

# **The Society for the Study of Occupation: USA**

## **Conference Proceedings from the Twenty-Third Annual SSO:USA Research Conference**

*Galveston, Texas  
November 6-8, 2025*

**Proceedings of the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA**

**12<sup>th</sup> edition**

**Twenty-Third Annual SSO:USA Research Conference**

***Occupations and Nature: Connections and Transactions***

**November 6-8, 2025**

**Galveston, Texas**

# **SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF OCCUPATION: USA CONFERENCE 2025**

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## **MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS OF THE SSO:USA**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Society for the Study of Occupation (SSO:USA) is a dynamic research society dedicated to advancing occupational science and leveraging its findings for the betterment of humanity. Our mission is to foster the growth and dissemination of knowledge in the field, driving meaningful insights into the diverse ways in which individuals engage in occupations across the lifespan. By promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and supporting rigorous research, we aim to unlock the transformative power of occupation in promoting health, well-being, and social justice.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

SSO:USA:

- Is globally recognized as helping to advance occupational science.
- Is a dedicated partner in a network of international societies collaborating to make a global impact through occupational science.
- Is a leader in mobilizing occupational science knowledge in collaboration with multiple disciplines.
- Empowers communities and individuals to enact occupational health, justice, and reform.
- Fosters the transformative power of occupation and is fully embraced and integrated into every aspect of human life.
- Envisions a world where people flourish by participating in daily occupations that bring them health and fulfillment.

## **HISTORY OF THE SSO:USA**

**By Elizabeth Larson, 2002**

History can be made in those mundane moments when neither the impact nor the influence of the future can fully be understood. In 1917 a group of scholars made history when they met to establish the profession of occupational therapy. Their vision for this fledging profession, focused on the core idea of occupation, was: to advance “occupation as a therapeutic measure,” “study... the effects of occupation upon the human being,” and disseminate “scientific knowledge of this subject.” Although this date and time marked a turning point, it was in fact a culmination of many individuals’ efforts and advocacy. As in any good story, the founding mothers and fathers could not have predicted the course the profession of occupational therapy would take and how long it would be before a discipline that specifically studied occupation was developed.

The founders’ vision served as the groundwork for what has emerged today as the discipline of occupational science. Interest in occupational science has surfaced on nearly every continent where scholars are joining together in study groups, on listservs and web pages, and at conferences to discuss the ideas and their applications to occupational therapy. This proliferation of vents on occupational science has surprised many but seems to be meeting a growing need among practitioners and scholars to better understand and use occupation therapeutically. “Occupational science ... is developing in ways that we could never imagined or predicted-its shape and character are being formed by scholars who embrace it and the students who earn doctoral degrees in the discipline” (Zemke & Clark, 1996).

In November 2002, nearly 90 years later, another landmark event in the evolution of occupational science occurred. In Galveston, Texas, another group of scholars met to formally establish the first U.S.-based research society aimed at addressing the mission outlined by the founders. This event too marked the cumulative efforts of many individuals over several years. Since the First Annual Research Conference in 2002, the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA has continued the original mission of facilitating high quality scholarship. There were so many people who contributed and offered support, both financial and emotional, that it would be impossible to mention them all here. Suffice to say, it takes the effort of many to continue the mission.

SSO:USA Web Page Address: [www.sso-usa.net](http://www.sso-usa.net)

## **RUTH ZEMKE LECTURE IN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE**

**DR. MARY C. LAWLOR, ScD, MEd, OTR/L, FAOTA**

*Let's Take a Moment: Temporality and Significant Experiences*



Dr. Lawlor is Professor and Associate Chair for Research in the USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the University of Southern California. Dr. Lawlor directs the Boundary Crossings Research Lab and has over 25 years of experience conducting interdisciplinary and community-partnered research focused on children with developmental and special healthcare needs, their families, and the clinicians who support them.

Her scholarship is distinguished by its commitment to examining the meanings of illness and disability in family and community life, the social and narrative nature of therapeutic encounters, and the sociocultural factors shaping health care, particularly among chronically underserved populations. She has led and collaborated on numerous federally funded studies, including two NIH R01 grants, a Maternal and Child Health Bureau-funded ethnographic study, and a Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) capacity-building engagement award.

Dr. Lawlor has been instrumental in the development of narrative and phenomenological methodologies in occupational science, including the creation of collective narrative interviewing. Her work in autism research has highlighted the importance of emic perspectives and explored how sensory processing challenges impact lived experience and social participation. Her ongoing research includes studies on uncertainty in the lives of autistic children and their caregivers.

An award-winning mentor, Dr. Lawlor received the 2024 USC Mentoring Award for Faculty Mentoring Graduate Students and has chaired or served on dozens of doctoral committees across PhD, OTD, and MA programs. As a leader in research development, she mentors junior faculty.

She is a Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association and a member of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation's Academy of Research, where she also served as Chair of the Board of Trustees. In recognition of her scholarship, she was selected to deliver the 2022–2023 Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture, one of the highest honors in the field of occupational therapy.

