



Who and what is shaping our assessment practice?

A scoping review of assessment
in OT education

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ASSESSMENT



Assessment decisions shape not only students' academic trajectories, but also the kinds of professionals we entrust to serve communities and therefore the profession itself.

VALID



**core
educational
and ethical
responsibility**

*‘How do we ensure
assessment practice that is
valid for the education of OT
professionals, within the
South African context?’*





Validity

- Validity as an ***argument-based evidentiary chain***:
 - Considers rigour of methods & consequences of decisions
 - Within social, cultural, & institutional contexts
- Validity as a ***social imperative***:
 - Justice-oriented & decolonial perspectives
 - Whose knowledge is valued?
 - Whose capabilities are recognised?
 - Who benefits—or is disadvantaged—by assessment practices?



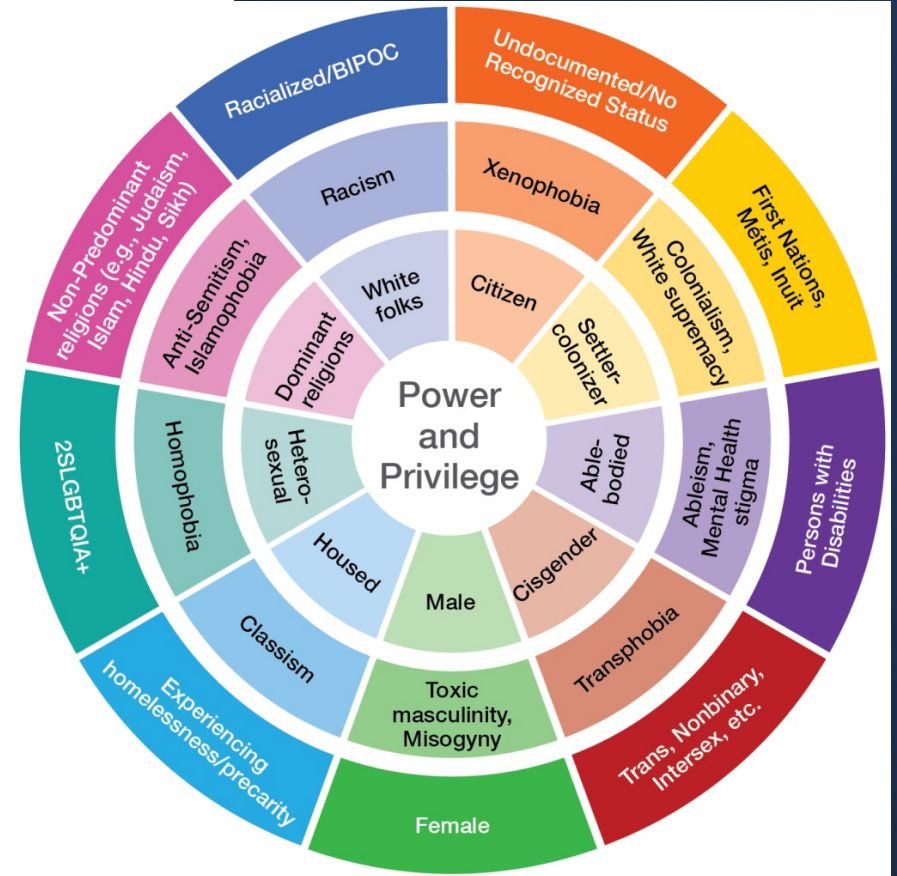
Purpose of the Study

- Scoping review: critically examine assessment scholarship
- Are current practices valid for the **profession** across diverse global **contexts?**
- What literature does exist?
- Gaps?
- Types of evidence?
- Where and how it was produced?
- Critical paradigm
 - Key ontological belief: multiple realities exist & knowledge is influenced by who holds power



Reflexivity

- White, heterosexual female
- Immediate privilege & advantage (genealogy & demographics)
- Majority stance in profession of OT

