

**Thinking about health and happiness based
on occupations**

Occupational Photo Project

Etsuko Odawara

Foreword

Over 40 years ago, I was lucky enough to join a group of occupational therapists led by Dr. Elizabeth (Betty) Yerxa at the University of Southern California as they began the development of the core science for the field of occupational therapy. Occupational therapy is a health field that originated over 100 years ago with the idea that the things we do that occupy our time (our daily activities or occupations) have an impact on our health and wellness. The loss of this focus in the mid-20th century was partly related to the successful rise of scientific medicine, with its evidence-based assessments, diagnoses, and treatment. While this was extremely welcome in the case of disease, the issue of living with disease residuals, with lifelong chronic disabilities, and the necessary adaptability to the many other life crises which disrupt our health and wellness was essentially ignored by medical and paramedical allied health fields such as occupational therapy. The development of a science which could provide scientific evidence of the effect of occupational therapy upon people's health and well-being was needed and ideally it would reflect the core concepts of the original founding of the field.

A lot of reading, philosophizing, theorizing, discussing and just plain arguing began among the USC faculty group. These processes, along with researching, teaching, and testing occupational therapy practice using the valued concepts began the discipline of occupational science. It spread nationally and internationally as its development continued—more reading, philosophizing, theorizing, discussing and of course, continued arguing in many languages and cultures around the world.

How to help occupational therapists and people outside of the field to understand the complexity of their daily occupations, their value in their adaptation throughout a person's life, and their importance to obtain and maintain health and wellness is a major question asked by occupational scientists. One approach is academic—teaching the theory, research, and practice to occupational therapy students at all current levels of entry: bachelor's, masters, and doctoral degrees (Ph.D., OTD, etc.). But these approaches are limited to people involved in academia and don't reach the practicing therapist or people who aren't therapists.

Dr. Etsuko Odawara, studied occupational science for her Ph.D. degree at the University of Southern California, coming there as an experienced clinical practitioner and occupational therapy educator from Japan. The language and cultural differences caused her to deeply

explore the ideas presented in her classes and to work at cross-cultural translation of them. She then returned to occupational therapy education in Japan and worked with her students there to help them understand occupation within their own cultural experience. She began to develop methods to assist them in exploring occupation in their own lives and lives of people close to them before they began to try to apply the ideas of occupational science in their practice. One of these methods was the use of what she refers to as Occupational Photos as a stimulus for an interview and discussion about the form, function and meaning of an occupation illustrated in the photo.

She has continued working with this method of aiding people in understanding occupation after her retirement through workshops for practicing therapists and through publication of her book in Japanese, explaining the Occupational Photo Project for the layperson and clinician. This E-Book in English is her open access attempt to encourage many people to use this method to explore the depth of their daily occupations. She continues the spirit of occupational science, sharing with the world to promote health and well-being.

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Introduction

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.

What is an Occupational Photo?

Maybe you are wondering what an Occupational Photo is, because the name seems unfamiliar. Occupations are the activities that we do in everyday life, and similarly, the Occupational Photo Project is a project to help us think about and document people's occupation and health using everyday photo shots.

In the Project, the Listener(interviewer) pays attention to the Speaker(interviewee), both looking at a photo of occupational engagement in everyday life brought by the speaker. They do this to understand occupation, health and well-being (well-being is wellness and is often equated to happiness, tranquility and vigor.) The purpose of this book is to introduce and discuss the Occupational Photo. The author expects that you can learn to understand and practice using Occupational Photos. Although I am going to discuss ideas based on the Occupational Photo Project and how to proceed with it in the next sections of this book, I would like you to first look at some Occupational Photo examples.

Miyuki's cooking in the early morning.



Miyuki wakes up at 4:30, enjoys drinking tea and makes breakfast and lunch for the family members. She values supporting them to stay healthy and do well in their school or work. Her morning routines and cooking also influences her and her family's life rhythm.

Yumiko's running.



Yumiko is in her late twenties. On weekdays, after working in the hospital building with air-conditioning all day, she likes to spend time outdoors. After work, Yumiko enjoys running 4-5 km to get sweaty and renewed. On the weekend, she enjoys running longer and participates in marathons. When she was a student, she valued making records as an athlete. Now however, for Yumiko, running means making an effort step by step and it makes her feel confident and refreshed.

Taichi's mountain walk.



Taichi is a retiree in his sixties who lives with his wife. He engages in volunteer work and takes care of his grandkids and his old mother. Since he was a high school student, Taichi has enjoyed climbing mountains. When he was young, he had a tight schedule. So, on weekends, he used to ride a night train to reach a mountain site and climb the next day. After climbing, he took the night train back to his hometown so that he could go to work the next

day. Taichi liked challenging high mountains with a heavy pack on his back, and concentrating on attacking steep slopes with his utmost efforts. Now, in retirement, he has slowed down his schedule in consideration of his changed stamina and climbing safety. Taichi's climbing has changed in that he takes time to enjoy the flowers, birds and scenery in the mountains and relaxing in the hot springs with his wife before and/after climbing.

Sachiko's Pilates.



Sachiko has suffered from low back pain caused by her job as a nursery school teacher for many years. She joined a weekly Pilates class with her friend. She is relieved and satisfied that her low back pain is much better. Now, she also practices Pilates at home. It refreshes her and she has developed a new habit of paying attention to her body posture. Sachiko's mom is happy that she is in good condition and looks

forward to the class once a week. She values being able to keep working, thus connecting her past to her future.

Ryota's car washing.



Ryota is a teacher in his forties who lives with his wife and three children. He is busy with his work from dawn to dusk. Even on weekends, he has little time to spend with his children. Five summers ago, the eldest child tried to help Ryota washing their cars, but she

got scared of the splashing water from the hose and went back into the house. Later, his children gradually became able to help him. Watching them washing the cars using water and car wash sponges, Ryota feels his children are dependable. This summer, he watched his children work together and raise their spirits enough to splash him with water from the hose. Ryota feels happy with their growth, and the fact that his children are not scared of the hose water anymore.

Yoshimi's caring for a fragile elder.



Yoshimi takes care of an old man with chronic conditions. With his assistance, Yoshimi works most carefully to prepare his food, considering his chronic conditions, his abilities to swallow, digest and absorb different foods, and his likes and dislikes. She arranges his recipes to serve diverse dishes with nutritious balance and seasonal tastes. If the old man enjoys eating her food, Yoshimi feels happy

and finds taking care of him worthwhile.

How the Occupational Photo Project started

Perhaps you are now asking “How did it start? Is it even necessary?” If you share the same curious questions, allow me to shed some light on how it started.

The Occupational Photo Project was developed during my clinical experience, education and research. An event in my private life piqued my interest in occupational therapy and gave me an opportunity to start a career in occupational therapy, but I was unfamiliar with occupation and it had little role in my professional life at the time. However, as I started to explore the concept and principles of occupational science and became more familiar with it, it triggered a shift in my perspective on occupation. My eagerness to share my realization led to the birth of the Occupational Photo Project, a tool so simple, yet so practical and powerful to extend this new perspective on occupation and start a constructive discourse with my students and my colleagues.

A big opportunity for occupational therapy

At the age of 22, I was a liberal arts student preparing to be independent from my parents. Before I got hired for a job, my younger brother met a vehicular accident from which he sustained severe injuries, causing him to lose his ability to carry out his previous everyday life. He had repeated surgeries and became a frequent hospital guest, but at that time, I didn't have enough knowledge to understand his prognosis. I simply wished for his speedy recovery and went off to start my professional life. However, a thought came to my mind while I was building my career, “Isn't it weird that I am working for a company which is linked to my brother's life and to my life?” After this realization, I decided to quit the job, and I returned to my parent's house. From then on, I regularly visited my brother in the hospital. Unfortunately, he didn't recover well.

