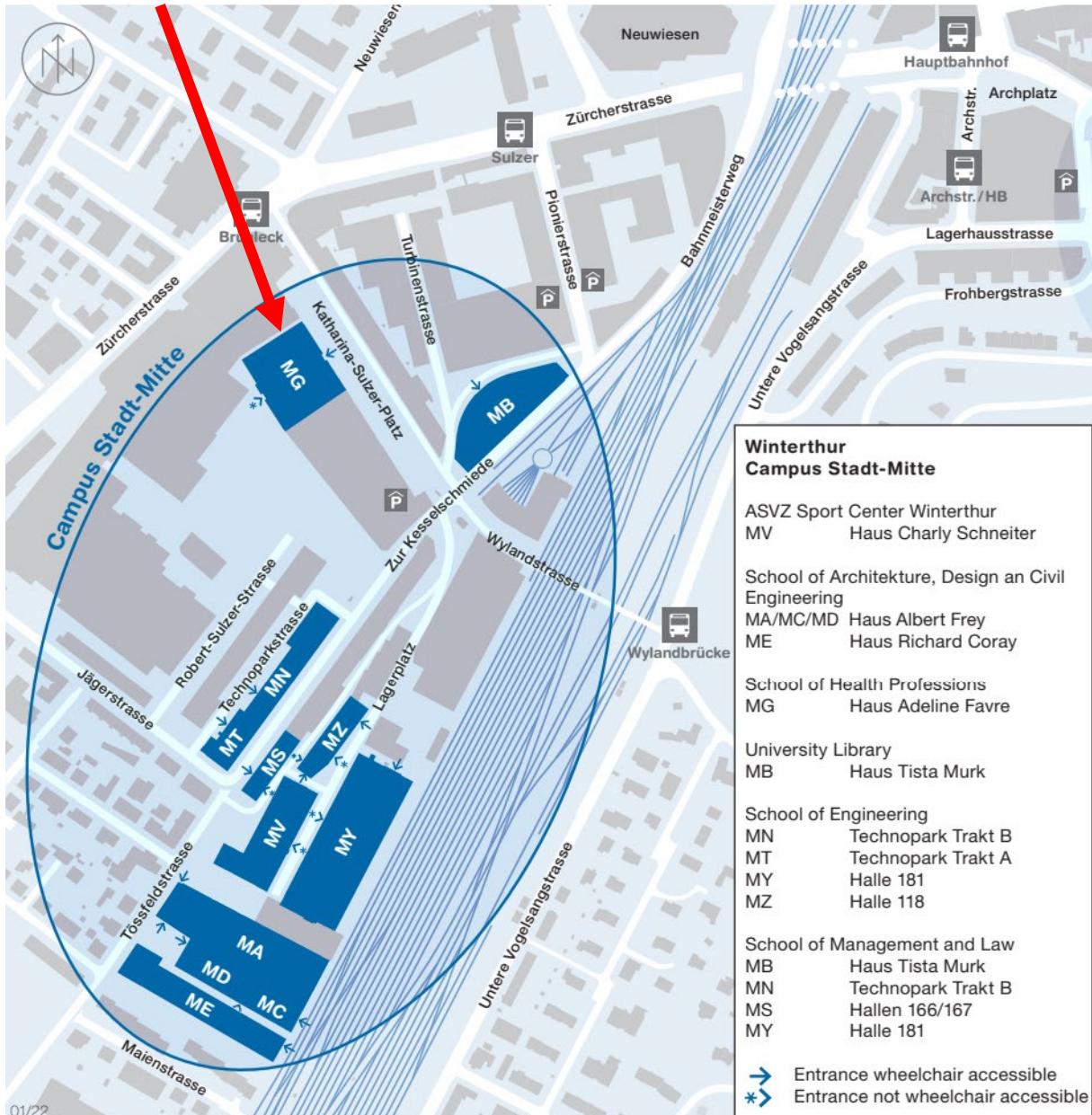
Keywords: Displaced persons, social transformation, Europe, critical reflexivity

Finding your way around the School of Health Sciences at ZHAW ([link to online map](#))

The building MG is called “Haus Adeline Favre”.

