

## Chapter 3 . Occupational Photo Project Procedures

This chapter will explain how to proceed with an occupational photo project using a case as an example.

Step 1. Talker & listener

Step 2. Story of meaningful (important) occupation

Step 3. Permission

Step 4. Interview

Step 5. Identify form of occupation, function of occupation and meaning of occupation

The **Occupational Photo Project** is a practical project to gain an occupational perspective through a photo and an interview. The purpose is to help you to understand people as occupational beings and the relationship of their occupations and health.

In this project, the talker and the listener talk about occupation while looking at a photo. Its features are discussing the occupation shown in the photo. Before telling about how to proceed with the project, I'll explain why the project uses "talking" and "photo."

We use the words, story or narrative to mean talking or writing about what happens to us or what we experience. People express what they come across or experience in their stories, and throughout the process past experience and behaviors are organized to make meanings (Polkinghorne, 1988). In the Occupational Photo Project, the listener approaches from the talker's story about what happens to the person and how he makes sense of that. We use the stories' power to interpret the talker's form, function, and meaning of the occupation pictured in the photo. They call the method of using photos in interviews "photo elicitation" which is famous in anthropology, psychology and sociology research. The use of photo makes it possible to stimulate the talker and to draw information, sensations or memories, and then stories (Harper, 2002). In this Occupational Photo Project, we are using the photo's power to help us understand the talker's story from an occupational perspective.

### **Step 1. Talker & Listener**

Two people participate in the project, a talker and a listener who pays attention to the talker. The talker decides what occupation to talk about, brings a photo related to the occupation, then talks about the photo and occupation. The listener listens to what is being talked about with interest and an occupational focus.

### **Step 2. A story of meaningful occupation (important occupation)**

The talker decides about whom and about which occupation to tell the story. If, as talker, you decide to talk about yourself, choose an occupation which you engage in often. If you decide to talk about a family member or friend, look for an occupation which they engage in in their everyday life. Choose an occupation that is meaningful and/or important to you or the other person you decide to talk about.

As talker, you can choose whatever occupation you wish, but you should choose something that is comfortable for you to talk about. It is easier to begin with an occupation with which you are very familiar. I recommend that you find occupations that you would like to talk about, that you are interested in, that you feel interesting, or that you think are important, valuable or necessary to the person the story is about.



The person in this example decided to talk about her mother Yoko's occupations with a singing club in which Yoko participates once a week. She (the talker) chose this occupation because Yoko looks forward a lot to participate in this club every week.

### **Step 3. Get Permission**

If you choose another's occupation to talk about, you are required to get permission from the person to talk about their occupation. You also must get permission from the person for taking a picture of them engaging in this occupation. If your photo includes other people, you must get permission from them too. To use the photo in this example, the talker has obtained permission from Yoko and the other person in the photo. Let's proceed with our project!

### **Step 4. Interview**

An interview is a conversation between a talker and a listener. If the talker is ready with an occupational photo and the listener is ready with an occupational perspective, you can start the interview. The listener just asks a few questions to help the talker tell the story. You can read

the example which follows of an interview about a photo of “my mother’s singing club” and see how the interview develops. (The contents of the interview which follows is a summary of the real conversation.)

1. Listener: Who is this (in the photo)?

Talker: It’s my mother. She is 83 years old and lives in a care house (an elders’ apartment with meal service in a cafeteria, watching over service to protect residents and nursing services available when they need.)

2. Listener: When did she move there?

Talker: She had lived alone in a condo, but three years ago she was diagnosed with depression and was hospitalized for a while. When she was discharged, she could not live by herself. She could take care of her personal needs but couldn’t keep up with the housework. I had a feeling she was anxious about living alone. She decided instead, to move to the care house.

3. Listener: What is she doing (in the photo)?

Talker: She is joining in the singing club which meets in the recreation room of the care house.

4. Listener: How do the elders join the singing club?

Talker: Elders who want to join in singing come to the recreation room on Friday at 2:00 p.m. and sit at a table. My mother gives them cards she has prepared in advance with the words to songs familiar to most of them. She starts playing CDs with the songs and they join in, singing together. You don’t need to sing well. You can just sit there and enjoy listening to the others singing. Some members have speech problems but enjoy listening. Seven to ten members participate in this singing club. Anyone can participate freely. Each session is about 1 hour long.

5. Listener: How is your mother spending time every day?

Talker: My mother makes breakfast and lunch by herself, but goes to the cafeteria for dinner. She goes for a daily walk in a garden on the rooftop, where she also does gardening, planting and weeding. She also enjoys meetings and chatting with other residents.

6. Listener: When did the singing club start?

Talker: While my mother was living alone in her condo, she used to come over to visit her friend who was living in this care house. She and her friend started singing together and other elders joined them. So the group moved, as a singing club, to the recreation room. However, when my mother got sick and was hospitalized, she asked her friend to handle the club. After about half a year she was getting better little by little. This photo was taken after she came back.

7. Listener: What kinds of songs do they sing?

Talker: They enjoy singing romantic traditional songs, patriotic songs and songs from childhood.

8. Listener: How's the singing club going since your mother moved back into the care house?

Talker: My mother was gradually getting better. It seemed like she was glad the club members were looking forward to her coming back from her hospitalization and she was encouraged also them coming to the singing club meetings. She looks for songs the members could enjoy. Responding to their requests, she goes to CD shops and department stores to get CDs of songs they will sing together at the club meetings.

9. Listener: Is that so?

Talker: She really likes it when some families of the club members say "Thank you" to her for leading the club and give her little gifts. She just enjoys chatting with them.

10. Listener: That sounds good.

Talker: For me, her daughter, the singing club looks like her job. She looks as though being involved is like working for the club.

11. Listener: What did she do before?

Talker: She worked for a retail shop and she treated wool products. She likes exchanging conversation and doing things with people, and likes doing for others.