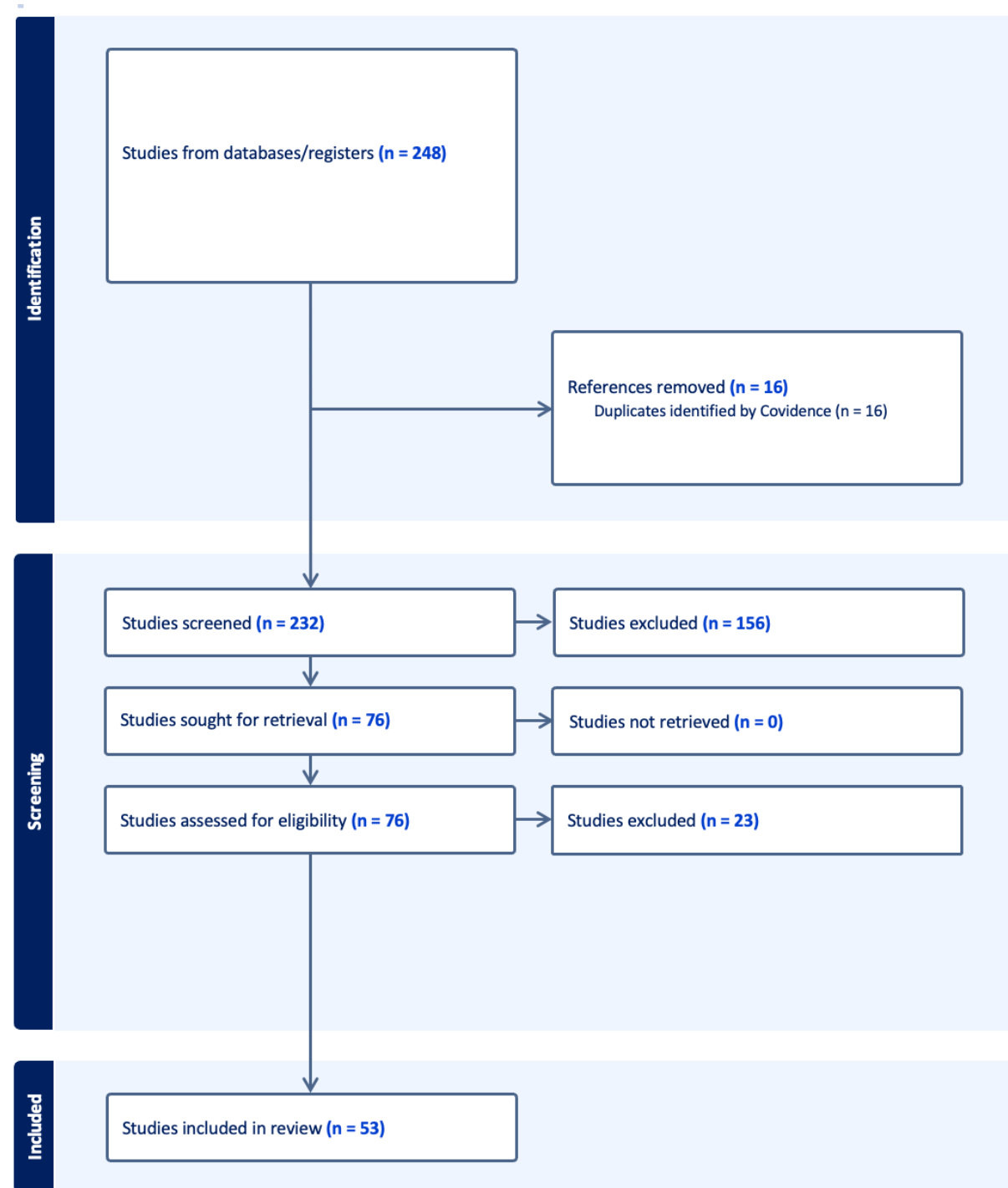




Methodology



- 232 papers
- Two authors screened independently
- **Inclusion criteria:**
 - Entry-level OT education (or OT included in dataset)
 - Focus on assessment practice (methods, philosophy, decisions, curriculum)
 - English, full-text articles only
- Final inclusion: **53 studies** included
- Main exclusion reason: Insufficient focus on assessment practice