In a book store in my town, I found a book “The Mechanism of Medical Rehabilitation” by Dr Satoshi Ueda (1971), which inspired me very much. It was the enlightening experience that I was waiting for. It painted a picture of people with disabilities living an active and enjoyable life in various societies. It offered an amazing sight wherein patients got out of their beds and moved on with their lives. It also introduced the professionals responsible for such: physiotherapists and occupational therapists. It provided a clear depiction of an occupational therapist's role in aiding people with disabilities to be able to live actively in their society again. Perhaps it was my interest in making crafts which attracted me to occupational therapy. I had thought walking exercise could guide my brother back to his student life. I wondered, “Could he live actively again with the help of the rehabilitation world?” And it was these ruminations that ushered me to rehabilitation school far away from my hometown.

My education in the rehabilitation school was largely based on a medical model. Students sketched bone specimens, memorize names of bones and muscles, and studied OT knowledges and techniques based on disease and disabilities.

I was interested in OT and worked hard to absorb the professional knowledge and was motivated to participate in classes and practice. My most memorable experience during my professional education was studying muscle testing, range of motion and activities of daily living. Nonetheless, I was nowhere near to figuring out how OT could help my brother, and I still did not understand occupational therapy well. At a party after my commencement, I said “I appreciate everything the school gave me, but I still have yet to answer the core question: ‘What is occupational therapy?’” In search of answers, I started working as an occupational therapist to serve clients, helping them to live life comfortably and fully.

What is occupational therapy?

After I gained experience with adult and older patients in hospitals, I got a faculty position in the OT department of a university. It was a difficult but exciting job for me. Thinking about how to teach best OT practice while also helping my patients to be able to do their daily activities and things they need or want to do brought me joy. However, while I was busy working with my patients, lecturing my students and feeling a sense of purpose, I still had not come to any conclusion as to “what is occupational therapy?” I think many OT students and occupational therapists share this feeling. However, as I couldn’t explain my occupational therapy, I was feeling less confident about my job. I was troubled with the questions: What is occupational therapy? How different is it from physiotherapy, which is our so-called sibling? Am I helping my patients? Am I useful to society? Is it just self-satisfaction? I wondered what I should do to be confident with my OT job.

My brother moved to a couple of other hospitals and I visited him. He didn’t work well with a rehabilitation exercise program. He looked bored in a corner of the hospital gym. When his home life restarted, he needed assistance with most all daily tasks except eating. My family tried to enjoy time with him, taking care of him using another’s help.

I got the idea that what he enjoyed doing was important and valuable. I wanted to call it meaningful occupation. His favorite activities included watching Iqusan, the TV program (on full volume), and playing card games with the family. He also loved playing Beatles’ songs with his keyboard and eating meals. When my family ordered eel dishes, served with individual sauce containers for each place setting, after the meal, he liked challenging himself to pile up sauce containers and often asked me to take pictures of his work. In such photos he was wearing a big smile and looking proud. He liked going to a park in our neighborhood, talking to familiar old people there and watching the cherry blossoms develop, bloom and die off. After my brother settled in back home, I returned to my hometown to live with my family getting a

job at a university there. I taught OT knowledges and techniques by diseases and disabilities as I had learned them in school and in my job experience. But I was unable to share with my students the enjoyment and satisfaction I experienced while I was doing OT practice with my patients. My desperation and frustration led to an irate question which resulted in an awkward silence in the class-- "If Katsuo (a popular Japanese cartoon character) gets a spinal injury at level C6, what happens to his life?" Perhaps my students viewed me as an energetic but odd teacher. It was not long after that my brother needed more care and had to move back into a hospital where he passed on. After his passing, I felt empty, depressed and I wanted to sleep in almost every day.

Meeting a new perspective of occupation

When I recovered from depression, an idea came to me. "It's time to explore and solve the riddle. Let me figure out what OT is." I had an image of myself searching around in different places with a red backpack on my back. I had this desire to put an end to this vagueness I had, which had troubled me when I tried to extend OT's excellence (wonderfulness). Because I didn't find the perfect place to study in Japan, I decided to study abroad and prepared for graduate study.

I went to the University of Southern California (USC) in 1996, where I was introduced to occupational science. In USC, occupational science was a distinct academic discipline, a social science, which was born from occupational therapy's foundation in the United States in 1917. Occupational science focuses on studying humans as occupational beings, putting occupation at the center of research to promote human health. Its purpose is also to support occupational therapy in helping people to promote health and well-being. Although I didn't understand these ideas well, occupational science made me hopeful and excited.

The more I studied, the clearer it became. Gradually, I came to think that the perspective of occupational therapy in which I had been educated only looked at people in a constricted view, highly medical in nature. I also came to realize that I have had a limited perspective of looking at people due to my training, and found out that it is a dilemma shared by many professions. This realization led to a deep attraction to occupational science, which had been studying human health with a wider perspective.

One of precious things I acquired from occupational science is the ability to understand humans as occupational beings, which provides useful hints to support people having difficulties in reestablishing their lives. I came to realize that we humans do not only have measurable motor power and function, but we have our daily lives, our own values, and life course; and we live in a society where we exercise our own wills, but can also be influenced by others. I came to have an image that, through occupation, people live life through their own agency to step forward interacting with the environment. Occupation is how we live our lives.

In our own way, we unconsciously understand occupation and choose an approach that leads to a positive direction enabling us to support ourselves. Such a perspective is important, and viewing humans as occupational beings makes it possible to create a story leading to a future where we can be more cheerful as we recover.

After studying in the US, I returned to Japan to teach at a university and had classes, study groups, and workshops to spread my new occupational perspective to my students and colleagues. My trials and errors made me realize that one must listen to people (yourself, your family members or someone around you) and observe real life experiences. This is the way to accumulate practical knowledge to help you understand every day occupation and various occupational perspectives. I used the familiar power of simple photography to facilitate the exchange of occupational stories between the speaker and the listener. The photo of my brother, which I took when he was piling up the sauce containers of the eel dish showed real occupational power, and it became the starting point for further developing the Occupational Photo Project.

Contents of this book

The book consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the purpose of the book, and, for better understanding, provides an overview of occupation and health through some Occupational Photos illustrating every day occupation. From these examples, we consider the characteristics of occupation, its role in everyday life and how it affects human health.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical basis of this book. Occupational Photo Project helps readers to understand and define their own occupational perspective. It also discusses occupational science, which largely influence this book's framework. Though the content may seem to be a little difficult, I recommend reading it because it provides the foundation of the Occupational Photo and the root of my thinking about it.

Chapter 3 provides step by step instructions on how to proceed with the Occupational Photo Project.

And finally, Chapter 4 presents many Occupational Photos and stories—precious photos and stories which were graciously shared by people around me. I collected 6 examples of different types of everyday occupations, and I hope you enjoy the colorfulness and richness of these occupations fully. I am sure real photos and interviews will help you understand how occupations emerge in everyday life, including how they relate to the environment and/or situations, how they change, and how they are linked to health. You will see the various relationships of everyday occupations, health and well-being. I provide interpretations and descriptions of the forms, functions and meanings of occupations for several examples (See Chapter 3 and 4). Though the interpretation is subjective and may differ from what another might interpret, I have included my own to help you to start and develop your own Project. I

hope that you can try your own Project using Occupational Photos, or use the book as a reference to have a deeper understanding of human being through the concepts of occupation, health and occupation and occupational being.