12. Listener: She likes doing things for people. And how about singing songs?

Talker: She has loved singing throughout her life. She had been in a choir before she was hospitalized.

We see from the contents of the interview that a talker tells a story about meaningful occupation. She focuses on what she thinks is important.

Before starting the interview, both the talker and the listener want to be relaxed. They should show interest in each other, smiling and getting to know each other.

The talker can talk about whatever she wants. The listener should listen to the talker, imagining the occupation described in the interview. Who is in the photo that the talker brings in? What is she doing? Where and with whom is she?

Next are more hints about how to proceed with interviewing.

### **Hints for the listener**

Let's listen to your partner, the talker, imagining: What is the occupation she is talking about? Who is doing what? What is the situation in which this occupation happens? Who is the actor in the story? That is, about whom is the story told?

For example, the story is told about a woman who lives with a young son and daughter and works part time as a waitress in a restaurant. Or a story of a single guy working for a sweet factory away from town. Or a story about a freshman who just moved in the university dormitory.

What are they doing? What occupation is talked about?

For example, A 10-year-old boy plays games, or an old lady enjoys making haiku, or high school students enjoy singing karaoke, or elders enjoy doing Tai Chi, or a mother is making lunch for her son.

What is the form of the occupation? That is, what does the actor do, with whom, where, when, how long, and how often? What are the tasks that make up the occupation? Is it easy or does it require skill and knowledge?

The listener listens to the talker describing the occupation in the interview. It's important to listen carefully, but also to elicit the story or details when it's necessary. There are no fixed questions for the listener to use but here are some hints for the listener using the example from the interview above.

Figure out the situation. In the beginning of the interview, the listener tries to get to know Yoko's life situation. The listener tries to roughly figure out whose occupational photo story it is and what her physical, social and psychological environmental situation was and is.

In the next part to the end of the interview, the listener tries to understand who is in the photo, just what she is doing, when, how often, with whom? She also tries to understand what singing does (functions) for Yoko and how it relates meaningfully to who she is in the ways below.

In 5. Listener (: How is your mother spending time every day?), the listener asks the talker to expand the story into the whole of Yoko's daily life.

In 8. Listener (: How's the singing club going since your mother moved back into the care house?), the listener asks an open-ended kind of question to get the talker to explain more about the singing group and its current value to Yoko. The listener searches as to where Yoko's singing is situated in her daily life and how her singing group started. So listening well can let the story develop well such as to the end. The talker described, how Yoko's singing with other people and doing for them made her life alive and healthy connecting her with the people. Asking works well to develop stories. However, watch out! Don't ask too many questions! The listener should let the talker tell the story the way what she wants to. The listener should show interest in her and her story. It might be supportive for the listener to nod at the talker, commenting umhmmmm, or yes, or good. In the interview example, the listener inserted brief questions to encourage the talker to say what she wants to say.

### **Step 5. Consider the form of the occupation, the function of the occupation and the meaning of the occupation to the person in the picture.**

Let me sum up a discussion by a group of participants in the Occupational Photo Project about this interview. At first, the listener listens to the talker to figure out what kind of life Yoko was having, that is, understanding Yoko's situation. Looking at the photo, the listener tries to figure out the form of Yoko's important occupation. The talker tells stories, not only relating the occupation to time and place, but to Yoko's health and well-being, personal values and cultural values, and how those influence this important occupation. Stories show how the occupation relates to other part of her life, to her health and well-being, and other things she valued. Stories were about why she does the occupation and how and why it is good for her. Then the talker tells stories about what has changed through doing the occupation. The listener should keep their ears open to information related to health and other important and meaningful things. Listen attentively and supportively to the talker, with curiosity, and she will be more comfortable to talk.

As for the talker think about stories that tell what is important? What is fun? How is it useful for her to live?

Now we focus on Yoko's interview example, considering what is the form, the function, and the meaning of the occupation that has been pictured?

What is Yoko doing in life? How is she spending her time? Think how her whole life relates to this important occupation of singing together. We try to understand Yoko as an occupational being. To do so, let's first think about Yoko's situation. Yoko is an elderly woman finding it too hard to live alone in a condo, so she lives in an elderly living setting with supportive service, a care house. It seems her occupations with her singing club are quite important to her. Let's figure out what is going there?

#### **Form of the occupation**

##### **Who is doing, when and what?**

The residents in the elderly housing come together in the recreation room once a week to sing familiar songs. Yoko organizes the gathering and prepares supplies of CDs and lyric cards for the group, making it easier for them to participate.

#### **Function of the occupation**

##### **Are these occupations useful for Yoko's adaptation, health, and well-being?**

##### **Think about the occupations' influence on them.**

Taking care of the singing club is worth it for Yoko to take on the work entailed.

Taking care of the club provides a weekly rhythm to her life.

By making friends and doing for others, she has a sense of fulfillment.

Living there, with support services, friends and the singing activities makes her feel safe.

#### **Meaning of the occupation**

##### **What is important to Yoko ? What are her values and what are cultural values related to these occupations?**

Life with safety and security is a primary value for Yoko in her old age and the care home setting provides these for her.

She continues to value doing for others and finds opportunity in this singing group occupation.

She is sociable and values having friends, which the singing group provides.

It's time to start your own Occupational Photo Project. For practice, use an Occupational Photo Project Worksheet which you will find at the end of this book. To use this form you will need to follow the steps listed below.

Step 1: The talker and the listener

Step 2: Find a meaningful occupation

Step 3: Get permission

Step 4: Interviewing

Step 5: Consider the form of the occupation, the function of the occupation  
and the meaning of the occupation to the person in the picture.