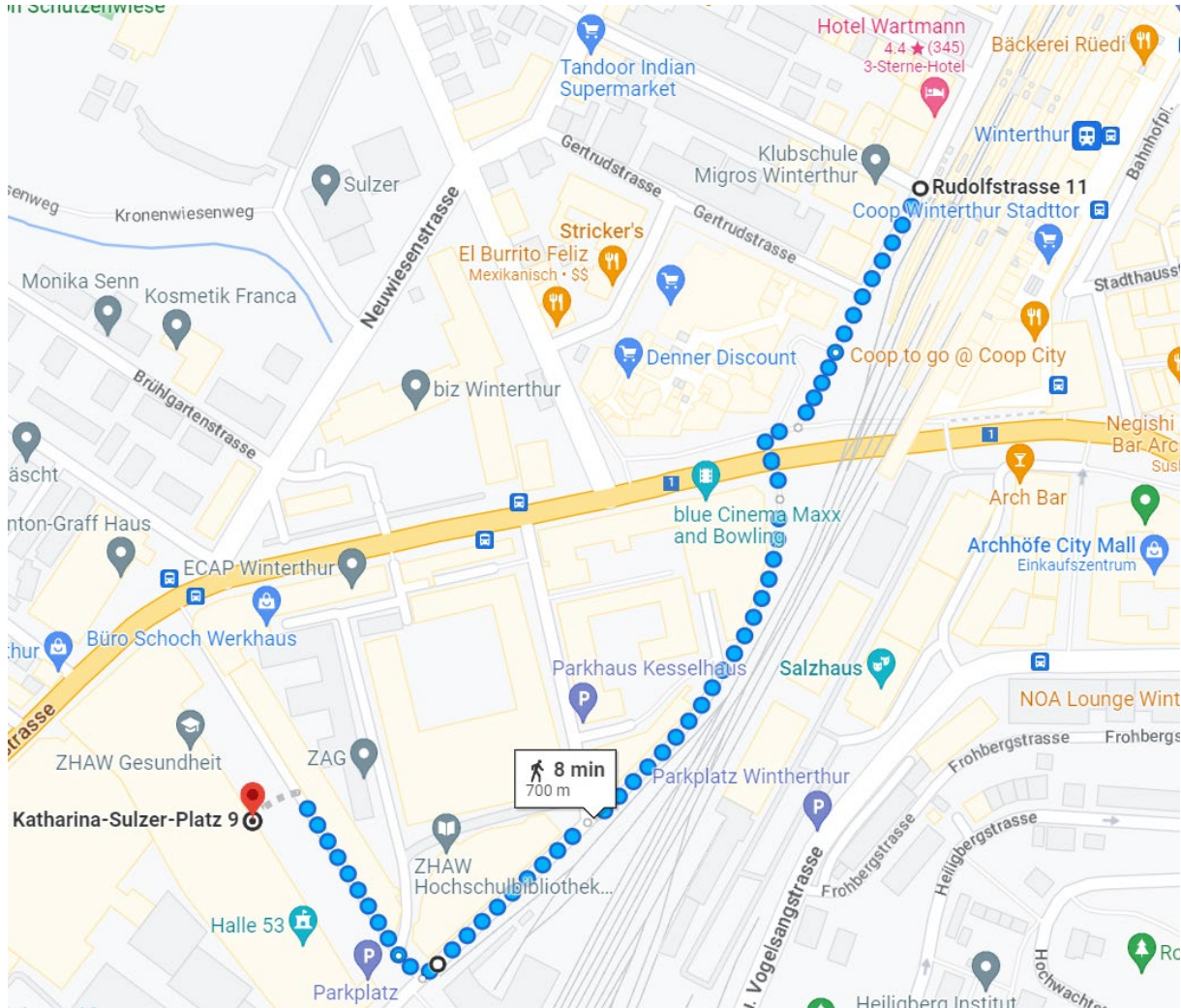
The Thesis Presentation Seminar and graduation ceremony will take place on the first floor.

Haus Adeline Favre



How to get to the campus:

The School of Health Sciences is located a 10 min. walk from the Winterthur train station. Winterthur train station is a 15 min train ride from Zurich Airport. Check schedules on sbb.ch



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