

What is Occupational Engagement?

Karen Burgess

This paper aims to:

- Critically evaluate the development of the concept of occupational engagement
- Critically appraise the literature related to occupational engagement from a social constructionist perspective
- Propose a definition of occupational engagement

The lack of formal definition of occupational engagement is potentially problematic for both occupational therapists and occupational scientists. Without it, it is not possible for researchers to be clear that they are exploring the same or related concepts. Readers of research also need clear definitions to help frame the information in relation to their own understanding of the concept. Reilly (1962) is often quoted (for example Brienes 1995; Christiansen, Little, and Backman 1998; Cook and Howe 2003; Cynkin and Robinson 1990; Dunn 2001; Emerson et al., 1998) as stressing the importance of engaging in occupation as being important for physical and mental wellbeing. She is considered to be one of the founders of modern occupational therapy. However, this claim is often only stated and very little research has been published which attempts to define the term or test its credibility.

Some authors appear to consider engagement, as an observable entity, whilst others discuss it as a construct. Several authors refer to occupational engagement, or engagement in occupation. Engagement, is sometimes used interchangeably with participation, or one word is used to define the other, for example Kielhofner (2002b) defines occupational participation as “Engagement in work, play, or activities of daily living that are part of one’s sociocultural context and that are desired and/or necessary to one,s well-being.” (p122). Therefore it is important to clarify any difference between the two terms from an occupational perspective in order to define occupational engagement.

It is acknowledged that occupational engagement is a complex, subjective and multifaceted concept which needs careful investigation to understand fully. The etymologies of relevant words will be explored and this, in conjunction with the literature, will be used to formulate a conceptual framework to define occupational engagement for future research.

Occupation-Centered Practice: Providing Opportunities for Becoming and Belonging **Pollie Price**

Although occupation has been the central heuristic for occupational therapy practice since its inception, until recently, scholars have not examined how occupation emerges in practice. The paper will present findings of a study that examined forms of occupation and

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occupation-centered processes of two experienced occupational therapists who were nominated by peers and self-espoused as occupation-centered. Each therapist selected two infants or children and their parents to participate. Observations and interviews were conducted as the therapists interacted with the children and parents over the course of service. Narrative analysis (Mattingly, 1998, Reissman, 1991) and micro-analytic strategies (Mattingly, 1998) were employed to closely examine the therapeutic processes as they emerged and unfolded over time, yielding several findings. First, both therapists thought of occupation as social; their processes enabled attachment, social connectedness and participation (Lawlor, 2003) as outcomes, placing less emphasis on developing skills for discreet occupational performances. Second, occupation as an idea emerged in the therapeutic processes as meaning was co-created about what the therapy experiences meant for who the child and/or family were becoming in their social worlds; generic activities became occupational. Finally, the paper will elaborate on analysis that highlighted numerous micro-processes embedded in the therapeutic relationships, and how the therapists tacitly synthesized the particulars of the situations to improvise and maneuver subsequent actions as they moved toward the desired outcome. Doing with (Jackson, 1998; Lawlor, 2003; Mattingly & Fleming, 1994; Peloquin, 1990, 1995) created an intra-personal context in which transformations happened that otherwise could not have. All efforts made by the children, therapists and mothers enabled them to move forward on a narrative trajectory (Corbin & Strauss, 1988; Mattingly, 1991, 1994) to who the were becoming in their social worlds. Finally, therapists mentored parents to achieve peripheral legitimate participation (Lave & Wenger, 1999, Wenger, 1998) in the social practices, and acquire competence in advocating for and confidence nurturing their child; parents helped their child generalize their adaptiveness into new social arenas.

The findings will stimulate participant discussion about the therapeutic aspects of context, activity, process and relationship, and implications for studying and teaching occupation-centered practice.

Social Participation: An Essential Element of Preschoolers' Occupation

Lou Ann Griswold

Adrienne W. Smith

Lori Burns

Children engage in a variety of occupations throughout their day, including structured learning activities and spontaneous play. Many children spend at least part of their day with other children, either in childcare or preschool. While early childhood educators likely have identified objectives for structured activities, it is the spontaneous play and interactions that need further exploration. This study contributes to our understanding of children,s occupations, particularly social participation, in a childcare setting.

This paper will describe qualitative research conducted by a faculty member and two senior level occupational therapy students in a childcare setting. Data collection took place during four mornings over a two-week period of time in a preschool class designed for

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four-year old children. Researchers videotaped continuously over a two and a half hour period each of these mornings. In addition, a second researcher collected observational data at ten-minute intervals throughout the morning sessions, recording information about peer interactions and teacher-child interactions throughout the classroom. Morning activities in the class included free play, group circle time, structured learning activities, and outdoor recess. The findings describe the unstructured and naturally occurring play and conversations among members of the preschool class. Specifically the results report (1) the interactions between teachers and children, (2) interactions among the children, and (3) the flexibility of a “schedule” of activities that comprise the routine of a preschool class morning.

The research findings contribute to our understanding of the social interactions among all members of a preschool class. This study highlights that spontaneous play and interaction, part of childhood occupations, are as important to consider as the structured learning activities. Awareness of social participation will enable occupational therapists and other professionals to more effectively use the social environment as an intervention tool to better support a child's participation in a preschool class.

Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science: Past and Future
Don Gordon

The history of occupational therapy as generally understood is conspicuously without any reference to the role of science in the founders' vision of occupational therapy. However, the founders understood the clear need to delineate a scientific basis for understanding the healing power of occupation in terms of both the present and the future of the fledgling profession. This presentation will explore the science of the early years of the profession, as well as consider the goals for a science of understanding occupation and its therapeutic effect. While different in many ways, the goals for a science of occupational therapy in the era of the founders is not completely unlike the goals of occupational science today.