What is talked about in the interview and the resulting understanding of the form, the function and the meaning of the occupation from the interview depends on who the talker is and who the listener is. There is no correct answer at all. It depends on the talker how long the interview is, what stories are told, and how deeply the stories go into the occupation pictured in the Occupational Photo. What the talker would say is also influenced by how well the listener reacts to and understands the talker. The length of the story and how deep it goes is also influenced by the listener. The form, function and meaning of the occupation pictured in the Occupational Photo may vary depending on who does the interpreting, who the talker is and who the listener is. This occupational photo project doesn't aim to find a single correct answer, but rather to get a bigger perspective of occupations, to become more familiar with occupations and to understand them more deeply. The listener, with different lived experiences and knowledge from the talker, tries to understand how the talker is seeing the person in the Occupational Photo as an occupational being, so the interpretation and understanding varies depends who participates in the project. The complexity of occupations allows these different interpretations to be possible.



## **Chapter 4 .Multiple Occupational Photos: Real occupational photos, interviews and interpretations of form, function and meaning of occupations**

This book aims to introduce a practical method named the “Occupational Photo Project” to help people understand occupation in our everyday life as it relates to health and well-being. This project method helps the reader better understand the perspective of occupation and feel comfortable using it.

In the beginning of Chapter 1, before I went into the details of the Occupational Photo Project, I talked about occupational photos using six examples. Occupational Photos are practical method to get the perspective of occupation, to better understand occupations as relating to health and well-being. I also talked about how I (the author) have been interested in occupation and how I reached better understanding through this practical method.

In Chap 2, the perspective of occupation is discussed more precisely. I tried to explain how occupation relates to health and well-being, from the theoretical base of occupational science, as easily and simply as possible.

In Chapter 3, I presented practical information on how to proceed with an Occupational Photo Project. I offered directions and hints on how to carry it out.

This Chapter 4 (“Multiple Occupational Photos”) is about occupational photos and interviews of people willing to talk about a photo of an important/meaningful occupation. The occupational individual talker is interviewed by a listener and their occupational photo talks are considered in terms of what they say about the form, the function, and the meaning of occupation. Through these examples of photos and interviews, readers can experience a deeper understanding of familiar individual occupations. The readers can be expected gain in depth understanding of how occupations emerge and are influenced by the individual's environmental situation, and how it relates to health.

Some readers may be surprised that lots of photos and interviews are published here. Our everyday occupations are really multiple. In our individual situations, with different life events, we use our occupations to adapt to and in the environment. Some of occupations discussed here are culturally unique Japanese ones and they may be interesting in expanding ideas about

occupation for international readers. I have inserted many photos and interviews so that readers could see how different people engage in occupations in their own individual situations to create their own lifestyle and, ideally, to be healthy. The variety of examples shows that people's situations are quite unique and their occupations, as well as the form, function and meaning of those occupations, are also varied. The examples will show that even if people engage in similar occupations, their own individual engagement in those occupations could have different forms, different functions and different meanings. That is because the form, function and meaning of an occupation to and individual depends on their situations, such as their past life events, their personal histories. You can sense in these examples, how their occupations have shaped by the individual's environment and situation. I believe these varied photos and interviews can bring readers a perspective of occupation which helps them to understand, through this Occupational Photo Project, how people live as occupational beings.

## Playing the guitar



Yoichi, in his 30s, plays the guitar to his daughter every day. He talked to me as we looked at his photo.

- What are you doing in this photo?

I am playing the guitar for my daughter.

- When do you play?

Almost every day, coming back home from work, I get my guitar and play for my daughter. In the evening, if she is up, I play the guitar to her.

- In the morning?

Yah, yesterday morning I had time, so I played for her.

- What music do you play?

I play songs that I practice these days. When I play a song well, like in the photo, she claps her hands and sings along. She enjoys my playing.

- Is the dad enjoying it?

I think, in this photo, my daughter is also enjoying it. With me playing the guitar and singing, she got excited and crawled to me, singing "aha, aha."

- When did you start playing the guitar and singing to her?

When she was in her mom's womb.

- When did you start playing the guitar?

I started playing the guitar when I was twenty years old. I broke up with my girlfriend and badly needed to get involved in doing something. So I played the guitar. I have loved singing along for 14-15 years. Playing the guitar, I need someone listening to me.

- OK, you need someone when you play the guitar, don't you?

Yes, if someone enjoys listening to me, I can present me. So my daughter listens to me. My wife also listens, but my daughter listens to me every day.

- Does she always give you a good response?

She definitely comes to me and listens to me, whether for a long or short time. Sometimes, she comes to me but leaves soon, and sometimes she sits on my lap for a while. When she is happy, she taps or beats on my guitar. I was amazed that she pretends to play the guitar after I finish playing it. So I do think she listens to me playing and singing.

- It's a pleasure in your everyday life, right?

I am going to continue to play the guitar. It is a good hobby to get rid of stress. In the future, I am going to take her to a music class. Playing music with her is my dream.

I get very jealous seeing a dad and daughter enjoying playing music together on TV. I would like to do that someday. I would enjoy playing music with my daughter.

- How old is your daughter?

She is one year and four months old.

- You are so excited with your daughter responding to you, aren't you?

Yes, that is fun to me. I am a father but I am usually not at home. Through playing the guitar with her, maybe she thinks "This guy playing the guitar for me is my father." I get her recognition of me as her father. It's my proof of existence.

Otherwise, I don't do anything for her but take a bath with her on my day off.

So I think playing the guitar and singing with her is my way to have a relationship with my daughter.

**Context of the occupation:** Yoichi is an occupational therapist in his 30s who lives with his wife and a daughter who is one year old. Being busy with work, he can't spend much time with his daughter. He enjoys playing the guitar and singing for her after work or on a weekend morning. Through this occupation, he is realizing himself as the father. He is happy with his daughter's reactions and interest in him when he is playing his guitar and he hopes she enjoys music as she grows. He looks forward to possibly playing in a band with her in the future.

**Form of the occupation:** Visible aspects of the occupation.

Yoichi played the guitar and sang for his daughter even before she was born and it is a routine for them now. In the photo we can see how she gets excited and crawled to him, singing. They

repeat this occupation often in their daily life. He imagines playing in a band with her in the future.