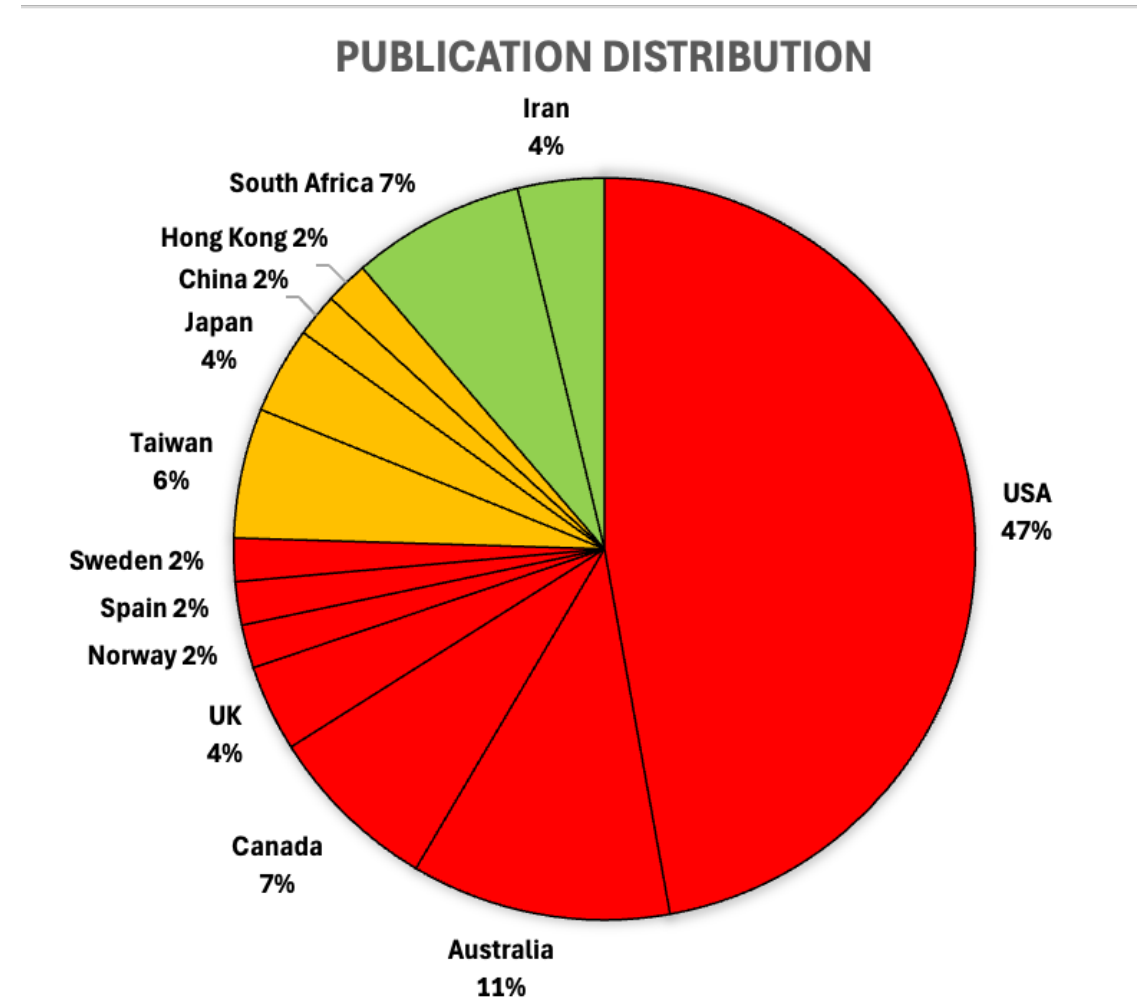
Data Analysis

- Critical discourse analysis
- **Language** shapes ways we think about assessment
- Examining how **power operates**
- How thinking has been shaped by broader professional, institutional, & historical contexts?
- Rigour
 - Primary author analysed all articles & co-authors independently reviewing subset
 - AI tool used as a reflexive sense-check
 - Ongoing discussion & return to data



Results

Country	% (n)	Country	% (n)
USA	47 (25)	Norway	2 (1)
Australia	11 (6)	Spain	2 (1)
Canada	8 (4)	Sweden	2 (1)
South Africa	8 (4)	Japan	2 (1)
Taiwan	6 (3)	China	2 (1)
UK	4 (2)	Hong Kong	2 (1)
Iran	4 (2)		





