



SPOTLIGHT ON OCCUPATION

DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE AND THERAPY

ISSUE 5

Welcome to the fifth issue of *Spotlight on Occupation*

The reasons people do what they do is a thread running through this issue of *Spotlight on Occupation*.

Two items draw from articles in the *Journal of Occupational Science* – a philosophical exploration of occupational satisfaction and an observational study of life in a Greek village. Two items arise from the Joint Conference of the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA (SSO:USA) and the Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists (CSOS) that took place in London, Ontario, Canada in October this year.

Each exemplifies the symposium theme in its own way: *Navigating Cultural Spaces* expands the boundary of occupational science to include immigration policy, while the *Significance of the Meaning of Occupation* builds a bridge between the different meanings occupations hold.

Feel free to hand SPOTLIGHT on to anyone who might be interested in it. Previous issues are available at <http://www.aut.ac.nz/study-at-aut/study-areas/health-sciences/occupational-science-and-therapy/spotlight-on-occupation-newsletter>



EDITORS VALERIE WRIGHT-ST CLAIR, CLARE HOCKING, AND JENNI MACE (L-R)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL SATISFACTION?
- SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MEANING OF OCCUPATION
- NAVIGATING CULTURAL SPACES
- INFLUENCE OF WESTERN SOCIETY

What, exactly, is occupational satisfaction?

AUTHORS: Morgan, W.J. (2010).

SUMMARY: This article takes the reader on a philosophical journey through wondering what makes a satisfying life before proposing a new understanding of what makes occupational engagement satisfying for people. Three current and competing concepts of occupational satisfaction are discussed: pursuing what one *wants* to do, having occupational *balance*, and achieving *flow* in occupations. Morgan goes on to argue how each of these characteristics is necessary, yet not sufficient, for occupational satisfaction.



He makes a case for taking account of the goodness or worthwhileness of occupations in contributing qualitatively to our occupational lives. The inclusion of *value* means fully satisfying occupations are wholehearted endeavours; we give ourselves over to them in a heartfelt, unconditional way.

COMMENT: Understanding what makes occupational engagement fully satisfying seems like an important endeavour for occupational science. Morgan's philosophical argument opens up a fresh view both through his succinct interpretation of the existing theories and his compelling inclusion of the 'wholeheartedness' of occupational engagement. That is, occupational satisfaction is fully realised if, and only if, the occupations matter to us in a human way. It helps explain why selflessly doing often mundane things which enrich the lives of others is entirely satisfying. This article is worth a read.

Reference: *Journal Of Occupational Science*, 17(4), 216-223.

The significance of the meaning of occupation

AUTHORS: Hocking, C., & Nayar, S. (2010, October).

SUMMARY: Noting that meaning is consistently cited in definitions of occupation and research outcomes, this presentation questioned why it is important. Looking beyond identity and other meanings individuals derive from their everyday occupations, it proposed that occupations hold meanings at multiple levels: personal, familial, societal, gendered, cultural, historical, regional and political. Drawing from the findings from a study of the food-related occupations of older women and a study of immigrant Indian women settling in New Zealand, examples of meaning at each level were outlined. For example, preparing traditional foods holds meanings related to regional or national identity; asking an Indian woman "what the occasion is" if she wears a sari to work evokes unanticipated racist meanings, if the question is experienced as defining her as foreign; and gifting food to other families signifies older Thai women's effort to "create a generous society".

COMMENT: The presentation "lifted the lid" on a previously unacknowledged outcome of occupational science research – that it is reaching beyond occupational therapy's focus on the motivational aspects of personally meaningful occupations. Considering the broader significance of the meaning occupations hold directs occupational scientists gaze to the contexts in which meaning is derived and constructed, how meanings connect or separate people, and its relationship to societal continuity and change.

Reference: Combined SSO: USA & CSOS conference: Redefining boundaries and bridges in occupation, London, Ontario.

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The influence of Western society's construction of a healthy daily life on the conceptualisation of occupation

AUTHORS: Kantartzis, S. & Molineux, M. (2011).

SUMMARY: This article aims to show how concepts of occupation have been heavily influenced by English speaking western cultural views on what healthy everyday life is. The authors take an often historical perspective in order to propose that four commonly discussed characteristics of occupation in English language discourse have been heavily influenced by dominant Western social institutions.

These four characteristics, active, purposeful, temporal and meaningful, are discussed separately with a particular emphasis on the influences of Protestant Christian thought.

These are critiqued against the views of other less dominant, non-industrialised, collectivist Western societies in particular Greek Christian Orthodox culture.

COMMENT: A growing number of authors have brought new insights to occupation from the perspectives of cultures other than a Western one. Kantartzis and Molineux add a fresh perspective to literature that challenges a Western view of occupation as an individual pursuit of goals and meaning in order to create self identity and competence. This article reminds us of the diversity amongst Western thought, especially those whose first language is not English. It suggests that there is still a majority view point that healthy daily life comes from individual engagement in occupations. Clearly we have more to learn about occupation from collectivist societies where doing together or for others is more important to healthy daily life.

Reference: *Journal of Occupational Science*. Online Early.



Navigating cultural spaces: Revisiting models of acculturation and settlement

AUTHORS: Nayar, S., & Hocking, C. (2010, October)

SUMMARY: An occupational theory of immigrant settlement developed using grounded theory methods was presented. Navigating Cultural Spaces explains how Indian women who have immigrated to New Zealand reconstruct occupational routines, traditions and practices; and in response, the resources, practices and attitudes in the host country change. Previous models of acculturation have emerged out of a bicultural context, whereby the migrant represents the minority culture and the host society the dominant culture. In New Zealand, te Tiriti o Waitangi signifies a relationship between two established cultures, Māori and Pākehā. Thus immigrants introduce a third cultural perspective, which current models of acculturation do not account for. Furthermore, within these models, 'integration' is often seen as an end point of the settlement process. Navigating Cultural Spaces however reveals that immigration and the settlement process is ongoing, dynamic and in flux, influenced by immigrants' interpretation of the personal and situational demands on others' attitudes and actions.

COMMENT: Occupational science researchers are increasingly turning their attention to immigrant populations and their settlement processes. As one of three presentations focussed on immigrant experiences, the findings of this study provided a unique, South Pacific perspective that both added new insights and reinforced emerging finding on the occupational lives of immigrants.

Reference: Nayar, S., & Hocking, C. *Navigating cultural spaces: Revisiting models of acculturation and settlement*. Presentation to the Joint Conference of the Society for the Study of Occupation USA (SSO:USA) and the Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists (CSOS), London Ontario, Canada.

Studying Occupation

LECTURER: Clare Hocking

AUT OFFERS TWO PAPERS FOCUSING ON OCCUPATION, BOTH AVAILABLE ON CAMPUS OR BY DISTANCE.

Participation and Health: Health explores the relationship between the things people do and their health, which involves understanding why people do what they do, and how that contributes to competence and satisfaction, builds identity, conveys culture, and structures society.

Enabling Participation: explores how occupation can be put to work to restore and promote health.

QUALIFICATION: Certificate of Proficiency, Honours degree; Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma of Health Science (Occupational Practice), or a Masters degree.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS: Those with a Bachelors degree can enrol direct into the Masters, holders of a Diploma or Health Department Certificate initially enrol into the Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma.

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