This presentation will begin with a brief review of the fundamental role of science in the founding of the profession of occupational therapy. This movement into a foundation in science presented a clear departure from moral treatment, the reported predecessor of occupational therapy. Occupational therapy would be born within a larger cultural world in which science and its knowledge formations would gain increasing power and cultural cachet. The birth of occupational therapy and its scientific foundation were integrally linked to the birth of psychotherapy, and the rise to prominence of the psychological sciences in the early years of the twentieth century. This initial understanding of the connection between the mind and body, or psyche and soma, created a fertile ground for the birth of a therapeutic technique that incorporated both mind and body: occupational therapy. This paper will conclude by examining and presenting for discussion the critical nature of understanding the reciprocal relationship between mind and body for the future of both occupational science and occupational therapy.

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Peer Influences on Occupational Engagement in the Infant and Toddler Classroom
Ruth Humphry

Meaning is thought to influence choice among alternative activities and how an occupation is performed. Since the self-organizing process of engagement and purpose of doing an activity are mechanisms bringing about systematic changes a greater understanding of children's experiences of interest, value and social significance in the things they do is important for understanding development of occupation. Although adults create the sociocultural niches where children engage in their daily activities, adults are not the only source for learning about or socially sharing in occupational meaning. Peers' activities include value-rich information that children observe, reflect on, interpret and incorporate into their definitions of situations related to their own occupations. Furthermore, through imitation and social interactions children who spend sustained time together create their own network of shared meaning about familiar activities, in some ways creating for a period their own subculture.

This study is part of a research program designed to understand the ways children take on the societal knowledge of how to use objects, carry out daily activities in an expected manner, and appreciate meaning in what they do. The paper explores how infants and toddlers in their childcare classroom contribute to the development of one another's occupations by enriching each other's experiences of meaning. Data for this paper come from 6 months of weekly observations of infants who were between 7 and 13 months old when their parents enrolled them in the study. Written records of their social behaviors and play when an adult was not directing their activities are analyzed, using a strategy similar to the one pioneered by Spitzer. The study first examines social dynamics and how young children construct meaning about an activity. Next, it considers how altered experiences of meaning potentially changes what children choose to do and how their occupations are performed.

A Historical Analysis of the Occupation of Writing and its Application to Occupational Science
Christopher J. Alterio

The occupation of writing has had a significant impact on individuals and societies; writing demands serious inquiry and study by occupational scientists. This paper provides a review of the richness of the occupation of writing and describes how writing has been important for individual and societal development across time. Studying historical events and literary examples of writing provides insight into the way that diverse fields of history, literature, philosophy, religion, sociology, anthropology, and psychology all intersected in the developmental course of human knowledge and in the establishment of the associated occupation of writing.

Once people within societies developed an advanced sense of self-identity, writers began to explore their own lives more deeply. This led to the modern age where writing was

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commonplace and then led into the post-modern era when many people participate in this activity in everyday journaling and through online virtual contexts. Writing offers a rich source of narrative information for understanding our historicity and for conducting inquiries into other occupations. Occupational scientists who understand the power of writing will be able to use it both as a research methodology as well as a subject itself for further inquiry. Occupational scientists should be particularly interested in studying hypertext as a new form of communication and self-expression. The accessible format of online journaling and the associated proliferation of journaling websites are both examples of instant hypertext sources of data for qualitative studies.

The occupation of writing has a complex and critical role in human history. Occupational scientists should be acutely interested in investigating the ways that writing has an empowering effect on human and social development across time. Occupational scientists should be able to access this type of narrative information for continued development of knowledge in occupational science.

Women Ex-offenders as Mothers: Intergenerational Risk and Resiliency Factors in the Lives of Women Ex-offenders

Phyllis J. Meltzer

Jack Scott

About 70% of women incarcerated in the nation's prisons are the mothers of one or more children under the age of 18 years. Past research shows that many of these children are at high risk for later criminal behavior, but our understanding of their early living arrangements is incomplete. In particular, findings from a number of studies have shown that women who have become involved with the criminal justice system have higher rates of school-aged pregnancies (prior to the age of 17 years) than the general population. We present data from a pilot study (n=30) of the use of the Self-Discovery Tapestry as a tool for exploring intergenerational risk and resiliency factors in the lives of adult women ex-offenders who became mothers. The Self-Discovery tapestry is an interactive visual life review instrument that provides a simple way for women to represent their life markers and continuous experiences over time. In this study we use the Tapestry as a tool for examining the occurrence, timing and duration of selected risk behaviors and resilient occupations in the lives of women ex-offenders who have become mothers versus those women who did not.

In this paper, we discuss past research on school-aged pregnancies and integrate it with work on women ex-offenders as mothers. We explore the value of the Tapestry as a data-gathering approach for studying intergenerational patterns (mother's childhood and children's childhood experiences) of risk and resiliency factors, and examine the extent to which specific maternal risk and resiliency factors predict school-aged pregnancies and whether the same factors present in the mother's childhood appear in that of her children. We focus on a particular resiliency factor—the presence of a natural adult mentor in the lives of the mothers. We conclude by discussing ways in which the Self-Discovery Tapestry can be used to facilitate additional research on intergenerational patterns of occupation among ex-offenders and other populations.