Playing the guitar and singing for his daughter is his routine, just like waking up, brushing his teeth, having breakfast and driving to work. These routines are embedded, repeated and accumulated in his life, structured by the social schedule of his work.

**Function of the occupation:** Effect or power of the occupation which promotes health and well-being. Challenged by events in the environment, an occupational being reacts to it to fit into the environmental context or challenge (such as getting well), using occupation. Let's check it out with Yoichi's interview.

Yoichi has enjoyed playing the guitar and singing, with positive feelings and emotions about it, for many years. Through this occupation, he has developed his identity and probably gets rid of some of the stress in his life. Playing the guitar and singing has been a meaningful occupation for him, embedded in routines of his everyday life.

The birth of a child is a life event which brings a lot of change to the parent's life, and produces a moral issue regarding how to be a good parent. Yoichi is challenged to find out how to welcome his daughter and live with her as a new family (to become a good father). He is challenged by the environment which requires so much time for his work. Through playing the guitar and singing for her, thus sharing his meaningful occupation in which he is most fully himself, he makes an intimate and trustful place for them to engage in together. He shares this time and place with her in co-occupation. Through this co-occupation, he develops his new family and becomes a good father. Based on their accumulated experience of this intimate and trusting relationship as she grows, he dreams of a future occupation, father and daughter playing together in a band. Accumulating these co-occupational times bridges him (as a father) to the future with his daughter. This occupation is effective in resolving the moral issue of how to live with his new baby and become a good father.

**Meaning of the occupation:** What is important to the person when they select occupations—what to do and how to do them?

Yoichi's goal as a father is making an occupational place for his daughter to learn to participate in society, small or large. He values giving his daughter, even in an early stage of life, occupational opportunity, and a comfortable and trusted place for her to be active. Generally,

it's social and cultural values that parents use to support their kids' growth and development in their society.

## Cooking



Kiyo was a woman in her fifties whose occupational photo showed a lunch she cooked at work. She is a chef working for inpatients in a maternity hospital (service). She talked about cooking as meaningful in her life.

Lunch Kiyo cooked for her inpatient.

- Do you cook?

Yes, I think about the menu, too. We have a basic menu plan for four weeks but I can change the menu, change fried chicken to pork cutlet. We are expected to serve delicious food.

- For whom do you cook at work?

Mainly for inpatients, young mothers of newborn babies, and hospital staff.

- When did you start this job?

I started this job 15 years ago, when I was 37 years old.

- How did you start it?

When my child entered elementary school, I wanted to work outside. I was a housewife, had no job skills at all, and didn't have any ideas but cooking. I was not confident. I had cooked only for my family. I didn't think I could get paid by cooking for people.

But I was inspired because I knew people loved my food. I started cooking for a middle school. I knew teenaged student's favorite food because I had an elementary school boy. I enjoyed cooking for kids. Since then, I have cooked part-time, then full-time. I got a cooking license to develop my job skills.

- Were you inspired by cooking for people beyond the family?

Cooking for people was new and fresh for me. When I was 13 years old, my mother asked me to cook dinner every day for my family, five people. I had no idea whether I liked cooking or not. I didn't think I would be a cook in my future. After high school, I worked as a local government employee (until I married). When my son entered an elementary school, I wanted to work again, part-time, I had no idea other than cooking. But I finally found it just right for me. I thought I would cook from now on. It was fresh and exciting that I got paid and people liked my food. I thought I could do it. I was confident. Cooking made me confident.

- That's great.

I am glad I chose cooking. It's a life changing event.

- Tell me what you do in the morning.

I leave home at 6:30. I wake up at 5:30, make my lunch, and leave home at 6:30. I start work at 7:10 and serve breakfast at 8 o'clock. I make breakfast for 4 patients in a small hospital (clinic).

- That's why you can cook the way you like.

Yes, I can cook elaborate meals. Generally, in hospitals they season frozen fish and cook it, then serve with lettuce. They serve meals in such a simple way. No one makes pizza from dough.

- Do you make pizza from dough?

Yes, I do. I make hamburger with hands. I don't like making jelly with hot water but make dessert with fresh whipped cream.

- This job is right for you, isn't it?

Yes, it is. Finally, I came here. Moving from one place to another, I've finally reached the right place. This job is right for me. That is not right for someone who makes simple meals but is right for another who makes elaborate meals. I would like to cook here as long as possible. I go to patients to deliver meals and ask them "What food do you like?" "Do you like this dish?" "You left tomato last time. Don't you like tomato?" If the patient says she doesn't like raw tomato but likes cooked tomato, I serve it cooked.

- Do you try to fit your patients' needs?

We really want them to enjoy our meals. Many hospitals deal with food allergies but we also deal with their personal food likes and dislikes. I enjoy cooking. I make apple pie from dough made with my hands.

- That sounds exciting. You told me, you didn't think cooking would fit you so much and you would enjoy cooking.

For some, a cooking job may be stressful, but I found it just right for me. I think not many people work at what they love. I am happy because I work at what I love and get paid to make a good life.



- What do you think about your future?

Although I don't know when the mandatory retirement age is at my work, I would like to work until the retirement age. I would like to continue working here as long as I could, learning young mother's trends and favorite foods from internet and magazines for my work.

### **Form of the occupation**

Kiyo started cooking for her family when she was in a middle school. When she completed child rearing and was ready to develop once again as an employee in society, she chose cooking for her job. That was almost the only skill she had for a job.

As a chef, she has transferred from several kitchens in schools and hospitals and now she cooks for young mothers of new born babies. She is satisfied with her job, making elaborate food with her own hands for those young mothers, fitting their needs and preference. She wants to work there until time for her retirement.

### **Function of the occupation**

This occupational photo story tells how cooking has been meaningful to Kiyo throughout her life.