Chapter 1 . Occupational Photos Purpose and Niche

The Purpose of Occupational Photo

More than anything else, this book will be useful for occupational education and could be a supplemental material or textbook for the introduction of OT concepts and tools, such as using occupational photos as a practical method to understand occupation and health and its relationships.

This book focuses on the Occupational Photo Project, a tool to examine everyday activities, real-life occupation, and health with the goal of helping its readers to deepen their occupational perspective, rethink everyday occupation and health, and understand humans as occupational beings as guided by the Occupational Photo method.

I am sure that this book would be a good companion for practicing and aspiring health professionals, such as occupational therapists and undergraduate and graduate OT students in search of practical tools to examine everyday occupation.

It is also my sincere hope that the book would be equally enjoyable and useful for non-health professionals or casual readers who are interested in learning more about everyday activities, as well as adults and/or elders trying to stay healthy, and even for high school students considering careers in occupational therapy, other health professions, or who are interested in human health. I urge you to explore the book to get started in your journey toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of occupation. It will offer you a sneak peek into occupational practice and some valuable insights on health and well-being.

The Niche of Occupational Photo

Occupation is what we do in everyday life

We live our lives by engaging in different things which occupy our time: what we often call “doing things in everyday life” or “activity.” In this book, we will refer to them as “occupations.” An occupation can be eating with family, working, watching TV by yourself, playing, traveling, cooking, dating, skiing, joining a party and going for a walk. Occupations are endless, and there are different ways to present them. Riding a train to arrive at a destination is called commuting or taking a train or making a trip. Eating together at the dinner table with family can be called a birthday party or an ordinary breakfast depending on the situation and culture.

However, we usually don't think much about our occupations

Occupation, like the air we breathe, is often taken-for-granted as it is a natural part of our everyday lives. Although we may not be consciously aware that our everyday life is established through our occupations, we nevertheless spend our days engaging in various

occupations. Yes, occupation is very familiar to us, but we rarely realize its importance--- usually only when we are unable to continue performing or engaging in such activities. We occupy our time doing things on purpose, consciously or otherwise. Truth be told, we cannot live without occupation. Although occupation is familiar to us, it appears that we do not think deeply about its details, such as who, when, where, and/or what. For instance, what meaning does it have? How does it affect human health? Is it useful to solve the problem? Does it help people to refresh, settle down, or fit within a situation or environment?

We care about occupation and health

There are numerous jobs and research fields related to health. Occupational therapy and occupational science are among those fields, with a focus on health and occupation. Occupational therapists provide services which support people's (in societies around the globe) ability to do everyday activities for a healthy life. Both the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)(www.wfot.org) and the Japanese Association of Occupational Therapists (JAOT)(www.jaot.or.jp) state that to promote people's health and well-being, it is important that they participate in everyday activities and in their society. On the other hand, occupational scientists are researchers who study occupation and produce knowledges and theories to promote human health (Yerxa et al., 1993.) It looks at the relationship between health and everyday occupation, its dynamics and factors that influence it.

To visualize occupation and health

No one would deny that our everyday activities influence health and well-being, but the complexity and yet everyday inconspicuousness of occupation make it hard to understand the relationship. It requires some skills to visualize the relationship between occupation and health. In the Occupational Photo Project, images of various occupations are captured and presented using photographs. The photos are then examined using the key concepts of occupational science (frame, function and meaning of occupation) as foundation to reveal the relationships between health and occupation. Such is the power of the Occupational Photo Project, that it can turn seemingly simple photographs into occupational science knowledge by providing visual cues to guide interpretation.

By applying an occupational science perspective and using its rich theories and knowledge anchored in multiple disciplines, such as anthropology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, geography, gerontology and neuroscience, we are able to better understand human occupation through its physical and psychological functions and sociocultural contexts. Therefore, an occupational science perspective will be helpful to support people to re-establish their life after a crisis brought about by disease, disability or disaster (Zemke & Clark, 1996) since

occupational science aids occupational therapists in promoting people's health and well-being through their occupations (Zemke & Clark, 1996; Clark & Larson, 1993; Yerxa, 1993; Yerxa et al., 1990.)

Occupation is visible with a wide view

Now that occupation has been demystified, let us discuss its characteristics, particularly its types, patterns, and its relationship with health.

We spend time engaging in multiple activities: walking, watching a movie, taking shower, reading, shopping and more. Often, we do something out of need, but we also do things because we enjoy. Engaging in occupation can evoke various feelings. When doing something we find interesting, we'd feel satisfied. On the other hand, if it's something lackluster or monotonous, we would find ourselves feeling sick and tired of it.

Our everyday occupations influence our health, both physically, psychologically, and in a broader sense. Everyday occupations can make us healthy or unhealthy. For instance, running regularly is usually good for health promotion. But this is not always true, especially in highly polluted environments where continued exposure to unhealthy air could harm runners. Another example is smoking, which they say is bad for human health, but which for some, is necessary to feel refreshed.

Some occupations we do alone, some with others. When with others, occupations can be interactive, where all actors influence each other. When having a meal with family or with someone very close, we not only take nourishment, but we also enjoy being together and chatting. It is through such occupational interactions that we promote intimacy and trust. Participating in a hobby club, through occupational interactions, we develop friendships with members. With continued participating, maybe you will gain a sense of belongingness and fulfillment. But if you skip it, you could miss these feelings, but enjoy solitary occupations instead.

Occupations change with time. When we think of our occupations it should be in relationship to our lifecycle (throughout the flow of time). We may encounter events that disrupt our everyday occupations, such as a life crisis in the form of a disaster or a disease that messes up the routine that we have taken for granted. This disruption to our pattern of daily occupations can leave us isolated, depressed or worse, unable to continue with our lives. For example, under the coronavirus self-restraint situations, many people lost opportunities to do their familiar or important or meaningful occupations, or changed how to do them, or started new occupations. Some people struggled to keep their life satisfaction or authenticity because they lost their taken-for-granted occupations. If our daily life occupational pattern is disrupted and it is hard to keep it, we try to reestablish it by accumulating new occupations. Many

patients have needed occupational therapists to help them reestablish their life and the occupational therapists have tried to find their roles in doing so.

Through occupations, people extend their habits, traditions, beliefs and values to others. At home, parents pass on their family values and wisdom to their children using errands, cooking, clean up, study habits, family events and after-school-activities. Thinking about occupations in the flow of time across generations shows that older people could participate in cultural activities with younger generations to pass on local tradition and knowledge, such as history, festivals and events. Through their occupational interactions with the youth, the elderly can transfer culture, habits, values, skills and wisdom, and they can promote their trust and belongingness, which benefits both generations' well-being.

This book is about a project that observes real-life occupations through still photo images to help us understand the various forms, function and meanings of occupation. The book's purpose is to allow readers to formulate their own occupational perspective. To achieve this, I will introduce its theoretical basis, procedure, and then share cases from Occupational Photo Projects.

Occupational science was the theoretical basis applied to develop the project because through it we view humans as occupational beings. Occupational science is an academic discipline that studies how occupation influences health and has developed knowledge relevant to occupation and health. The Occupational Photo Project makes use of the occupational science perspective as it seeks to understand humans as occupational beings. There are other aspects of an occupational science perspective, which illustrates the complexity of occupation. You can think of the Project as using one of the many different perspective focuses.