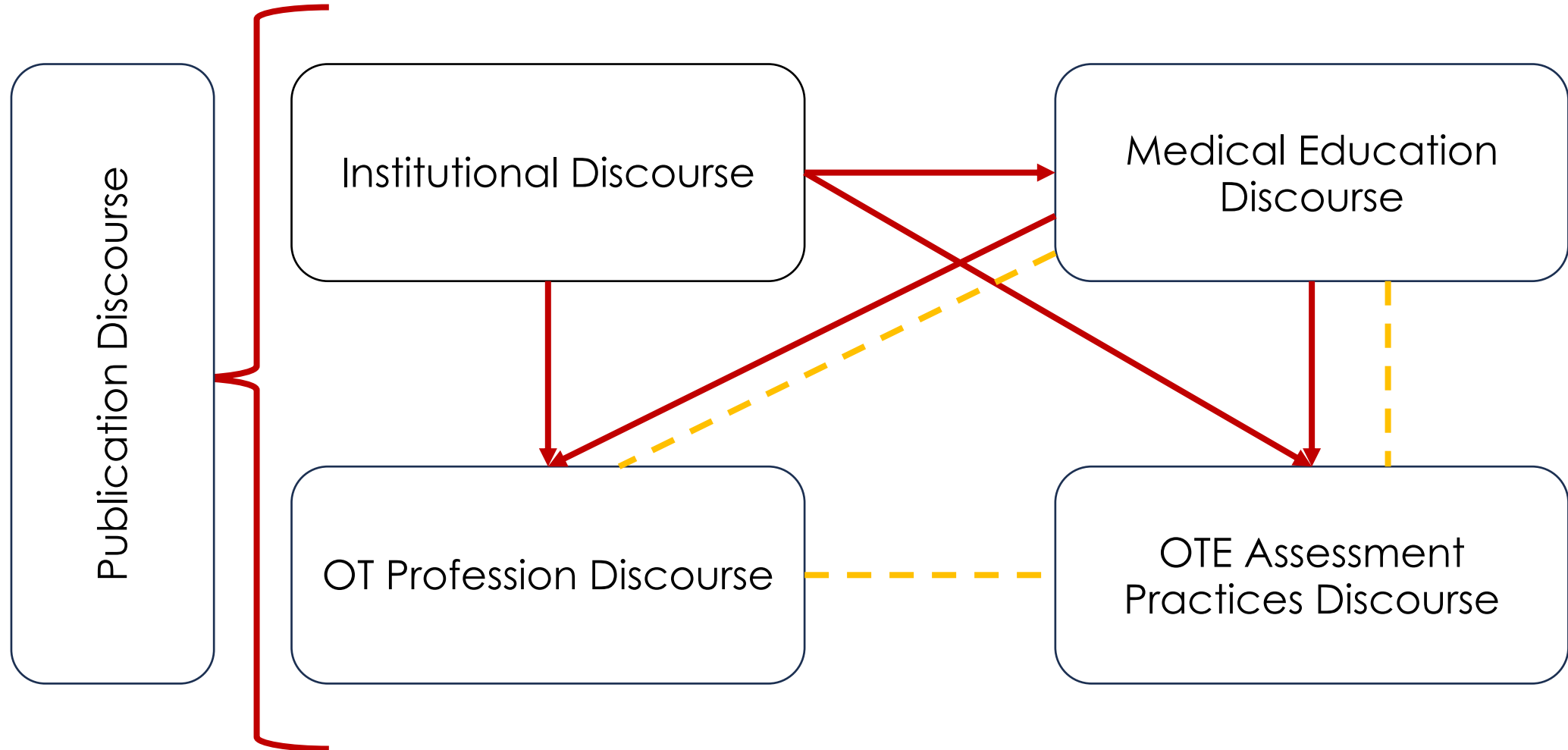
Results

Assessment focus	% (n)
Competency-Based (CB)	23 (12)
OSPE/OSCE	21 (11)
Skill specific assessment	17 (9)
Assessment approach	13 (7)
Self-Reports	6 (3)
Simulated Patient experiences	6 (3)
MCQ	4 (2)
Context	4 (2)
Portfolio	2 (1)
Written Assessments	2 (1)
Oral assessment	2 (1)
Digital storytelling	2 (1)

