

# **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](http://www.wfot.org)) and the Japanese Association of Occupational Therapists (JAOT)([www.jaot.or.jp](http://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)**

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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

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### **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

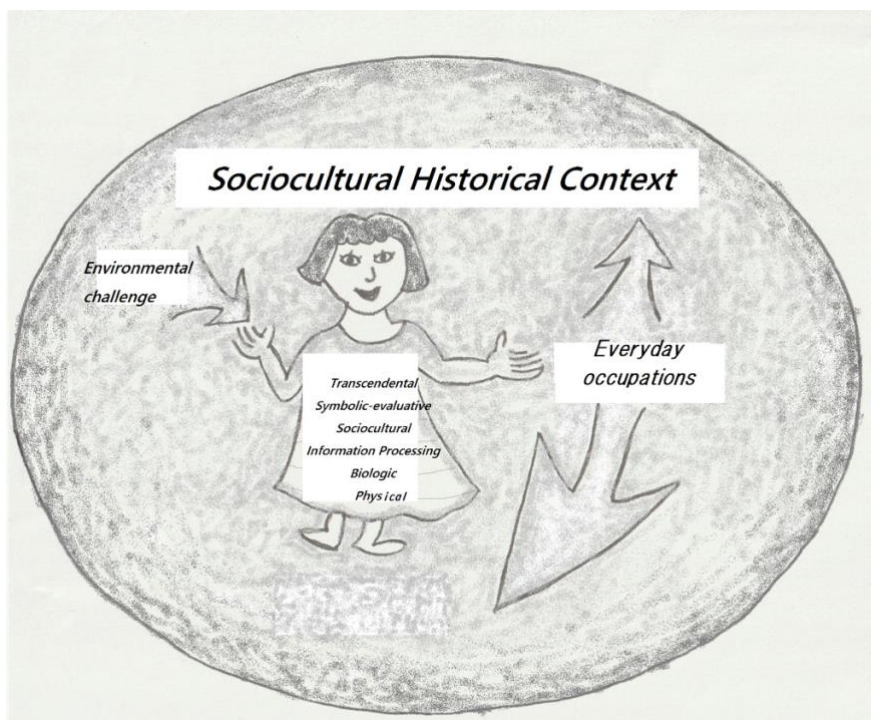


continuing our everyday occupations. We occupational beings show strength and flexibility. When we meet events or changes in the environment, we approach them with initiative and flexibly use our abilities and things at hand fully to be able to step forward.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.