The Occupational Photo Project was born from my interest in coming up with a simple and easy tool to better understand occupation and health. Perhaps, you are now asking, "How can an Occupational Photo help in examining occupation and health?" Let's explore health and occupation using the six photos shown previously. These photos are all about everyday occupations. Here are some questions that we might want to ask: "Why are the people in the photos engaged in such occupations?" or "How do these occupations promote their health and well-being?"

The first Occupational Photo is about a mother. She wakes up very early in the morning and makes breakfast and lunch box for her family. She prepares food every morning to help her family be active all day. The mother's occupational routine also influences the rhythm of her family's life. The second is about a young woman who enjoys running after work. Running outside refreshes her tensioned body and mind after working inside the building all day long. She used to be a student athlete who made running records. Nowadays, her occupation of running promotes her health and well-being in a different way. The third is about a retiree who enjoys mountain walking. He was an ardent climber who used to challenge mountains using his

full physical strength. Now, he has changed his occupation and enjoys walking mountains a bit differently; he adjusted his walks to suit his present lifestyle. The fourth is about a working woman enjoying home exercise. She started a pilates class to prevent back pain. Now she can go to work without back pain so that she looks forward to continuing this pilates occupational participation. The fifth is a photo of children washing cars taken by their father. Although he is too busy to spend much time with his children, through the occupation of washing family cars together with his kids, however, he can bond with them, watch them grow, and experience a father's joy. The last occupational photo is of an assistant who prepares a meal for a fragile old man. She finds meaning in her efforts in preparing meals to meet the requests of the fragile old man and in supporting his health.

Now that you have a better idea of occupations, don't you think that they are often taken-for-granted? And that while they make up our everyday lives, we do not think about most of them much? And that sometimes we pay attention to occupations and other times we ignore them? Isn't it getting easier to see your occupations in your everyday life? In the next chapter, let's explore the perspective of occupations and health, starting from the beginning of occupational therapy about 100 years ago.

Chapter 2 . An Occupational Perspective

Occupational therapy started one hundred years ago voicing the idea that a profession using occupation for intervention is needed to support people in troubles, assisting them to reestablish their life in their society. This voice was based on a belief that occupation has the power to promote health and recreate a life after crisis. Its mission was to support people with disability and/or disease (people in trouble) to live fully in their society and to help them create a meaningful life using occupation. However, while occupational therapy was expanding as a paramedical profession, the full perspective of occupation as its base became endangered (uncertain) and occupation itself became invisible in its practice and societal awareness. It is occupational science that emerged from this crisis in the occupational therapy profession. The mission of occupational science is to understand humans as occupational beings and to study the relationship of occupation and health. Let's begin with the dynamic history of occupational therapy and that of occupational science.

Founders of occupational therapy

Occupational science is an academic discipline launched in 1989, but its roots were from the early 20th century. In the 1910s in the United States, a profession named occupational therapy did not yet exist, but a group of people met to form it because they realized that occupations (activities) have the power of promoting health (Peloquin, 1991a, b). They were the founders of occupational therapy, who were from many other professions: an architect (George Barton), a nurse (Susan Tracy), a medical doctor (William Dunton), a social worker (Eleanor Slagle), a vocational counselor (Thomas Kidner), and a craft teacher (Susan Johnson) (Peloquin, 1991a, b). From their own job experience and/or illness experience, they realized that engagement in daily occupations has the power for people distressed by a life crisis to promote their own health and to create a life with a future focus. They declared the societal need for occupational therapy, a new profession that supported people to promote their own health using occupation (Christiansen, 2008; Larson, Wood & Clark, 2003).

At that time in the US society, people's life had been influenced by the industrial revolution; mass productivity was emphasized and people were busy as industrial workers but artisanal crafting by individuals was undervalued as was the meaning of their daily occupations beyond work. Many soldiers came back home to the US wounded from WW I . The soldiers had to recover from injuries, find jobs and create their new life in the communities. Immigrants from European countries, searching for a new life in the USA, had a hard time finding a place to live, getting a job, raising their family in a new culture, becoming citizens. Many people had tuberculosis. Patients recovering from tuberculosis across the US societies required a long time for the rest cure followed by a need to regain physical fitness and develop or redevelop skills to

get jobs and start a new life. From different professions that attempted to support the people distressed in different ways at that time to recover and to gain job skills to start their new lives, the founders of occupational therapy, discussed previously, realized the power of occupation (activities) and declared the necessity of a profession using occupation to promote human health and the need of education for such professionals.

Medicine at that time was benefiting from supportive science, but it also fell into the rise of scientific reductionism (thinking of things, such as bodily organs, separately and as the smallest unit of study, rather than in a more humanistic whole) and thus developed a tendency to think of the patient as bodily parts or body and mind separately. A characteristic of the occupational therapy profession is that it sees and treats people comprehensively (wholistically, as a whole unit) as human beings actively engaged in interactions with their physical and social environment and as agents in developing their own life, and also believes that human occupation, that interaction with the environment through agentic doing, has the power to promote human health. At that time, such an ethical idea was common among social movements like mental hygiene and moral treatment (Christiansen, 2008; Clark & Larson, 1993). At the basis is Meyer's idea (1922) that humans are organisms making harmony with the environment through their activities and that humans need occupation to live a healthy life as much as they need food (Dunton, 1919). The founders focused on occupations that were habitual activities and work-rest-play (Larson, Wood & Clark, 2003).

Occupational therapists, practitioners of the profession of occupation, believe they can contribute to helping people have rich and productive lives by enabling distressed people to live taken-for granted everyday lives in their society. Their founding features were understanding of wholistic human and occupation-centered perspectives. Occupational therapist education began, based on these understandings. While supporting people through their practice, the number of occupational therapists increased. However, as more time passed, the more they became influenced by their biomedical practice and societal environment.

Crisis of occupational therapy

While the occupational therapy profession expanded in the US because of WWII demand and acceptance and participation in the medical world, it became increasingly influenced by societal and medical value emphasizing reductionistic science. Occupational therapists' attitudes toward patients shifted from a comprehensive one to a reductionistic one. The founders' perspective of occupation had disappeared in 1940s and OT developed medically modelled diagnostic knowledge and skills in 1950s (Larson & Clark, 2003). In the 1960's in Japan, occupational therapy education was started to enhance rehabilitation medicine. Occupational therapists from the US taught Japanese students the diagnostic-based OT treatments available at that time (Suzuki, 1986).

After the 1960s, in the US, occupational therapists questioned the nature of scientific values for occupational therapy. They pointed out that occupational therapy in clinical practice lacked a theoretical foundation (Reilly, 1958) and that contributed to the profession being in an academically critical situation (Kielhofner, 1977). They cited the need for a theoretical conception common to all areas of practice of the profession and explainable to other academicians, professionals and ordinary people. This need led to the proposal of a wholistic perspective centered on the core concept of human occupation (Yerxa, 1981). Discussions among Japanese occupational therapists concluded with a statement that occupational therapy is a practical study of therapeutic-activity-use (Sato, 1986).

Based on the core concept of people's engagement in occupation, Yerxa launched an academic discipline with a theme of human occupation and health. She said "health is not absence of organ pathology, but as an encompassing, positive, dynamic state 'well-beingness,' reflecting adaptability, a good quality of life, and satisfaction in one's own activities" (Yerxa, 1998, p.412). Occupational science has developed all over the world as seen by the International Society of Occupational Scientists' (<http://www.isocccsci.org>) Inaugural World Occupational Science Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in August 2022.