The Meaning of Boredom to Adults Recovering from Substance Use Disorder

Antonietta Corvinelli

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore the meaning of boredom from the perspective of adults recovering from substance use disorder. Seven males and one female recovering from Substance Use disorder were interviewed for this preliminary post-professional master's level study. Six of the eight participants were intravenous drug users. Participants were recruited from an urban day treatment center offering treatment to people with HIV/AIDS. Three themes were identified: boredom as a precursor, activities and boredom, and patterns of boredom as recovery progresses. Boredom was experienced as a

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precursor to using drugs. Boredom also triggered self-examination: Past loss, incomplete achievement, and lack of life meaning and purpose were recalled when bored. Alongside boredom, anxiety, frustration, worry and depression were remarked. Participants reported being alone and doing nothing while bored. In response to boredom, experienced as especially overwhelming in early recovery, drug use was reported. Later in recovery, a wider repertoire of activities, were employed. In addition, boredom was tolerated. The importance of recognizing and attending to boredom persisted, regardless of the length of time in recovery. A definition and model were synthesized from these themes. This master's level project is a beginning for continuing doctoral work. It is the intent of this writer to isolate the experience of boredom for substance users in recovery. Given the sample characteristics (HIV/AIDS), comparison groups will be interviewed. Four participants not known to be substance users have thus far been interviewed. In contrast to substance users, boredom was identified with respect to specific occupations such as work. Boredom was experienced as less expansive. Normal participants will continue to be interviewed. In addition, users of other drugs of choice besides intravenous heroin, as well as participants with HIV/AIDS not known to be substance users, will be interviewed. In this way, a limitation of the preliminary study can be addressed. Occupational therapists are in a position to incorporate boredom coping in the treatment of substance use.

Understanding clients, particular experiences of boredom at the appropriate stage of recovery will enable practitioners to grade and adapt purposeful occupations, a crucial addition to relapse prevention.

Parenting the Child with Asthma: Managing Uncertainty and Making Choices to Assert Control
Ellen S. Cohn

Asthma, a common chronic childhood disease, is considered a national epidemic affecting approximately 4.4 million children in the United States. Minority children experience higher rates of asthma diagnosis, severity, asthma caused disability, greater emergency room visits and hospitalizations than other children. Although the underlying cause of these disparities is not well understood, research has suggested that parenting beliefs and family routines are important factors to understand asthma management. Embedded in parents, routines and approaches to managing asthma are cultural explanatory models; parents, personal and implicit beliefs about illness that describe the nature and origin of the disease and what can be done about it. Thus, a greater understanding of how families arrange parenting occupations to manage childhood asthma and parents, cultural models of health and illness may contribute to understanding the existing disparities. The meanings parents bring to the parenting occupations become clearer when culturally valued parenting goals and belief systems are examined. This paper describes the occupation of parenting children with a chronic disease; specifically how parents create asthma management routines for their children and families, and make decisions to control the uncertainty associated with an unpredictable, often symptomless disease that requires complex medication regimens with troublesome side effects.

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The proposed paper is based on preliminary findings from a NIH funded research project investigating “Communication, Perspectives, & Childhood Asthma Disparities” (NICHD RO1 HD044070) and a metasynthesis of qualitative studies exploring the occupation of parenting children with asthma and cultural-based explanatory models. Forty parents of children with persistent asthma receiving health care at an inner-city academic medical center serving predominantly minority populations and parents receiving health care at a multi-specialty provider group serving a socio-economically diverse population were interviewed about how they manage their children’s asthma within the context of their daily parenting occupations and their understanding of the nature and cause of asthma, their knowledge and attitudes, beliefs about medications and intervention. Preliminary data analysis will be presented and questions will be posed to the audience to generate discussion related to occupational life styles and cultural based explanatory models of health care among parents with various racial and ethnic identities.

Ever Vigilant: Maternal Orchestration of Caregiving Occupations in Autism
Elizabeth A. Larson

This paper will describe differences in orchestration of mothering and childcare occupations by mothers parenting children with autism. Children with autism appear to present greater parenting challenges than some other children with disabilities. This study examined maternal caregiving and stressors when parenting a son with autism. Nine mothers with diverse backgrounds whose sons had autism spectrum and additional diagnoses participated in this qualitative study. Data was gathered through intensive interviewing. A deductive interpretive interactionist analysis examined maternal interpretations and meanings of caregiving by identifying key experiential units, features and patterns of units, exemplars of variations and negative cases in these features/patterns, and relations of units. This analysis revealed that mothers characterized their caregiving as vigilance rather than burden, yet this vigilance was described as detrimental to maternal well-being in its fatiguing nature. Continual maternal oversight was necessary to promote the child's participation in daily life in expeditious, safe, and reliable ways while mitigating circumstances that provoked severe negative disruptive behaviors. Mothers vigilantly and strategically structured semi-independent activities, occupied children during leisure, oversaw social negotiations, monitored safety and environmental conditions, and performed forensic analysis of the root of the child's participation difficulties. The functions of vigilance were threefold to assure: 1) child's contentment and family harmony, 2) sufficiency of services that fostered child development and limited child difficulties, and 3) the child participated as fully as possible in family and community life. This parenting was especially intensive because mothers oversaw the children's activities at all times even during periods when mothers of typical children could take breaks from parenting. The implications of intensive vigilance on maternal well-being are discussed.

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The Occupation of Household Financial Management Among Lesbian Couples

Diana M. Bailey

Jeanne M. Jackson

Occupational science seeks to explicate the everyday activities of individuals within their social and cultural worlds. This research paper is concerned with the occupation of "doing finances" within the context of creating a home as a couple. Financial management is one facet of a larger study examining how lesbian couples create home through occupations.

Thirteen couples were interviewed individually, in their homes, to address the question: How do lesbian couples go about creating a home together through engagement in household occupations? Financial management was a 'found' topic that emerged spontaneously from the interviewees. A modified grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and Polkinghorne's (1995) approach to narrative enquiry were used to analyze data from this qualitative study.