Cooking constructs her role with people since she was very young. Her family situation shaped her major role in the family both as a child and as a housewife. That provided her the occupational experience to develop skills and knowledge of cooking for her family. Until she had to work outside home, she didn't relate cooking with a future job for herself, but cooking supported her ability to develop as a worker into the society beyond the family and solve her life crisis. Cooking helped her make a living and step outside the family further into society and forward in her life. Her career as a chef enabled her to go out on her own and made her confident about how she lives. Through engagement in cooking as a job, she realized her love of cooking and figured out her value in being able to produce elaborate cooking from scratch with her hands to fit people's needs and likes and thus to make them healthy and happy. Cooking also enabled her to climb a career ladder. Through cooking she created her identity, who she was, is and is going to be.

### **Meaning of the occupation**

Cooking has been meaningful throughout Kiyo's life, first being helpful in her life with her parents, then through her life as a housewife and a mother. But she values cooking most as a tool that enables her to be a valued worker in the society through her career. Cooking played a most valuable role when she went out on her own as a worker. It supports her identity and keeps her confident.

## Going out on his own



Shiro is a male occupational therapist in his twenties who recently moved from his family's home into his own place. He showed this occupational photo of a meal he had cooked, and talked his life on his own.

- Did you make nikujaga (meat and potatoes) for the first time?

I wanted to make a good meal for one of my graduate classmates. Everything was good, but I did cut the carrot too thick and it was too hard to eat. Later I asked my mother to look at the leftovers and she gave me advice on how to cut it the next time I cooked nikujaga.

- How did you choose to make nikujaga?

Since I was little it's my favorite food, so I tried making nikujaga for my classmate.

- How did you start living on your own?

That's one of the things I wanted to do before I turned thirty. I was so-so able at work but I didn't feel able in my everyday life. People around me recommended that I go out on my own. I thought going out on my own would help me get a wider outlook as a human and as an occupational therapist.

After I moved out and lived on my own, I was able to talk with my clients more deeply about everyday life responsibilities and occupations.

Now I can discuss with my clients, like, about what we would do to help him make going shopping easier and better for him.

Now I know things in the community better and thus am better able to work as an occupational therapist.

- What is going on with you doing your own things beyond the cooking?

I have learned that if I do the laundry once every two days, I wouldn't have enough time to do other things. But if I do the laundry once a week, it isn't often enough for me to have the clean clothes I need. Now I'm trying to figure out how often I should do the laundry. I haven't made a weekly routine yet. I hope I can make one that works better for me.

- How do you like living alone?

I lived in a family of six. Now I like being able to do things at my own pace. I can do things when and how I like. For example, I had to finish taking bath early at night before my grandparents needed to go to bed so I wouldn't cause them to stay awake late. But what I don't like about living alone is having nobody to talk to. In my parents' house, I enjoyed chatting with my mother and brother while we were watching TV together, but now I don't enjoy watching TV so much alone.

- What is new in your life alone?

I think about my mother's days. I realized how hard her days were. After coming home from work, she is doing the housework and taking care of my grandparents until 10 pm (when they go to sleep). It is only after all that, that she has her own time. I will ask her next time what she thinks about having no time of her own.

I have asthma and dust allergy but I wasn't careful about cleaning, so I got sick and my coughs just didn't stop. While I lived in my parent's house, my mom cleaned the house carefully, to help keep me healthy.

I also had food poisoning because I wasn't careful enough with food on my own. So I had to take sick time off, causing troubles for my colleagues. I recognized these as my weak points.

**Form of the occupation:** In his parents' house, the mother did all the housework. Shiro didn't do any housework chores at all and lacked skills and even awareness of them. After going out on his own, he has been struggling with cooking, laundry and cleaning. Now he is trying to learn the skills and to create a daily routine for the course of his week. He talks more about the housework and community life to his clients in occupational therapy sessions due to his recent experience of living independently.

**Function of the occupation:** Going out on his own lets Shiro be free in his life but also requires him to be responsible for his life. But his life is disrupted by lack of occupational experiences. Lacking of housework skills caused him to suffer from food poisoning and asthma attacks. He learned how daily occupations affect his health and that he needs skills to develop his daily homemaking occupations and stay healthy. Through experience in doing his own laundry, he is figuring out how often to do the laundry to make a functional weekly routine. He learned that housework is important to a stable, healthy life. He used trial and error in doing the housework in his daily life, working to make a daily/weekly routine. Creating a new life requires accumulating new occupational skills, but brings him accomplishment and confidence.

**Meaning of the occupation:** Going out to live on his own means both freedom and responsibility for his own life, health, and well-being. Going out on his own meant participating in daily occupation from which he was exempted in his parents' home. Through participating in daily occupations he is recognizing that he can be self-responsible and that is quite valued. Learning housework skills and creating his new life in his own home means a lot to him. Meanwhile, participating in previously exempted occupations inspires understanding and increases his interest in others as occupational beings in their own environment. It also stimulates his sharing with and gratitude to others.

## Living with pets



Sayuri is a woman in her twenties who has had pets since she was little. She talked about this photo of feeding her guinea pigs. Maybe her story reminds American readers of “fur-babies.”

- Tell me about your life with the guinea pigs? What do you do in the morning?

My guinea pigs are morning types. When I get up in the morning, they squeal a lot, asking for food. I give them water and pet food, saying “I know. I know.” I and my husband have breakfast and, if it’s summer, I set the air conditioner for them. Then we leave for work.

What I do first after I get back home is tell them “I am home.”

After checking that they are okay and how much water they drank, I start doing the housework. After dinner, I move them onto the kitchen table and feed them treats, carrot skins and cabbage. Then I clean their cage at the end of a day.

- Do they like playing with you?

They are calm and quiet. They don’t mind if I hold them, they let me touch them.

Last year, Yamato (one of the guinea pigs) had scabies and lost weight and half of his hair in a month. For half a year, I took him to the vet for a shot every week and gave him meds. I was afraid he would die but fortunately he recovered. Later, Kumi (the other one) also had scabies. I took them to the vet every week for one year. That was hard for me. They are fine now.