Chronological Summary (dates are approximate)

1917	US; Occupational therapy education began to develop the profession to promote human health using occupation
1920s	Number of occupational therapists increased rapidly
1940s	The wholistic view of occupation disappeared
1950s	Knowledge and skills of medically-based diagnostic OT treatment developed
1960s	Japan; Occupational therapy education started
1970s	US; Calls for regaining the nature of occupational therapy via the concept of occupation
1980s	US; Theories centered on the concept of occupation emerged Japan; Occupational therapy was concluded a practical study
1989	US; Occupational science was launched to study human occupation and health
2020s	International Society of Occupational Scientists and national and continental societies functioning globally

Occupational science: Active and flexible occupational being

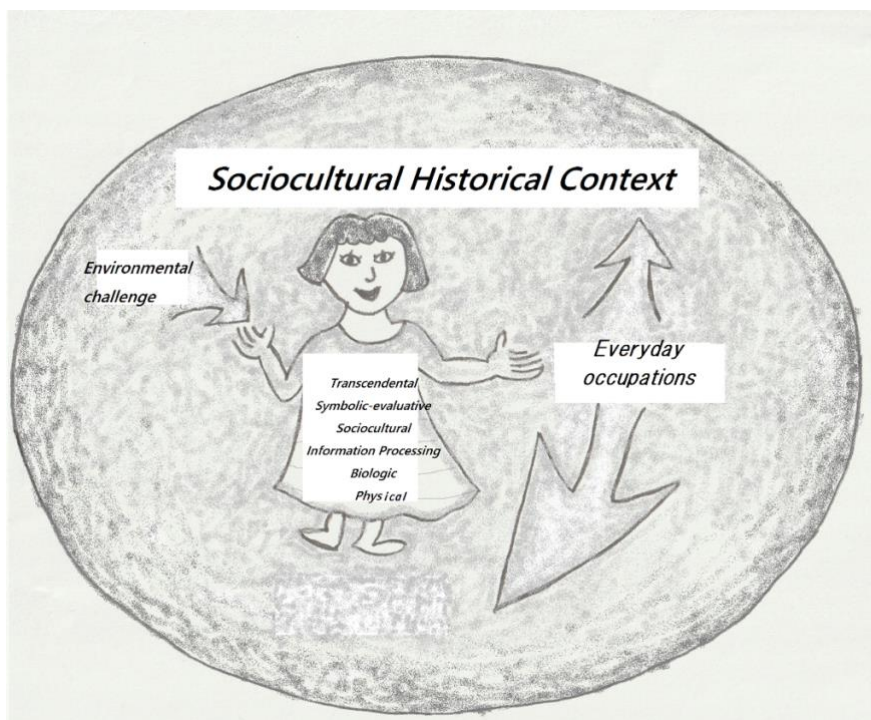
Occupational science considers people as occupational beings. The idea of an occupational being is to think of people as active, able, and engaged in a free existence, behaving with a purpose in life, and adapting to complicated environmental changes using skills and resources on hand (Yerxa et al., 1990; Yerxa, 1998). It's taken-for-granted that we will live our life by

continuing our everyday occupations. We occupational beings show strength and flexibility. When we meet events or changes in the environment, we approach them with initiative and flexibly use our abilities and things at hand fully to be able to step forward.

The idea that people engage in occupation freely, actively and ably to adapt to challenges by the environment suggests that humans occupations are dynamic (Yerxa et al., 1990; Yerxa, 1998), and this idea may help us understand occupation. People's interaction with the environment in our everyday life is through human occupation. While we interact with the changing environment, we are not only bombarded by it but we approach it actively and freely to adapt to the changes we face. We, as humans, have such an active and strong nature. However, when we think about the real occupations we and others engage in, they are not simple or obvious. Actually, occupations are complex and ambiguous.

Complex Occupations

Here is a model that explains complicated occupation well. The Model of the Human as an Occupational Being (Clark & Larson, 1993, p.51) captures human and environment as a system and describes their interaction. Look at the Figure below, modified from one by Clark and Larson (1993, p.51). In the middle is the occupational being, the person. The background is huge, the entire environment, that is, her life, world and society. There is not only physical but psychological and socio-cultural context in real life environments. Family, school, work, neighborhood, people and nature are included because they are all a part of the environment. This model shows human and the environment as an interacting system that functions organically.



The person, as an occupational being, is not only exposed to events and changes in the environment but tries to get a better fit between themselves and their environment by adapting self or environment. To adapt, an occupational being interacts with the environment organically (as a whole person, mind and body, physically, psychologically, socio-culturally). In this model, human-environmental interaction is through “everyday occupation.” The person, an occupational being, with (according to the model) six-levels of subsystems with multiple functions, tries to engage in occupations to adapt or adapt to the environment. The six levels of subsystems (at the time this model was developed, systems theory suggested hierarchical levels of subsystems) proposed in the occupational being were; transcendental, symbolic-evaluative, sociocultural, information processing, biologic and physical. Occupation is complicated because, every time a person is influenced by the environment, each of these six subsystems are reacting and affecting one another to interact with the environment. These interactions (to better succeed in the environment) are occupations. So you can see that occupations are much more than what is visible, like actions or movements, but rather are complex interactions with a unique environment at a particular time.

Let’s look at an example, considering a real person and her daily occupations in terms of the Model of Human Occupation’s subsystems and occupational complexity. Here is a working woman, named Rika, living with her son in a local city. She leaves home at 7:30 on Monday-Friday, works 9:00 to 18:00 and comes home around at 19:00. She wakes up, does her routines (washing her face, getting dressed, making up, waking up her son, having breakfast and leaving home), walks to the station, rides a train, works for a company, attends meetings, and coaches her junior workers, then returns to continue her life at home. Her son, a high school student, has played tennis since junior high school. His school does not have school lunch so Rika makes a lunch box for him every day.

First let us consider Rika’s day as an occupational being from the simple perspective of the physical subsystem. The physical subsystem structures enable functions of nerves, organs, bones and muscles, and enable people to continue to live, to move, to work and to play. All the physical functions are active while Rika is doing her morning routines, job, dinner after work, taking a bath and going to bed.

Meanwhile, as a biological being, Rika’s need to maintain life causes her to collaborate with others so that she would get food, eat, maintain hygiene, protect her family, and raise her children. To support these activities she also interacts with others and is employed.

From the information processing subsystem, the occupational being gets information from the environment, and plans sensing, cognition and movement. As Rika and her son get information from their environment and recognize things, they judge it and use it to plan their everyday life activities like work, study, and play (club activities). For example, under the COVID-19 pandemic, when they got information about infection prevention, their daily occupation

changed, such as what to be careful about, how distant to keep with others and about the order in their actions.

We look next at the sociocultural subsystem. Rika and her son's wake up time, leaving home for work or for school is set to meet the schedules and rules at work or school. Rika chooses making his lunch because her son's school doesn't have school lunch. While an American mother might feel she has been a good mother (social role) sending her child off with a peanut butter and jam sandwich for lunch, a Japanese mother has a much higher cultural expectation for creative bento box lunch preparation. Her weekend occupations change from the weekday (a social time designation). She makes menus and goes grocery shopping to make lunches for the week. The food she chooses and methods she uses to cook reflect her culture and social experiences.

