



## Welcome to the sixth issue of *Spotlight on Occupation*

The first issue of *Spotlight on Occupation* for 2011 comes to you after we all have witnessed many catastrophic events around the world that have left whole communities displaced and mourning loved ones. Here in New Zealand, three months on from the Christchurch earthquake, the occupations of many are still in complete disarray. Thousands are in temporary accommodation without work and with many of the places that provided them with a sense of home, belonging and a context for every day routines completely destroyed. However we also hear on a daily basis stories of human resilience. Within hours of the earthquake we saw people gathering together and doing for one another. Around 10,000 student volunteers helped those in need. Farmers from across the country, armed with their tractors and shovels, formed the 'farmy army', and to feed them all the Christchurch 'baking army' mobilized the cooks amongst us. Occupation matters!



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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>

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- THE TRANSACTIONAL RELATIONSHIP
- CONFRONTING OCCUPATIONAL GAPS
- STUDYING OCCUPATIONS

## Elders' experience of being in a residential care setting: Finding meaning through occupational engagement

**AUTHOR:** Mesnage, N.

**SUMMARY:** Underpinned by the notion that spaces and places are the contexts in which we live and occupy ourselves, this study explores how older New Zealanders experience being in residential care.

From the in-depth stories told by the two men and two women, aged 85-97, three modes of experience showed through. 'Being Cared For' was about the comfortableness and peace of mind of having some needs attended while tolerating the constraints of living within the care environment.

Next, as the participants spoke of going about their day within the facility's public and more private spaces, their stories revealed how the person-built environment interaction both facilitates and impinges upon the experience of 'Being Part of a Shared Community'.

Thirdly, 'Being Me' speaks to the various ways in which these people went about expressing who they were and looking after their own well-being in an otherwise collective context.

**COMMENT:** The participants' stories and messages within this dissertation make it a compelling read for practitioners in aged care. Reading about the otherwise hidden layers in the ordinary, occupational worlds of these four elders, may offer practitioners innovative suggestions for using the environment and occupations in ways that enable residents to create a meaningful experience of being 'who I am' within a group setting.

**REFERENCE:** (2011). Unpublished honours. AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand.

## Social ideologies embedded in everyday life: A narrative analysis about disability, identities and occupation

**AUTHORS:** Asaba, E. & Jackson, J.

**SUMMARY:** The process by which a man disabled by a spinal cord injury makes sense of his world and finds his new place in it through occupation is examined from the perspective of social ideologies and discourses and self authoring. To create a new identity he must reconcile the social discourse, which presents a negative view of disability, with his personal voice which does not identify as disabled. In this struggle the social discourse starts to become the personal voice, until he is able to reject this negative identity. He achieves this through action, trying familiar occupations with an unfamiliar body and experiencing success.

**COMMENT:** Studies such as this remind us of what we can learn through occupational story telling. The particular lens used in this study illustrates the importance of considering personally meaningful occupations within a broader societal context. As the people of Christchurch and Japan attempt to re-establish engagement in personally meaningful occupations in previously familiar environments that may now be unrecognisable, we should remember that safe does not necessarily mean well. They will be aware that the world is watching them return to everyday life which may or may not be congruous with how they feel as they do this.

**REFERENCE:** *Journal of Occupational Science*, 18(2), in press.

# SPOTLIGHT ON OCCUPATION



## The transactional relationship between occupation and place; Indigenous cultures in the American southwest

**AUTHOR:** Frank, G.

**SUMMARY:** Frank applies John Dewey's concept of 'situation' to look at responses to problems the Pueblo, Ohlone and Navajo tribes have faced over time. She analyses three studies presented at the 6th annual research conference of the Society for the Study of Occupation in 2007. Frank proposes that these indigenous cultures have undergone transformation as they moved or been moved from place to place over time, through engagement in occupation.

In these three tribes, land use, weaving and, for tribes not recognized by the federal government, occupations that build identity have been a means to transformation and adaptation as their situation has changed. Interestingly, Frank draws on Māori indigenous studies to make the point that the use of occupations to reconstruct culture is essential to collective health and wellbeing.

**COMMENT:** This article gives a clear context and narrative to the complex theories of John Dewey which helps in applying them to occupational science. It also helps us to see the importance of the transformational nature of occupation in helping communities such as Christchurch restore identity, culture and a sense of belonging.

**REFERENCE:** (2011). Journal of Occupational Science, 18(1), 3-20.

## Studying occupation

**LECTURER:** Clare Hocking

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

**Participation and 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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## The meaning of occupational gaps in everyday life in the first year after stroke

**AUTHORS:** Eriksson, G. & Tham, K.

**SUMMARY:** In the year after having a stroke, participants in this study adjusted their routines and altered their way of doing things to address the gaps they experienced in everyday occupations. Recapturing their everyday occupations meant confronting many challenges, in order to re-establish their occupational identity.

Participants' ability to do so related to feeling competent in what they were doing, despite all the changes, and opportunities to do familiar things in familiar places. Although needing to focus on how to do activities that were previously taken for granted was very tiring, participants strove to preserve continuity in their everyday lives, chose their occupations carefully, and created strategies that enabled doing.

**COMMENT:** The findings underline the importance of assisting people to preserve a sense of self after stroke, through engagement in occupations that are important to them while acknowledging that addressing occupational gaps is profoundly fatiguing. More broadly, the findings shed light on the challenges facing people affected by the recent earthquakes and tsunami, in Christchurch and Japan.

Whether displaced or living with the realities of ravaged power, water, and sewage systems; damaged roads; inaccessible or intensely busy workplaces, people will experience occupational gaps over months and years, and may never return to the places and ways of doing things that were once familiar. Whole communities will be challenged to choose occupations carefully and to support each other to enable doing.

**REFERENCE:** (2010). OTJR: Occupation, Participation & Health, 30(4), 184-192.