- How long does a guinea pig live?

They say a guinea pig will live 5 to 6 years. My family had had a golden retriever for almost 15 years but she died this February. I was so sad with her death. So I am afraid of how much I would be sad and miss them when my guinea pigs die someday.

- Does your husband like your pets?

He feeds them and cleans their cage. The guinea pigs live with us in our home. My husband and I talk about them, watching what they do and how they are. Some times, they are lying in the cage in a funny pose. Other times, they appeal to us: “Give me your food. That is ours.”

- What if you didn't have guinea pigs?

I can't imagine my life without an animal. When I come home, my house feels alive because they are there. Whether they live or die and the quality of the environment they live in depends on their owner, the human. Having them depends on their human caregiver's ego. When I come home, their being there makes me feel warm. If neither we nor they were there, time would stop in our house. If they are at home, I feel our house is warm and active. I am happy to have somebody to whom I can say "I'm home." I don't care if it is a person or not (but plants are not enough).

Animals are always the same to me. Humans are not the same. I sometimes get tired after I interact with people too much at work. I get relieved with my pets and that is different from being with a person. Also, I want my animals to be happy as much as possible. I don't know what their happiness is. Maybe they are happy if only they have food. But I don't want them to live in a bad environment but rather, I want them to live freely and enjoy their life, because I get healed by them in my daily life.

- Are you going to be hurt if they get sick ?

Last year I was worried a lot about my guinea pigs. I knew guinea pigs could live 5-6 years. My babies got sick when they were 5 years old. I was afraid they would get sicker and then die. I paid lots for their treatment for one year.

- How much did you pay for their treatment?

I don't know how much I paid for their treatment but more than you would imagine. One shot cost 50 dollars. I didn't have any insurance to cover it. I had to pay for them. When I left home for work in the morning, I told them "Mom is going to work to get paid to pay for you."

- Sounds like they are your children. It seems you are willing to work hard for them, aren't you?

Yes, I do. I joke with my family and say "I feel like gave birth to them."

### **Form of the occupation**

Since Sayuri was little, she has always had pets. She has engaged in taking care of them for many years. She has two guinea pigs now. Living with them, repeatedly taking care of them and interacting with them, is embedded in (a part of) Sayuri's life. Her morning routine is saying good morning and feeding them, and in summer, setting the air conditioner when she leaves home so as not to let them get overheated or dehydrated. When she gets back from work, she says "I'm home" and checks their food and water. After dinner, she enjoys feeding, petting, and talking to them, then she cleans their cage before she goes to bed. When they get sick, she takes

them to the vet even for expensive treatment. Her husband collaborates with her in taking care of them.

### **Function of the occupation**

Sayuri repeats taking care of her guinea pigs and interacting with them on a daily basis. The repeatability makes up her daily routine and gives her life stability. Living with them makes her feel her home is warm and comfortable. Non-verbal pets have different communication abilities than humans and often more easily accept us humans more than other humans do. Sayuri gets rid of the stress she feels from her daily life and work and feels secure and comfortable with them. Such healing promotes her ability go forward to tomorrow and supports her well-being. Sayuri believes pet owners are responsible for their pets' life and their living environment. Taking care of the guinea pigs on a daily basis, getting them medical care when needed, and organizing their living environment also has the effect of fulfilling the pet owner's responsibility.

### **Meaning of the occupation**

Sayuri's caring for her pets means that making a good home with her pets shows her gratitude to and responsibility for them.

Caring for them and communication with them means promoting her well-being, enabling her to go forward to tomorrow.

## Making mochi



Mochi is a Japanese rice cake made of glutinous rice pounded into paste and molded into shape. It's a Japanese family tradition that families and relatives come together to make mochi in the end of the year, to offer to the gods and thus welcome the new year. People steam rice, pound steamed rice in a mortar to make the sticky mochi paste, then they tear it to mold mochi cakes in different sizes and shapes.



Karina is a woman in her twenties who showed an occupational photo of her nephew pounding rice for mochi, helped by her father. She talked about their traditional family event in which 30 people participated on this December 30th.

- How much mochi did you make?

This time we made 12.5 lbs of mochi in total!

- Since when did you join this event?

My family had continuously carried out this event long before I was born. When I was little, with the adults' help, I used to hit the rice myself, once or twice, with a regular mallet. But my dad loves kids and wood crafting, so five years ago he made a kids' mallet for little children. (In this picture, my nephew enjoys pounding mochi using the kids' mallet.)

- What role do you play in this event?

For the last five years I've played the role of the person responsible for turning over mochi while the pounder hits the steamed rice, turning it into a sticky paste. I also tear the resulting sticky paste into different sizes and shapes after it has been pounded enough to shape. My grandma and my mother used to do that but they're not able to turn mochi paste any longer because of back pain. It's my turn now. It's hard to turn heavy and sticky mochi paste, moving in rhythm with the continuing pounding, and after it is done, it's hard to tear it. But I am glad I've mastered proficiently the skills of turning and tearing mochi and I am proud of being even better than my aunts.



- And what do you do with pounded mochi?

We mold mochi in different sizes and shapes, then offer them at the temple, the Buddhist home alters, and even to our farm machines, expressing gratitude to multiple Japanese gods. Then we ourselves enjoy eating mochi with sweet soy sauce, radish sauce, and sweet bean paste.

- When do you start preparing for this event?

A couple days before the event day, my parents start working for it. They call family and relatives to check how many people are coming. They set up the mortar and mallets outside the house. They also prepare lunch for the participants. In the morning of December 30<sup>th</sup>, we steam the rice over a wood fire, pound the steamed rice to a thick, heavy paste with mallets, and make mochi cakes. Then we offer them and eat them. We eat lunch together before all the people go home. On New Year's Day, the family and relatives come together again at my parents' home. It is our family tradition that my grandparents want to hand to their descendants.