While the biological level of Rika's making lunch might be considered primary because a mother's feeding her child is basic reproductive offspring life maintenance, this occupation is also influenced by higher subsystems. It also is impacted at a symbolic-evaluative level description of the cultural importance of a mother's role in encouraging her child. Moreover, it is affected by the transcendental level that relates to the meaning of occupations throughout the person's life cycle. Rika chooses making lunch with the meaning relating to her student son's future for which she encourages his striving in his studies and his participation in club activities.

Our occupations are complicated in such ways. We cannot simply analyze a physical action and consider that to have described an occupation. The complex interaction of many subsystems for that action at a particular place and time must all be considered to more fully understand an occupation.

Life is an accumulation of occupations

At the base of occupational science are respectful attitudes toward human dignity and toward seeing the individual as an occupational being. This is a moral and philosophical idea.

Occupational beings approach environmental change actively, interacting with it and forming a good relationship with it. Occupation has an important role promoting individuals' healthy lives, that is to contribute to human health. This is called "the centrality of occupation to health" (Clark, Wood & Larson, 1998, p.16). It shows that people have the ability to approach the environment actively, to treat the changing situation with patience and strength and to choose occupations to fit the changing environmental situation.

The founders of occupational therapy emphasized that occupation is required for human health as much as food (Dunton, 1919) and stressed that occupation plays a central role in living a healthy and full life. Through occupation, we fulfill our purpose and face our difficulties in the environment. Occupation has the power to propel us humans forward. Occupation is

like an engine that gives energy for human to drive our everyday life throughout our life cycle. While engaging in occupation, we spend time, live our everyday life, make our family, figure out who we are, connect to others, create our identity and adapt to changes of the environment (Clark & Larson, 1993). Conversely, if, like a car without an engine, we didn't have a balance of occupations or couldn't perform needed occupations, we couldn't adapt to the changing situations of life. Then, without our meaningful and important occupations, we couldn't propel our life forward and would be disappointed, depressed, and stagnant.

Both our everyday life and our longer life cycle is established through what we do and what we did, that is, with accumulated patterns of occupations. Based on our piles we go forward to future. Like the pillars of a structure hold up the roof, building with the pillars of daily occupations provides a base for our future life. Occupations can be our life energy, helping us to step forward.

But events occur that disturb our ability to maintain our ordinary life. They might cause a critical situation, a life crisis. When disease, disability, or disaster occurs, we can't continue our taken-for-granted life as before. Such life crises might also make it physically and/or mentally difficult to maintain our previous everyday life.

However, occupations have the power and the possibility to break through a life crisis. It is possible to establish a new life by building on new, adapted and familiar occupations. It can be like building with a Lego set of blocks, while facing your situation actively and flexibly.

Occupational therapists are good at supporting their clients to do that.

Throughout our life, we try to connect to the next generation, continuing our own(personal) life, resolving crises one by one. While the generations shift from parents to children to grandchildren, our occupations are continued across generations. Our familiar occupations are transmitted, piled up and built on, and handed on to newer generations as habits, routines, customs and traditions, shaping our societies. Using occupations, we hand over and link our life to the next generation, whether changing our habits, culture and values or not.

Occupational choice influences how we live

Since the time of occupational therapy's founders, members of the profession have believed that "occupation has the power to promote human health", an idea that reflects the moral treatments approaches represented in multiple social movements at the beginning of 20th century. These movements respected the view of people as actively approaching and interacting with their environment as agents of their occupations and in the power of such interactive occupations to promote healthy lives. That is the universal power of occupations and effect of occupations.

Let's imagine how a student does her everyday occupations. When she wakes up, her day starts. She engages in her morning routines; washing her face, going to the bathroom, having

breakfast, and getting changed. She rides toward school on her bicycle and once there, she takes a midterm exam. After the exam, she has free time and she goes to a karaoke place for enjoyment and to reduce the accumulated stress from the test. After dinner, she sleeps very well. However, on the weekend there is an unusually heavy rain. Her family's house is flooded so she spends her time engaged in cleaning up the mess of a flooded house with her other family members.

In different situations, we choose our occupations and engage in them to fit the demands and opportunities of the environment. This includes small choices like what we eat for lunch or how we go to school in heavy rain, and even bigger, more important, or irregular occupations, like choosing our future courses as a student or making career decisions or choosing where to live. Such occupational choices could lead us to turning points in our lives. Engaging in occupations to create their life, each person makes choices among occupations, negotiating the situation at the particular time and with their own values.

Occupational participation/choice includes moral and ethical issues and provides us important turning points in deciding how to live. If occupational choice and thus usual participation is disturbed, we cannot continue our familiar life and our health and well-being is threatened. To consider, as a person or as a professional, health and wellness, it is essential to be interested in how people choose, participate and experience their occupations in their everyday life and then how those occupations relate to their meaning of life and health. It's also essential to consider social values and meanings shared in the society, as well as personal subjective experience, values, and meaning.

Let's think about occupational choice about the student discussed above. Before the flooding, she would not like to clean her own room. But this emergency changed her occupational choice. Inside her house got terrible and they're not able to continue familiar occupations: having meals, taking a bath, having rests, going to school or work, and enjoying quality time. Their usual life got disrupted and their health and happiness were threatened. Her family got challenged in this emergency, flooding. It took them a moral issue how she and her family members live life and promote health and well-being. Facing the challenge, to recover their usual life and familiar occupations, her mother encouraged all the family to clean up mud/water together. Being expected to join, she chose to collaborate with her family in cleaning up, to develop their everyday life because she was a member of the family.

Occupational choice includes the moral issue how to live. Promoting health and well-being through life is an ordinary human value and meaning. Members in a family and/or community are responsible to collaborate for these values. The student's occupational choice is heavily influenced by this moral issue.

Social and cultural perspective

Our everyday occupations, like eating, drinking, walking in our neighborhood, going shopping, working and commuting are countless, but we don't always pay attention to what we do and how we do it. Through my experience in travel, TV watching and reading, it is clear to me and easily observable how occupations look different between countries and cultures, and among the time periods and the historical backgrounds when/where they were/are engaged in. One example familiar to us all is dining, having a meal. Some people eat meal with a fork and a knife in the hand at a table, seated in a chair, other people eat with chopsticks in their hand, seated on tatami-mats, and yet others eat food using their hands while seated on the floor. If you compare the occupation of traveling in 21st century and that 200 years ago, you would understand that we enjoy moving a long distance in short time using cars, planes, or highspeed trains, but for Japanese people 200 years ago a visit to Ise (a famous shrine) was a uniquely precious once-in-a-lifetime traveling experience as they moved a long distance on foot over many days or in a sedan-chair carried by laborers.

Everyone, including you readers, myself, an old man in your neighborhood and a 5-year girl living in a town in the other side of the earth, live life engaging in occupations in taken-for-granted ways in their societies and in their cultures. We humans are called social beings and cultural beings. However, we existence because we do things and we are established by what we do, and that is why we are called occupational beings. We choose occupations and accumulate them to grow, becoming who we are. My occupations reflect my individual values, meanwhile what and how I do is influenced by the norms and/or values of my family and/or Japanese society. While our occupational choices are shaped by our own will, hopes, and desires, it is also influenced by our family's habits and values and norms and tradition in the society we live.