Three major findings will be presented: a) Approaches to Money Management, b) the Dynamic Nature of Financial Management, and c) Being Lesbian in Today's Society; each has several subtexts.

Implications for occupational science will be discussed. We will suggest why occupational scientists may want to redefine the traditional 'division of labor' approach to household tasks, instead positioning household work as occupation. An occupational science approach might include concepts of fairness and balance related to how household care has been lived out over a lifetime, and creative approaches taken to such mundane occupations as doing finances. Second, we will highlight how equal respect for paid and non-paid work can influence negotiation styles within the home. Finally, we will show that people engaged in seemingly personal occupations are actually situated in legal, social, and political realms that influence their occupations, in this case household financial management.

The Occupation of Growing, a Research Society

Lisa Ann Fagan

Jon A. Sanford

SSO: USA and the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) are two small research organizations that share similar histories, having grown out of the need to investigate the relationship of daily occupations/ human behavior, health and well-being, and theories grounded in the interaction between person, environment, and occupation/behavior. However, while EDRA formally began its life almost 35 years prior to SSO, and has grown from an organization of 30 members to an annual conference with 300-400 participants, EDRA's strengths lie in its interdisciplinary approach to understanding the link between the environment and occupation/behavior.

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It could be said that EDRA members think like occupational scientists, and that occupational scientists have adopted environment and behavior methodologies. So, as EDRA approaches 40 and SSO turns 3, each organization has much to share with, and learn from the other in understanding how to create robust, healthy lives. An organizational case study of these two small research societies will be presented. Similarities and differences in constituency, mission/purpose, and focus will be highlighted. Of particular interest to SSO members is how EDRA has changed over time to continue to respond to societal issues (such as the increasing incidence of obesity, and the needs of the aging population) by the formation of new special interest subsections (including the Active Living by Design group, and the Participation network) that reflect the needs and interests of all of its constituencies, including sponsors/funders, practitioners, educators, students and users/clients. These changes have been critical in the success of the members to secure grant-funding for research that enhances community participation through an understanding of person-environment-occupation fit.

This organizational case study will focus on a content analysis of topics presented at the EDRA conference in 1984, 1994 and 2004, to illustrate the change in focus and methodologies over time, as well as interviews of a representative sample of 2004 presenters regarding the funding sources that supported their work.

Discussion will include reflections of a long-time (30+ years) EDRA member (a research architect), and a newer (2 years) EDRA member (an occupational scientist / occupational therapist), as well as suggestions for possible collaborations.

Elders' Occupational Experiences, Spirituality, and Religion

Christy Billock

Esther Huecker

Religion and spirituality find expression through daily occupations unique to each individual. For the elderly, numerous temporal, spatial, and social disruptions offer challenges for creating meaning in daily life. This paper presents findings from the first two years of an ongoing qualitative study conducted by faculty and graduate students in occupational therapy at Loma Linda University. The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of spiritual and religious occupations for elders with and without disabilities. The first year of research focuses on well elders of a shared denomination while the second year looks at elders with disabilities from one faith tradition. Researchers collected data through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and journaling. This paper introduces preliminary themes and participant experiences from the initial two studies.

Although occupational science literature reflects the significance of meaning and spirituality to daily occupation, limited discussion exists on the relationship between the forms and experiences of spiritual occupations and religious occupations. An important part of this paper is to discuss the differences between spiritual occupations and religious

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occupations. Participants' experiences are presented to explore the complexity and diverse nature of these two distinct yet interrelated occupations. A brief literature review on the topics provides a foundation for discussion.

Three primary themes emerged across both studies and are presented in this paper. The themes which illuminate participants' experiences of religious and spiritual occupations include: 1) symbolism of ordinary objects, 2) recreating a sense of continuity over participant's lifespan, and 3) the importance of social worlds. This paper provides multiple perspectives on elders' experiences, thereby enriching the understanding of interconnectedness of daily occupational experience, spirituality, and religion.

An International Analysis of Holiday Food Preparation in Elderly Kentucky, New Zealand, and Thailand Women

Doris Pierce

Anne Shordike

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The purpose of this study was to describe the meaning of holiday food preparation in women of Kentucky (Christmas), New Zealand (Christmas), and Thailand (Thai New Year) who were 65 or more years of age and still involved with their families. International multi-site research provides occupational science, not only with fuller theoretical descriptions of particular occupations, but also with tests of its broad theoretical assumptions, which may or may not emanate from the cultural origins of the science and prove a poor fit with other cultures.

Each country ran a minimum of three focus groups with an average for six participants each, resulting in a total of 336 pages of interview data. At the SSO: USA Meeting of 2003, a review across disciplines of the history, challenges, and epistemological questions raised by cross-cultural methods was presented as the basis for this international research team's design of its approach.

This year's presentation will offer the results of analysis using a qualitative derived etic approach. Data was double coded by researchers from different cultures using Ethnograph. Analysis used an initial coding scheme developed across sites, a lead researcher generating analytic memos, and multi-site development of the interpretation via the Internet.

Results will be reported in terms of the similarities and differences across cultures in how tradition, time, change, relationships, places, foods and objects played a part in the older woman's experience and construction of the meaning of holiday food preparation. The difficulties, benefits, and pragmatics of international multi-site research will also be briefly presented.