I am happy that now I am able to make mochi cakes with sweet bean paste in them. I am good at turning the heavy and sticky mochi paste while the pounder hits the mochi with the mallets in the mortar. When I was little, I was helped to participate by the care of adults. But I am glad that now I've grown up enough to do it by myself. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, we take mochi cakes that we have offered to gods down from the family alter and eat them or dispose the rest of them, putting them in the field as fertilizer. We make the mochi cakes as an offering to the gods for a good year ahead.

### **Form of the occupation**

Karina's parents have the annual family event of making mochi in the end of a year. Her family and relatives of all ages come together to Karina's house to make mochi. This time they pounded 22 lbs of rice to make mochi cakes in different sizes in their traditional way. They carry out this occupation outside the house, steaming rice over a woodfire, placing it into a mortar and pounding it to sticky mochi paste. The pounding and turning goes on with rhythmical movement and sound. In order to have the rice pounded thoroughly and evenly throughout, great collaboration and synchronization is required between the pounder, who hits the rice with the big heavy mallet, and the turner, who turns the mochi paste by reaching in with their hands between beats of the mallet. Pounding rice needs skill on both sides and synchronization to avoid an accident, like the pounder hitting the turner's hands or other body parts.

Well done mochi paste is molded into mochi cakes of different sizes and shapes. They offer mochi cakes to different Japanese gods to offer thanks and pray for the future of people's wellness, safety and for rich produce from their farm. In Japan, people say gods are everywhere in their living environment, even in kitchens, bathrooms and farms. On the New Year's Day, people come

together to Karina's parents' house again to welcome and celebrate the new year. Her ancestors carried out this family co-occupation through the generations and her current family is going to continue it into their future.

Karina has been a part of this annual event throughout her life. When she was little, she was helped by adults to participate. These last five years, she has been acting as the mochi turner. Karina mastered this skillful role which had been her grandmother's and then her mother's. Now Karina is proud of her growth into this important role in the family tradition.

### **Function of the occupation**

Men and women of all ages come together to participate in this family event, pounding mochi. They pound mochi to offer mochi cakes to different Japanese gods and to welcome the new year. When they present mochi cakes they show gratitude to the gods for their well-being in the old year and pray for the family's wellness, prosperity and safety in the new year. Through gathering together and making mochi to show gratitude to gods and pray for the future, they identify their social membership as the family and relatives.

Karina has participated in this event since she was little. She has grown from being present at the mochi pounding to skillful practice as the mochi turner. That recognizes her rise up the family social ladder and makes her proud of herself.

### **Meaning of the occupation**

Generally, in Japan, pounding mochi is a traditional family event that shows gratitude to gods for family's health and wellness. It also welcomes the new year through prayer for the continued health, safety and prosperity of the family and relatives. Through participating in such an event including the social and collective values, Karina's increasing role provides evidence of her growth in the family and society and is deeply meaningful to her and the family. Transmitting such a role of family event from generation to generation means continuity of family, an important and meaningful value in Japanese tradition.

## Picking tea leaves



Kaori was a woman in her early thirties whose occupational photo showed her grandfather, in his late eighties. He had been a tea farmer for seventy years, growing tea trees, plucking leaves with machines and shipping them to tea factories. But tea farming, especially tea plucking with machines had become too hard for him with his backache and limb pains, so he transferred his tea farm to his daughter.

(Kaori) Because my granddad has back pain and pain in limbs, his wife and daughter worry about him, telling him to stay home and rest. But he goes to the tea field and tries his best, picking tea leaves in the corners of the tea field.

- What does he say about tea farming ?

He talks about how the cost of tea leaves is going down because of the economy. He also talks about how his back hurts so bad that he can't move as he wants. Last year his daughter (my mother) took over the tea farming from him. He told me (his granddaughter) that he appreciated her but also was sorry for her. But to her, he says that, but rather demanded that she maintain his way of tea farming. I think the tea field is his place to feel alive. I guess when he stays home alone, he feels lonely and useless. But here (in the tea field), working with his family, he feels secure and useful.

- Do you think it's a meaningful occupation for him?

Yes, I think so. But he does not talk about anything like that. For him, working in the tea field is just what he continued doing throughout his life, every day from 4:00 am. It is just a habit. He finds the corners in the field where the machine can't work and there he picks tea leaves by hand. Although his wife and daughter tell him to take a rest and stay at home, he goes to the field daily to pick tea leaves. I think he really wants to do that.

- Is the family worrying about him and watching over him working in the tea field?

I think we would say that his coming to the field shows that he is still good, well and productive.

Once, when he was not able to walk to the field at all, he saw a doctor. I took this picture after he got better. My family said it's great that he can move like this again.

- While he was not able to go to the tea field, what did he say?

He said "I want to go to the tea field. It hurts. It hurts."

- Does the family say that it's good he could pick leaves with them watching over him?

Yes, but they also say that he doesn't need to go there.

- What do you think happen if he couldn't pick tea leaves?

I think he would get more fragile.

### **Form of the occupation**

Kaori's grandfather has grown tea, picked tea leaves and shipped them to factories for seventy years. His routine was one of working from 4 am in the morning each day. Because of low back pain and painful limbs, he could not use the tea plucking machines. This caused him to hand over the tea farming business to his daughter. But he still goes to the tea field to pick up tea leaves in the corners of the field where the machines can't reach. His family members working in the tea field are worried about him but watch over him while he is hand picking tea leaves.

### **Function of the occupation**

Engagement in tea farming for many years supported him and his family, contributing to their productivity and their life over time. Tea farming was the center of his routine, repeating the same daily activities from waking up at 4 am, going to the fields, returning home to go to bed early each night for many years, giving a sense of stability in his life. Combining with other daily occupations, tea farming gave him confidence and a sense of security. It built connections with his family and demonstrated his responsibility for family which became his occupational identity. Tea farming was his most meaningful occupation, establishing who he was with his family and others.