Although it is not usually the focus of our attention, we can become conscious of how our personal occupations in everyday life are influenced by social values and norms. In traditional Japanese society, for instance, the occupations of "ryosaikenbo" (a good wife and wise mother) have been an ideal. Gender division of labor occupations was expected: the housewife was responsible for caring for and handling the members of her household and its structures, objects and functions; while her husband was responsible for working for pay to support the household. This social value definitely affected women's (and men's) occupational choices. Many young girls dreamed of and felt destined to be a housewife and a mother for their future. However, today, in the 2020s, it is taken-for-granted that women will be employed in many societies. Young girls dream to be professional athletes, pâtissier and cabin attendants, and they have a wide variety of work occupations to choose from.

Because we are social beings, we need to think about occupation from a socio-cultural perspective. "Occupation refers to specific 'chunks' of activity within the ongoing stream of human behavior which are named in the lexicon of the culture..."(Yerxa et. al., 1990, P.5). We live within cultures and societies and within the flow of time. That means that our daily occupations are influenced, shaped and named by social norms and cultural values and change across time. In other words, how we spend our life time is evaluated, is given meanings and is named in our own culture or society. I'll explain further later with what are likely to be familiar lifetime occupational episodes.

Occupational change and identity

Occupation is what we do in daily life. As we grow, occupations change within the flow of time. When a baby is born, she spends her days drinking milk, sleeping and crying. Then she starts sitting up, whining and creeping. She plays peek-a-boo (resulting in laughing or surprise), prattles and then walks. She is fed in a baby chair then eats by herself at the family table. While she continues to develop to enjoying occupations such as running, playful pretending, playing in a park, and going out for errands, she experiences interactions with others, especially her family. That is her entry into the society, later including going to nursery, school and other groups like club activities, after school activities, and cram school. She would make friends, fight with them and make up. She would join school events or trips. In school, she can learn a lot, interacting with children and teachers. Through books, movies, TV and the internet, she also comes into contact with the broader world. We grow across rites of passage (special life moments). Through events such as birthdays, beginning and ending school years, commencement, and coming-of-age ceremonies, we celebrate our growth. We get a job, form a family and support our society. Through the interactions with family, friends, people at work, and others, we participate in a wide variety of social occupations. From birth on through life, we build our identity by accumulating occupations.

Form, function and meaning of occupation

Occupational science assumes a person is an occupational being. Thus when someone experiences a disruptive event in everyday life, they deal with the environment through occupations, negotiating the situation and judging their own performance abilities and their private and social values, consciously or unconsciously but comprehensively, to better fit the environment. That means changing themselves and their occupations or changing the environment for a better fit in their interactions. At the base of it is a human history that we have accumulated for hundred thousands of years, of engaging in occupations for survival, reproduction, productivity and pleasure. This human history is the power of occupation

promoting health in our everyday life whose importance the OT founders emphasized over a century ago.

Occupational Science perspective is that people live by adapting and adapting to the environment flexibly and actively. Occupations are not simple behaviors but are accumulated across time and form complicated layers of accumulated occupational experience. The purpose of our agency in occupational choice is to live positively. A wide definition of health is interacting with the environment and adjusting to it well, making a balance of adapting the environment and self, to survive and live better in the future.

While you may be able to understand occupations as having a power that promotes positive living and building our current and future life now, you also may have begun to wonder if it is too complicated, and have become afraid of trying to understand it further. However, you can understand occupations in the real world without fear with this helpful guidance from one of the founders of occupational science. Clark suggested that from the results of occupational science research we realize that an occupational perspective includes thinking about the form, function and meaning of occupation (Larson, Wood & Clark, 2003; Clark & Larson, 1998). The Occupational Photo Project uses these three aspects of “form of occupation, function of occupation and meaning of occupation” to study the photos of people engaged in everyday occupations.

The Form of occupation is the observable aspects of occupations. It is about things you can observe while a person is engaging in an occupation, for example, the relationship of the person and time, space, methods, and/or environment. It describes the who, when, where, what, how, with whom, how long and how often of the occupational participation. If you understand the form of occupations, you would also become familiar with the person's occupational performance, occupational patterns and temporal rhythms related to their health. I expect you would be able to easily understand this through the occupational photo examples in Chapter 4.

The Function of occupation is the effect, power or influence of occupation on health and/or well-being. It is about how useful occupation is for health/ well-being, for our adaptation to changes in the environment, which is the dynamics of occupations to promote health. Health doesn't just mean no-disease; this would be a very narrow view of health. Rather, the function of occupations is the health of people using a wider sociocultural view. Because occupations influence people's health at multiple subsystem levels, the function of an occupation could have numerous and various expressions. Improvement or development of skills or abilities, growth, control, accomplishment, fulfillment, transition, survival, satisfaction, relaxation, refreshment, usefulness, interaction with others (social interaction), belongingness, collaboration, harmony

(orchestration), self-confirmation, establishment of identity, establishment of human relationship, empathy, security, safety, transmission of values, reestablishment of life- all are positive effects of occupation. In the opposite way, boredom, dissatisfaction, depression, stagnation, anxiety, disappointment and disruption of life could be negative functions of some occupations. There would be more, endlessly.

Let me show you some examples of the functions of occupations. If you have a walk on Saturday evening after a long and hectic week, you would enjoy fresh air in your neighborhood park. You may get sweaty and feel fresh. Walking could have a refreshing effect. Meanwhile, if you take a walk every day, you could expect it to help maintain your physical fitness and to make a rhythm in your life. But, if you want to shape your body, you would need harder exercise.

If you start playing tennis and focus on hitting and chasing balls, gradually becoming able to keep a rally going, and then you win a game, you have developed skills and abilities in playing tennis. You would find fulfillment in playing tennis and be satisfied with your development as a tennis player.

This photo shows another example of the functions of occupations. A mother, daily making breakfast and lunch for her family members in the early morning, may provide nutritional and emotional support for their life that day. This healthy maternal routine contributes to the family's daily rhythm. Supporting and helping the family might give her fulfillment, thus serving as one of the occupations establishing and maintaining her self-identity as a good mother.



Yet another example of functions of occupation is in basketball club participation. Member basketball players can feel a sense of belonging with the team through working together as teammates, repeating trials and reducing errors in practice, passing the ball to each other and



bringing it to the goal. Engaging in playing basketball in a team for a long time may create an identity as an athlete, a basketball player who collaborates with teammates for the good of the team.

Engaging in occupations such as working in various jobs or performing habits or taking on societally recognized roles may be useful to establish an identity. For example, through

studying in an occupational therapy program, practicing OT skills in school and in clinics, accumulating clinical experience, interacting with staff and clients in practice, listening to

patients discuss their daily occupations, touching them and trying aiding tools with them, and focusing efforts helping them form a better life through occupation, identity as an occupational therapists will grow in you.

We have a sense of self that we realize through doing (occupations) (Clark, Wood & Larson, 1998). While you are discussing everyday occupation, you will discover such stories of our occupational selves. The stories show the listener how meaningful and important (precious) occupations are. The importance of occupations would show not only the form and function, but also the meaning of an occupation to the participant. The stories show you how occupation influences health and how occupation relates to the environment. While engaging in doing, you recognize who you are and draw yourself in the future. The functions (power, role) of occupations let you be aware of the meanings for you, and help you build your story and your identity.

We humans recognize ourselves and sense ourselves through doing occupations. A little girl, twirling in a hallway, may dream of her future self as a professional ice-skater. An employed mother who is busy with her job, house work and childcare throughout the day, reading picture books aloud to her children in bed each evening, may be smiling, tired, or reflecting on the day. An occupational therapy student, while working a parttime job in the early morning to pay for tuitions, studying OT knowledge and skills, and doing OT field work, will be aware of herself as making efforts for her future life. Doing these occupations is important and meaningful for the student. A young hairdresser, while engaging in arranging the customer's hair style to match her request, may imagine herself as an adept professional hairdresser in the future. A young bakery intern, after he kneads the dough by hand, shapes the loaf, takes it out of the oven and then checks the completion of the bread, imagining himself in the future as a self-employed baker, making people happy.