The Influence of Occupational Persona: Why Some but not Others Develop Effective Occupational Strategies

Alison Wicks

This paper discusses the influence of occupational persona on developing effective occupational strategies to facilitate meaningful occupation. The paper is informed by my doctoral research which analyzed, from an occupational and a feminist perspective, the life stories of six Australian women, all aged over 65. The aim of the research was to understand what influenced the women,s occupational potential across the life course. Occupational potential refers to a person,s capacity to participate in meaningful occupations. My findings revealed personal, socio-cultural, historical and political factors influenced the development of their occupational potential. When a feminist lens was applied to the data, gender, a socio-cultural factor, emerged as a source of occupational tensions, limiting their occupational participation. Occupational tensions refers to the women,s experiences when they were denied the opportunity of doing what they wanted, or had to choose between doing what they wanted and what was expected. My analysis also revealed that in response to gender-specific occupational tensions the women developed occupational strategies, unique ways of creating opportunity for meaningful occupation. The effectiveness of their strategies also influenced their occupational participation. Prompted by post doctoral discussions with occupational scientists in North America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand on why some but not other women developed effective occupational strategies, I undertook further analysis of my data. Analysis of the women,s occupational strategies has since highlighted the influence of occupational persona, that dimension of self, shaped by biology and context, which influences participation in certain types of occupation. This paper helps us to understand the role of occupational persona in maximizing occupational potential and enabling people to become who they want to be. In addition, the paper contributes to our appreciation of the multidimensional nature of the occupational human and the dynamic, complex interaction between doing, being and context.

Occupation, Agency and Quality of Life for Homeless Women Living in a Shelter
Anne Shordike

As the numbers of homeless persons in the United States continue to increase, the greatest increase is in homeless women and families. At least 14% of the homeless are single women and 40% are families, 85% of these have a single mother as head of household (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2002). This paper will discuss how the experience of homelessness impacts the occupations, sense of agency and quality of life of women living in a homeless shelter. It will explore their experiences of their daily occupations, including

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their perceptions of their quality of life and their ability to have control in their necessary and meaningful occupations.

This study, currently in the data analysis stage, involves in depth interviews as well as Quality of Life and Locus of Control surveys with 27 homeless women currently living in a shelter to explore the relationship of occupation, quality of life and perceived sense of agency for these women. Preliminary analysis reveals that most of the women interviewed feel that they have little difficulty performing daily occupations. The occupational constraints in their lives come from financial deprivation, which results in occupational deprivation. Valued occupations, which they may or not be participating in while in the shelter, were discussed. The women consider how shelter living impacts their physical, social and psychological well-being. Most of the women prioritize getting a job and a place to live, and for some, child care. While more of the participants seem to prioritize “working the system” and utilizing external resources to get their needs met, some of them clearly assume that they are responsible for their own well-being and participation and have the expectation that they will be successful.

Some discussion questions that this work has raised for the researcher include:

- How does a disenfranchised individual relate to societal systems and how is this manifested in their occupations?
- Can occupation be a measure of quality of life and agency?
- Can occupation be a method as well as an outcome when confronted with functional dependence, that is, society’s creation of dependence on social systems?

The Perfect Girl: Gender as Barrier to Health and Occupational Potential
Jill Mueller

Women are twice as likely as men in the United States to be clinically depressed. In many cases, the depression begins at or shortly after adolescence. Additionally, while their school performances are as good as or better than boys, during childhood, girls, academic achievement is known to decline as they become adolescents. This paper will suggest that increased rates of depression and decreased academic performances among adolescent girls may be occasioned by their internalization of societal expectations about what is thought to be „appropriate% behavior and/or ambition for females in Western culture. Adolescent girls who feel a need to be better liked and/or more acceptable to others may be more likely to limit themselves to traditional female roles than girls who do not experience such insecurity. They may attempt to enact the super-human and selfless qualities of the stereotypical ideal woman. In enacting this standard of “Nice and Good” to please others, girls may unwittingly curtail the development of their own present and future occupational potential. This paper will review the works of Carol Gilligan (1982, 1988, 1991) and Dana Jack (1991) on moral development and the relational self to describe the phenomenon of self-silencing by adolescent girls. It will discuss the general relevance of Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) to all occupational science research that links human motivation (White, 1959, 1974), competence (White, 1959, 1974; Matheson

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& Bohr, 1997), and flow (Kowal & Fortier, 1999) to the development of occupation and the facilitation of health across the life span. Finally, the implications of a gendered SDT approach to the work of professionals specifically concerned with the occupational development and psychosocial health of adolescent girls, including occupational scientists, occupational therapists, and educators, will be explored.

The Meaning of Occupations of Adolescent Girls Living in Rural Communities
Linda Buxell

Limited information is available on the study of occupations of adolescent girls living in the rural setting. This paper presents the results of qualitative studies completed by a faculty member and graduate students in occupational therapy at the College of St. Catherine. This paper presents portions of a recent literature review regarding occupations of 13 - 18 year old adolescent girls living in the rural setting. Issues related to occupational choice, the use and development of skills and capabilities through participation in occupations, and how the community supports engagement in meaningful occupation will be explored. Results of qualitative interviews will be shared. Through qualitative methods, researcher investigators hope to gain the girls' perspective on their psychosocial well-being and meaningful existence as linked to their engagement in occupation within their respective communities. The research plan includes interviews of parent(s) and or guardian(s) of these adolescent girls to more fully understand the occupations and well-being of these girls. Qualitative research methodology will be discussed as a means of understanding the significance of occupational participation for adolescent girls living in rural communities. The studies seek to explore the meaning of participation in occupations of adolescent girls living in various rural communities of Minnesota and western Wisconsin. The studies hope to access the subjective meaning of the occupations of these girls. Further developing the literature and the understanding of the human as an occupational being will contribute to the field of occupational therapy and the developing discipline of occupational science.