In old age, however, he had a medical life crisis, but he recovered from it. The resulting disruption of his normal life in old age challenged him to determine how to live. He couldn't engage in tea farming the way he did previously so he had to hand it over to the next generation, his daughter.

When he stepped out from the center of tea farming, his most productive occupation, he released the responsibility and burden he had carried for many years.

He is satisfied that the meaning of his life-time occupation was handed on well to the next generation.

Next, this meaningful occupation supported him remaking connections to the future. He chose to hand pick leaves in the corners of the tea field where he had always worked with his family while they worked the machines in the field.

Now he moved forward in his life. He figured out what he could do and what he wanted to do based on his current abilities and his previous occupational experience.

Hand picking tea leaves is a small part of tea farming, but a new version of his most meaningful lifetime occupation. It makes a connection to his previous life and that of his family, but also, it makes a bridge to his future and that of his family.

Reacting toward that life crisis which challenged his ability to live fully, engagement in meaningful occupation prompted him to face the crisis actively and voluntarily. His choice of hand picking tea leaves reflects his occupational experience and history.

The tea field is still an occupational place for him to engage in his most meaningful occupation.

### **Meaning of the occupation**

Tea farming is a symbol of productivity for him and his family. Such productivity is an important cultural value/meaning that enables people to live and survive with pride and satisfaction. The grandfather who handed his tea farm responsibilities over to the next generation is now less productive than before. However, hand picking the tea leaves unreachable by machines is his new meaningful occupation. It is a symbol of his wellbeing in his last stage in life, defining who he still is and how he is related to others.

Tea farming's meaning for Kaori's grandfather is productivity to support him and his family, connections among the family, and continuity in his occupations throughout his life. Also, the occupation has meaning of a value to hand over and share this meaningful occupation with the next generation.

He and his family value tea farming which enables them to continue living fully across generations.

## **Conclusion**

I wrote this book for readers who are interested in occupation, who would like to make more sense of the complexity of occupation to persuade themselves and others of its importance. When I started studying occupation, I was annoyed with occupation seeming totally invisible and complicated, but now, the ideas of occupational science help me to enjoy investigating occupation and health and well-being. Living life fully, situated in our everyday life, means being challenged by the environment. We are excited to adapt to the environment. Being occupational means that we respond to challenges from the environment and the world, to propel ourselves forward through our lives and to gain and maintain well-being. I hope the Occupational Photo Project helps you who feel annoyed by complex and invisible occupations.

The Occupational Photo Project is a means to access and become familiar with occupation and to better understand it. Its goal is that you persuade yourself to value occupation gradually with baby steps, as your experience helps you understand it. Why don't you try it? A work sheet is added for your practice.

# Occupational Photo Worksheet

Put your photo here



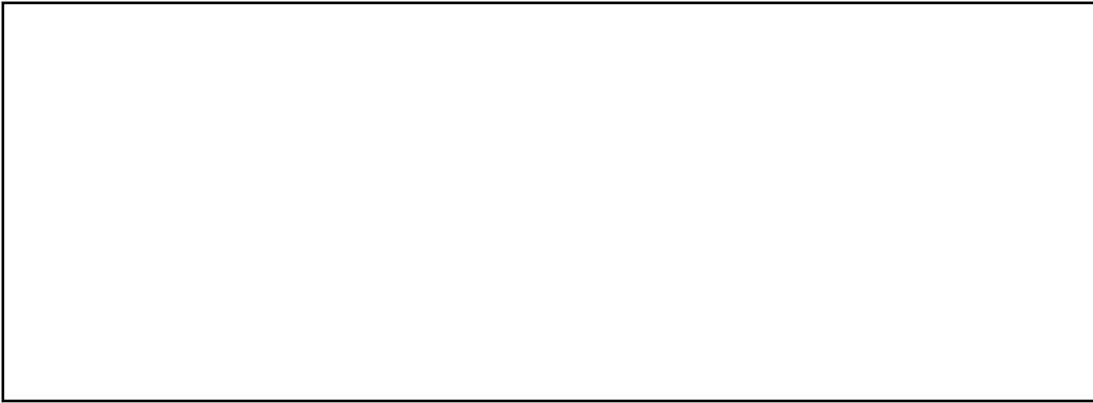
The talker's name :

Listener's name :

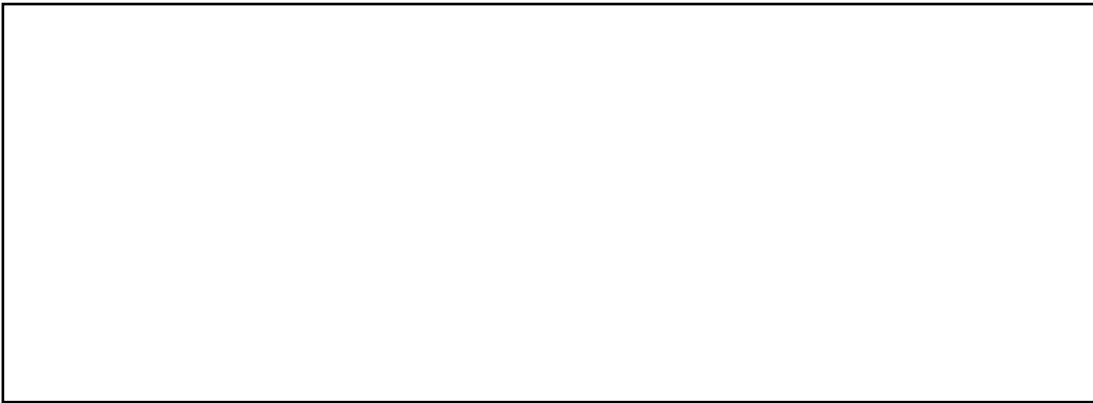
Date of the interview:

The meaningful(important) occupation :

Form of the occupation:

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to describe the form of the occupation.

Function of the occupation :

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to describe the function of the occupation.

Meaning of the occupation :

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to describe the meaning of the occupation.



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