Meaning of occupation

The word "meaning" has different definitions. We call what a word expresses its meaning (For example, zouri –sandals, in Japanese- means a type of flat foot ware often used in old days). To be meaningful means to have a meaning that is important or impressive. For example, if a child cherishes his stuffed animal, it's a meaningful belonging to that child. If you had a wonderful adventure in a summer vacation of the third year of junior high school, that is your meaningful summer vacation. Even if it's hard, but worth making efforts to live it well, it is a meaningful life. Something valuable for people in a particular culture is meaningful for them. For example, in most areas around the globe, longevity is meaningful and people celebrate it and pray for it.

We seldom focus on the meanings of our occupations. However, when we have an especially impressive experience, we cherish it, think about how much it means to us, and call it

meaningful. If you have liked and have been involved in playing basketball since you were an elementary school student, you could call playing basketball a meaningful occupation for you. While you are engaged in the occupation, you might be aware of what meaning it has for you. If you were unable to continue to participate in that occupation for some reason, you would certainly think about how meaningful it had been for you.

Through doing things, we create meanings. The meanings the person attaches to an occupation are also influenced by the social values of the culture or society in which the person is living. Because we grow up and continue to live embedded in our culture or society, our personal values can be influenced great deal by social norms and what others think.

For example, many Japanese have a deep attachment to cherry blossom-viewing and look forward to enjoying it as an annual spring event. In Japanese culture, the cherry blossoms represent the impermanence of life in a beautiful way. Because Japanese people repeatedly enjoy being together with their families or friends to admire the beauty of cherry blossoms from their childhood on, they are imprinted with this Japanese culturally meaningful occupation. They then create their own individual meaning and individual meaningfulness of cherry blossom-viewing. So, you can understand that the value of an occupation in one's culture influences individual occupation. You could say that we create our own meaning, incorporating or resisting values of our culture and society.

Although a birthday party might only mean a surprise for someone, it generally means to celebrate the birthday person's health, happiness and growth, and to wish for a good life for him or her. A birthday party for an older person generally means to celebrate living a long life and a wish for one even longer.

A family's everyday meals may not only mean taking in nutrition to grow and to have energy all day long, but they mean that parents have an opportunity to check on the general conditions of their family members and family members can share their experiences and encourage each other to have a good day. It seems that while spending our time in our every day occupations, we take them for granted. We cherish our occupations when they have some symbolic meaning (Clark, Wood & Larson, 1998), but we usually do not pay special attention to consider the meanings of our everyday occupation, taking them for granted much like the air we breathe. Meanings influence our occupations throughout our lifetime. The meaning of occupations greatly influences our occupational choice. For example, a family who lives with their fragile old mother may choose not to live in a mountainside village but might choose living in a bigger town for her safety and accessibility to health and/or assistance service. If a worker couple living in a city finds contact with nature meaningful, they will choose gardening in suburbs or going hiking. Then they may choose to live near a beach after retirement.

We often find it meaningful to express emotion through occupations. Taking a yoga pose, for example, we could feel connected with the universe, peaceful, quiet and relaxed. If you lose a

loved one through their death and as a result feel confused and disbelieving, you might express your feeling of loss and sadness and find some relief through processing your traditional cultural funeral procedures. Attending to traditional funeral occupations can provide the participants with an opportunity to express their sadness and acknowledge the feeling, leading to some relief.

Occupations have many forms, functions and meanings and their characteristic expression is rich and complicated. Occupation, while changing and transforming through time, creates our life and life course and influences our health. To learn more about how we can understand this perspective of occupation based on the characteristics of occupations in the lives of real people, I have developed a method using what I call the “Occupational Photo.”

The purpose of this book is to help you better understand everyday occupations in people's lives, based on the “form of occupation, function of occupation and meaning of occupation.” We will learn to understand how occupations are linked to health, based on these three characteristics of occupation. I expect you will refine your perspective of occupation using this method. In Chapter 3, I will explain how to proceed to use the Occupational Photo by sharing an example.

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 30th, 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 11th, 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



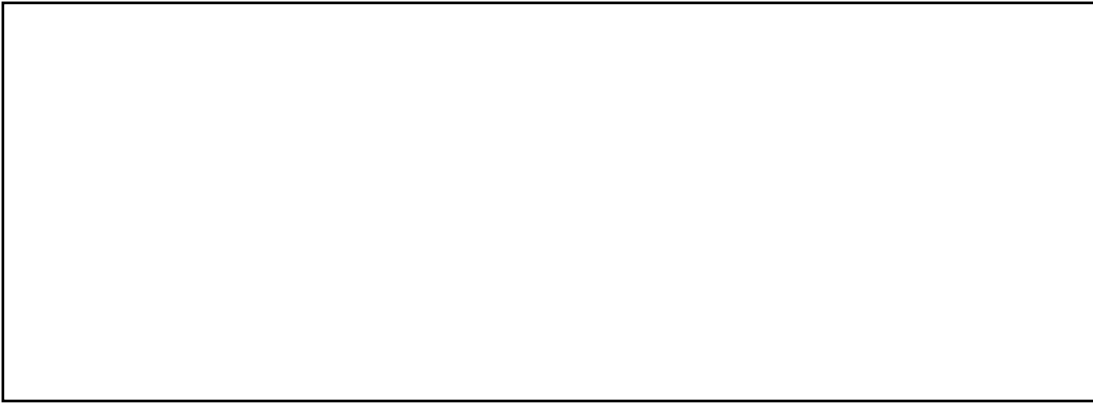
The talker's name :

Listener's name :

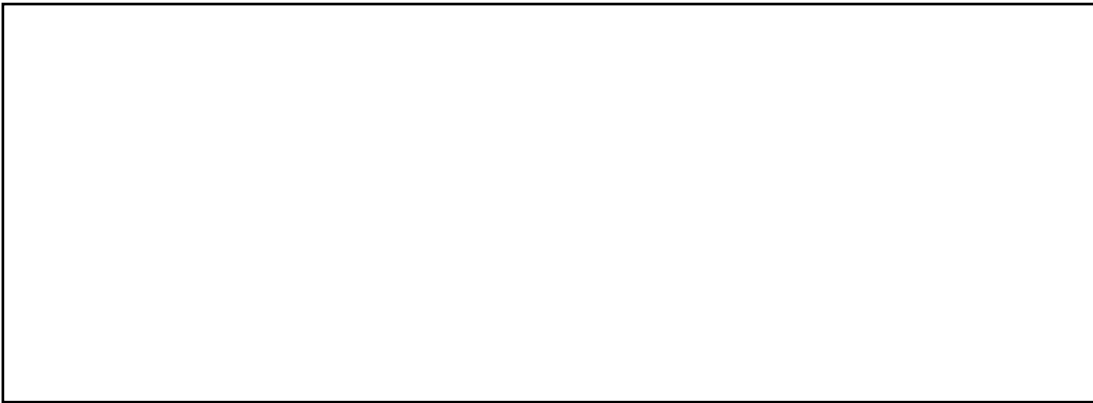
Date of the interview:

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 :

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Meaning of the occupation :

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