The elements of well-being, function, and meaningful existence related to engagement in occupations are some of the core areas of occupational therapy practice. There is a challenge to provide occupational therapy services to rural populations. Studying the occupations of adolescent girls living in their rural communities through qualitative interviewing with a focus on meaningful activity and well-being may support the need for a broad range of community and occupation based services.

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Elders with Low Vision: Perspectives on Engagement in Occupation, Health, and Well-being

Cynthia Sheppard Bell

Contributing Authors: Ferol Menks Ludwig, Elysa Lipschutz, & Rosalie J. Miller

As the aging population continues to escalate, members of the healthcare community will be held accountable for understanding what, how, when and why independence is possible for some older persons and not for others. Occupational therapy as a profession can gather information of this nature in the area of low vision, which affects a significant number of older persons and may deprive them of their independence, health and well-being. In order to be able to respond to these issues, increased awareness about the effects of low vision on engagement in occupation, and effects on health and well-being must be understood.

This qualitative grounded theory study involves in-depth interviews to elicit elderly women participant,s perspectives of how low vision affects engagement in occupation, health and well-being. The constant comparative method involves comparing data between participants, within participants at various times, between and within incidents and categories and finally from category to category. The ongoing analysis process develops a theory.

Results & Discussion. (This study is in progress so these sections will depend upon the analysis of data, which should be completed as of December 2004). The intent of this section will be to use the data that comes from the participants to develop a theory that builds the knowledge occupational therapy professionals can use in practice with this population. Effort will be taken to remain true to the participant,s voices. Strengths and weaknesses of this study, as well as areas for future growth will be discussed.

Internet Study of the Health Related Quality of Life of Persons with Spinal Cord Injuries

Karen Frank Barney

The overall goal of this exploratory Internet study of persons with spinal cord injuries (SCI) was to describe the impact of their sense of coherence (SOC), environmental barriers to participation, impairment, secondary conditions and demographic factors on their perceived health related quality of life (HRQoL). This approach is the first to combine these factors in a descriptive investigation on SCI. This quantitative study builds upon the findings of two preliminary qualitative studies on the nature of adjustment to SCI and the barriers to activities experienced by persons with SCI. The results of the research provide new information regarding factors that contribute to the support and the deterioration of the health of persons with SCI living in the community following discharge from their initial medical care. These findings may be used to guide the evolvement of more effective individually tailored occupation based interventions for persons with SCIs during their rehabilitation and post discharge adjustment in the community. No published studies have

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investigated HRQoL as a co-function of sense of coherence, environmental barriers to participation, and physical status. Collecting and analyzing data from a WWW based sample survey of persons with chronic SCI accomplished this goal. HRQoL was measured by the MOS SF-36 Version 2, adapted for persons with SCI. Environmental barriers to participation were measured by the Craig Hospital Inventory of Environmental Factors (CHIEF). In addition, measures of the individual's Sense of Coherence and physical status, including 17 secondary conditions used with this population by the Massachusetts Department of Health and the New England Spinal Cord Center, contributed to the analysis of HRQoL. The MOS SF-36 eight subscale and mental and physical health summary findings were generally below the 25th percentile of the normative scores. Furthermore, risk factors for diminished HRQoL were examined, together with implications for support of the health and occupational well-being of persons with SCI. Since the use of the Internet as a survey method for this type of research is new, the limitations and the strengths of this medium for promoting participation among persons with SCI will also be discussed.

Exploring the Interplay of Context and Occupation: An Undergraduate Research Project

Julya Westfall

Leah McQuade

Kim Seaward

Two students pursuing a bachelor's degree in occupational science will present the results of a collaborative undergraduate research project. Using a naturalistic inquiry design, occupational science students explored the perceptions of international students on campus. The research questions were: 1) What differences do international students studying at a university in the United States perceive in the spatial, temporal and socio-cultural contexts of their home countries and the United States and 2) How have any perceived contextual differences influenced their occupations while studying abroad.

The students' faculty mentor will discuss the purposes of the project and how it was integrated into a course.

Participants will have an opportunity to discuss the study results and the nature and value of undergraduate research in occupational science.

Program Assessment of an Undergraduate Occupational Science Major

Mary Lou Henderson

The purpose of this paper is to present assessment data from the Occupational Science Program at the College of St. Catherine. The Occupational Therapy Department began planning this program in 1999 as part of the move from undergraduate to graduate entry level for occupational therapists. Faculty wanted a way to maintain departmental presence

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in undergraduate education. The major was approved by College faculty in May 1999 and was to be offered in the new Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. The Occupational Science Program started accepting students in September 2001. Currently three groups of students complete their baccalaureate degree through this major. Most of them are undergraduate students who enter the program as juniors and plan to complete both the baccalaureate in OS and their master's degree in occupational therapy. The program for these students is evaluated as part of the occupational therapy program. The other two groups of students are those who plan to complete their baccalaureate in OS with an interdisciplinary focus or those who are already occupational therapy assistants and who want a degree completion program. The Occupational Science Program only gathers assessment data from these two groups.

Assessment is an important part of program development. It is critical for promoting and developing strengths, as well as identifying and addressing limitations. Informal assessment data has been collected throughout the three years of the occupational science major, but in 2004 a more formal program assessment was untaken. Current students and graduates were surveyed to determine their perceptions on many aspects related to the program. This data will be analyzed, summarized and programmatic recommendations will be developed. This information will be shared with participants with discussion regarding occupational science majors for individuals not going on to become occupational therapists.