Journal	Number of publications
Journal of Occupational Therapy Education	17
The American Journal of Occupational Therapy	6
British Journal of Occupational Therapy	4
Doctoral Dissertation	4
The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy	3
Australian Occupational Therapy Journal	2
The Journal of Physical Therapy Science	2
Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education	1
Australasian Journal of Educational Technology	1
BMC Medical Education	1
Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy	1
Focus on Health Professional Education: A multi-disciplinary journal	1
Healthcare	1
INMED	1
Innovations in Education and Teaching International	1
Journal of Allied Health	1
Journal of Rehabilitation	1
Medical Teacher	1
Occupational Therapy International	1
Queens University	1
Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy	1



Discourses, power & tensions



Use of assessment methods that emphasise rote learning and grades	<u>VS</u>	Focus on clinical reasoning skills
Focus on CBME	<u>VS</u>	Challenge of applying CBME to OT & no evidence to support it's use
<p>OT as part of the collective 'allied health'</p> <p><i>"Although the development of the CBEF focused on the evaluation of occupational therapy students, efforts were made throughout the development process to acknowledge the commonalities among rehabilitation disciplines and to create an instrument that could potentially be applied across disciplines."</i></p>	<u>VS</u>	<p>OT as unique</p> <p><i>"By infusing occupation into curriculum threads, course objectives, and learning activities, students and faculty stay focused on the unique qualities that distinguish occupational therapy from other professions."</i></p>

<p>Set standards & strict marking criteria <i>“therapists have a common understanding of what constitutes unacceptable performance for a student and what constitutes exceptional performance.”</i></p> <p><i>“If our discipline is to move forward as a profession known for their expertise and client centeredness, we must base our standard of student competence on stringent grading policies and faith in educators’ grading practices.”</i></p>	<p><u>VS</u></p>	<p>Allowing for personal experience & understanding <i>“if you develop a sufficiently objective scoring system for the portfolio so that you can adequately compare people with one another, you may end up objectifying the portfolio to the point of it being nothing but a cumbersome multiple-choice test.”</i></p> <p><i>“This belief is underpinned by the principles of constructivist learning theory, which postulate that the learner is responsible for constructing his or her own knowledge from experience.”</i></p>
<p>Uniform ways of assessing across contexts</p>	<p><u>VS</u></p>	<p>Appreciating diverse contexts</p>
<p>Focusing on characteristics of validity & reliability (positivist paradigm) <i>To address concerns about validity, the reviewers were asked to comment on comprehensiveness, wording and the appropriate-ness of the scale; to address concerns about utility or user-friendliness”</i></p>	<p><u>VS</u></p>	<p>Focusing on rigor (constructivist paradigm) <i>“The use of stricter assessment criteria or more structured and prescribed content would improve inter-rater reliability but would obliterate the essence of the portfolio assessment in terms of flexibility, personal orientation and authenticity.”</i></p>

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Discussion → Lift & Shift

- Strategy in IT: data on a software platform are migrated to cloud platform
- Time & cost effective BUT suboptimal use
- Global North medical programs → OT profession and varied contexts
- = misalignment with professional realities → undermines validity

When the degree of alignment between the **assessment system** and the **realities of the profession in the real world** are maximized, assessment becomes an effective and efficient educational tool. Alternatively, if assessment is not providing an accurate representation of how the student may perform in real life contexts, it fails to meet the purpose of assessment.

- Risks reinforcing dominant medical discourses & marginalising OTs philosophical foundations & plural ways of demonstrating competence.



KEY MESSAGES

- Build **OT-specific assessment scholarship**
- Critically examine **models designed for medical education e.g. competency-based**
- Expand validity to include **authenticity & social impact**
- Promote **epistemic plurality** in HPE publishing

Aligning assessment with OT philosophy is essential not only for educational coherence, but for the future relevance and integrity of the profession.



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