Hashi-ire: Where Mental Health, Chopsticks, and Occupation Intersect

Eric Asaba

Jeanne Jackson

This paper puts forth a theoretical analysis grounded in ethnographic methods to explore the form, function, and meaning of hashi-ire as an occupation within the context of Japanese psychiatry. In keeping with occupational science and therapy, the term occupation is used here to denote a broad domain of purposeful and/or meaningful daily activity such as work and leisure. The term hashi-ire refers to the assembly of disposable wooden chopstick packages, a program that was widely used under the auspices of Japanese psychiatric rehabilitation immediately following the Second World War, but has become a rare occurrence today. From a rehabilitative and medical framework hashi-ire has been viewed with some skepticism as a way to pass time and under some circumstances as a potential venue for skill building. The uncommonness of this occupation in psychiatric settings today makes it a unique and interesting event for social analysis. The purpose of this paper is to go beyond the context of the traditional medical framework and provide a description of one environment in which hashi-ire was observed. Within this paper, hashi-ire will serve as a mechanism to further understand the concept of occupation within the context of a mental health program. The ethnographic data used in this paper are based on interviews and participant observation. Preliminary analyses reveal that hashi-ire provides an opportunity for participants to meet peers, it provides structure for a daily routine, and it provides an avenue towards health and relaxation. Furthermore hashi-ire may be a potential source of community building, a mechanism for apprenticed learning, and a venue through which an individual shapes his/her identity.

The Problem of Individualism in Occupational Science: A Critique and Way Forward

Virginia Dickie

Malcolm P. Cutchin

Occupational therapy and occupational science have correctly recognized both person and context in the performance of occupations. The disciplines have nonetheless tended to focus on the singular individual as both influencing and being influenced by context while somehow standing apart from that context. Meaning that purportedly resides solely within the individual often has been reified as if it is the whole of occupational experience. Yet if we are to understand occupation as an integral part of a dynamic whole that is life itself, the duality of person and context cannot stand and the elevation of personal meaning to be the core of occupational engagement must be questioned. In this paper we develop a theoretical critique of what we consider to be an overemphasis on the individual in occupational science. Moreover, we use empirical examples from our research that further

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call this emphasis to question. We then present a problematic: how can we conceptualize situated individuals, engaging in occupation, in a manner that allows for robust research and captures the complexity and holism of occupation? We use John Dewey's philosophy, and his conception of "situations" in particular, to begin working through the problematic. We focus on Dewey's view of situations as inherently relational in character to provide some suggestions about how occupation may be conceived as less individual, and therefore more social and cultural, in nature.

An Exploration of Mothering Experiences

Sandee Dunbar

Elysa Roberts

Much of the research on mothering in the occupational therapy literature has focused on mothers of children with disabilities (Kellegrew, 2000; Segal, 2000). These articles provide insight into the experiences of mothers whose roles were impacted by rearing a child with special needs. Although this type of knowledge is beneficial for occupational therapists, it is also necessary to explore perceptions of mothering experiences unrelated to disability (Francis-Connolly, 1998). More recent literature has expanded our awareness of various mothering considerations in populations that are not impacted by disease or disability (Esdaile & Olson, 2004).

Mothering is a complex and dynamic collection of occupations worthy of consideration by occupational scientists and occupational therapists. With an increased awareness of mothers, perceptions and activities related to mothering occupations, occupational scientists can contribute to the body of knowledge that influences intervention in occupational therapy.

This session will focus on the results of an exploratory qualitative pilot study. The authors sought to answer the following question in this exploratory study. What are mothers' perceptions of the occupational experience of mothering? The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of personal impressions regarding the mothering experience. This was done through a series of semi-structured focus groups. Emergent themes and applications to occupational therapy will be shared, followed by a short discussion period.

Living with the Internet: Implications for Shifts in the Occupation of Parenting

Bonnie Freeman

The paper explores issues around living in the post- Internet world, and the implications for daily household occupations, and family life. It is informed by a qualitative study completed by the presenter as dissertation research. The research was conducted over a 1-year period with five parents of an adolescent, each of whom completed a questionnaire, and was interviewed several times. The events of 9/11 occurred shortly after the first

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interviews were completed, and became woven into the research methods, data and final analysis.

The presenter will use the study, and its links to salient literature as groundwork to stimulate discussion. The purpose is to broadly explore the implications of new and emergent technologies for childhood and for parenting, from the perspective of occupational science. How are the significant and rapid changes in technologies used with growing ubiquity in the household affecting occupational routines of childhood? How are occupations of parenting affected, as parents strive to support healthy adaptations to emergent technologies? What are some implied directions for future research?

Panel Session: Complexity Science and Occupation Reconsidered

Coordinator: Aaron M. Eakman

Stacy Frauwirth

Donald J. Fogelberg

Like occupational science, complexity science is a new and emerging academic discipline which has emphasized interdisciplinary cooperation. A variety of theories have been developed within complexity science to help understand the behavior of complex, non-linear systems. The roots of complexity science can be traced to general systems theory, and its scope has grown to include dynamic systems theory, chaos theory, and complex adaptive systems theory. Historically, occupation has been analyzed and occupational models have been developed around linear models, including general systems theory. In recent years, however, there has been a call to begin exploring the application of nonlinear models to the analysis of occupation.

Contemporary applications of complexity theory in occupational science have typically involved understanding the individual as a complex system. This panel presentation will expand upon recent work within occupational science, by exploring three different and interacting levels of analysis through the lens of complexity science. At the first level, the individual is viewed as a complex system, and occupation is seen as an emergent phenomenon of the system. At the second level, the individual is viewed as an agent interacting with others in the co-production of occupation. Finally, at the third level, the occupations emerging from either or both of the first two levels can be viewed as forming a system which can be analyzed through concepts from complexity science.

Understanding and distinguishing between these levels of analysis is important for occupational scientists for at least three reasons. First, it may provide a theoretical space for integrating disparate conceptions of occupation. Second, it prompts questions regarding the interaction and mutual influence between these different levels. And finally, it suggests new areas for occupational science research.

Outline of Plan for the Session:

A. Introduction to complexity theory

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1. What are complex systems?
2. Review non-linearity, sensitivity to original conditions, emergent properties, self-organization, and self reinforcement.
3. Dynamic systems theory, chaos theory, complex adaptive systems theory, and self organizing holarchic open systems.

B. History of relationship between occupational science/therapy and non-linear systems theories.

C. Towards integration: Further theoretical applications of complexity theory to occupation and the importance of levels of analysis.

1. The individual as a complex system.
2. Occupation as a complex system.
3. Social Complexity - Individual as agent.

D. Implications for Occupational Science

1. Theoretical integration of concepts of occupation
2. New directions for research

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SESSION V

Panel Session: Tools, Materials, and Occupation

Coordinator: Valerie Howells

Clare Hocking

Virginia Dickie

Tools and materials play an important role in many human occupations. They are a source of meaning in their own right, a means to do or accomplish, and a link between individual doing and societal activities across time. This panel will focus on the ways that changes in tools affect the organization and meaning of occupations for individuals and society. Valerie Howells will describe how tools and materials became a focus in the follow-up interviews of participants in an inclusive arts studio. Classes at the studio were taught by artists, and high quality tools and materials were provided for all participants. Participants reported that the quality of the tools and materials validated them as real artists doing real art. The availability and abundance of the objects provided an opportunity to experience multiple sensory experiences, and led to a sense of competence as participants accomplished making successful products. Virginia Dickie's focus is on the rotary cutter as an example of how a small technological innovation reverberated globally throughout quilt making occupations -- altering practice, increasing productivity, changing design, and affecting culture. Clare Hocking will discuss tools as specialized objects from an historical and theoretical perspective. She will outline four levels of interaction with objects and show how human tool use distinguishes us from other animals. Theoretical perspectives will include the notion of tools as conductors of human activity, which change our relationship with our surroundings by enabling us to do things that we could not otherwise do and transform the goals that we can formulate. The objective of this panel is to initiate a dialogue about the role of tools and materials in occupation and possible ways to study and describe this relationship. We argue that a tendency to focus occupational science research on the person may fail to explicate the contribution of tools and materials to occupational engagement. Discussion will include a focus on research methods that allow us to grasp the extent and nature of this contribution (e.g., historical research, participant observation, observation, & researcher reflexivity).

Panel Session: Over the Rainbow: Understanding Occupation and Identity in the Lives of Gays and Lesbians

David A. Leary

Don Fogelberg

Jill Goodman

This panel will focus on the doing of occupation for gay and lesbian persons and its connections to meaning and identity. Three specific occupations will be examined: getting dressed, attending circuit parties, and participating in organized sports activity. These three seemingly unrelated activities / occupations demonstrate the unique construction of meaning of for individuals who are gay and lesbian. Our objective is to examine how

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participation in these occupations is related to the expression of individual and collective identities. We will also discuss how marginalized people create meaningful subcultures through engagement in particular occupations. The meaning of occupation is embedded in culture and gays and lesbians create subcultures within a larger dominant heterosexual context. Therefore an examination of this populations' participation in specific occupations is especially salient. The findings from these three papers will serve as a stepping stone to discussing the intersection of identities, subcultures and meaningful occupations. Our hope is to create a deeper understanding of the central function of particular occupations in the lives of people as they go about creating a sense of self in what is often a contested or uncomfortable world.

Heuristic Inquiry: A Personal Poetic Journey: Implications for Occupational Science
Kristine Haertl

Heuristic research, as developed by Clark Moustakas (1990), focuses on an internal search of a particular construct, experience or phenomenon for an individual. Though similar to phenomenological inquiry, heuristic research has its own design, methodology and applications and is focused on the self. Such research often leads to self discovery and personal growth. Given the self reflective nature of heuristic methodology, it is uniquely suited for the study of occupation.

This presentation will provide an overview of the qualitative application of heuristic inquiry and suggested uses for occupational science. The author will present her own poetic and reflective writing, its meaning in her life, and heuristic application used to begin an ongoing process of inquiry into the occupation of reflective writing. The presentation will suggest possible application of heuristic research into the study of occupation, as well as areas for further study within the presented project.

The Occupation of Homework: Two is a Couple, Three is a Crowd
Ruth Segal

Contributing Author: Jim Hinojosa

Homework is a common family occupation in which school-age children and their parents engage in teacher generated assignments. Homework is considered an extension of school work in which children practice skills learned in school and learn new material. It is a school-related occupation that is superimposed on the daily schedules of families.

The expectation for parental involvement has changed historically. Currently parents are expected to be involved and knowledgeable about the homework assignments. The way parents translate involvement into actual life practices, however, is shaped by parental values and personalities and children,s age, abilities, needs, and personalities.

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Although, parent-child friction is a commonly described experience of homework, little has been done to discuss the nature the occupation of homework to enhance our understanding of the issues that lie behind such frictions.

A qualitative study focusing on homework experiences and the strategies that parents use to encourage their 7 - 11 years old children to complete their homework was conducted. Four parents of typically developing children and four parents of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed for themes relating to parental experiences and strategies related to homework.

In this presentation, issues such as parental lack of control on the content, amount, and demands of homework impairs their ability to shape and construct a positive experience of homework for the family. These findings are discussed in relation to the findings of parental efforts to construct family occupations whose experience is positive for their children.