Dr. Lawlor earned her Sc.D. in Therapeutic Studies from Boston University, her M.Ed. from Harvard University, and her B.S. in Occupational Therapy from Boston University.

## **ABOUT THE DR. RUTH ZEMKE LECTURESHIP IN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE**



In recognition of Dr. Ruth Zemke's mentorship, questing intellect, and ongoing efforts to foster an occupational science community of researchers, this lectureship was named in her honor. The lectureship is "designed as a forum to present visionary, theoretical, and critical analyses of occupational science." (Larson, 2002).

The recipients of the Ruth Zemke Honorary Lectureship are given an engraved kaleidoscope in recognition for their contribution to the study of occupation. Occupation is made up of simple, everyday actions that can be combined in an infinite variety of ways. This variation creates a complexity that requires examination from many perspectives in order to understand its many facets and meanings in people's lives. According to Dr. Zemke, the kaleidoscope serves as a metaphor for occupation. It is a collection of simple, everyday items that can create beautiful and often complex images. People change their perspectives by rotating the kaleidoscope to see the endless variety of images created. Indeed, the kaleidoscope is a well-chosen keepsake for the recipients of the Ruth Zemke Honorary Lectureship.



## **PRE-CONFERENCE EDUCATION WORKSHOP**

### ***Connecting around Occupational Science Education: A Conversation for All***

**Facilitated by members of the SSO:USA Education Committee**

**Thursday, November 6, 2025**

**9:00 am – 11:30 am**

Building on robust conversations about Occupational Science education that have taken place at the last two conferences, the newly-formed SSO:USA Education Committee invites you to engage in thinking deeply and broadly about occupational science and OS-informed education. The conversation will apply to all degree levels also consider OS education as it pertains to other disciplines and therapeutic practices such as occupational therapy. Participants will engage in a facilitated workshop considering important concepts core to occupational science education, examine critical questions for educational curricula, and generate ideas for infusing occupational science across a variety of types of educational programs and pursuits. Don't hold back if you're not a formal educator - everyone (students, practitioners, researchers, etc.) is welcome at the table of OS education!

## PRE-CONFERENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

### *Water: Muddying Doing, Knowing, and Being*

IRENE J. KLAVER, PhD

Thursday, November 6, 2025

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Water evokes paradoxical statements. Fluid and ephemeral, it is the bedrock of the world; projecting an image of clarity it provides an atmosphere of opacity. In my presentation I connect this paradoxicality to water's deeply relational character. Water is always in relation, its movement of meandering bespeaks the dynamic of sedimentation and reactivation, water and land, inseparable in their doing and being together. Relationality implies complexity and hence ambiguity, incommensurability, and indeterminacy.

I will present various projects in which humans have set out to control water in its relation to land, only to have to confront unexpected consequences. As water reveals, nature is not out there, it is enmeshed in us, in our practices, in the way we think and do things, it makes us, is us, is in all that surrounds us. It creates situations, atmospheres, entities. It muddies our existence.



I argue that this muddying, this combination of water and land, of doing and being, this 'messiness' is intrinsic to any relational situational complexity. It requires an attunement to a different sense of knowing, a knowing intrinsically related to doing, to practices, to being in situations, to being as being with, doing as a doing with, a process-based doing. In my presentation I trace how this knowing and doing have become eclipsed by the dominance of a logic of linearity versus a meandering trajectory that is predicated on its environmental embeddedness. I argue that our current era asks for muddying: doing, knowing and being with as exemplified by the ways of water.

I look forward to conversations with the attendees about the relevance of such a deeply relational environmental approach to their practices.

## CONFERENCE THEME-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND GUESTS

This year's conference theme, "*Occupations and Nature: Connections and Transactions*," concerns connections and interactions of nature and occupation. Just as nature-based contexts impact occupations that occur in various ecologies, human occupation has profound impacts on these and other ecosystems/ the natural world.

### THEME SPEAKER

#### REBECCA BRACKEN, PhD

Conservation Research Director, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

#### *Wild and Well: Nature's Effect on You*

Friday, November 7, 2025

9:30 am – 10:30 am



As we increase our reliance on technology, in schools, work, and at the home, we spend less and less time outside enjoying the natural world. Research frequently documents the benefits of exposure to nature, including lower stress, improved attention, and an all-around better mood. Even establishing a sense of connection with nature can increase our happiness. But how are wildlife biologists, botanists, herpetologists, ornithologists, mammalogists, marine biologists, and others who study nature affected by the constant forces that nature creates? Researchers in these professions are frequently immersed in nature for their jobs as well as their hobbies. Does interacting with nature during work provide the same benefits? How does nature alter the direction of research, and how do researchers compensate for the potential loss of control working in nature generates? Does immersion in nature enhance the ability for increased creativity and improved problem-solving skills, thus allowing scientists to think deeply and critically about the world around them? At Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, an organization that focuses on connecting people to nature through research, education, outreach, and land conservation, we are driven by nature with the environment often determining the direction of our work. We recognize that, more often than not, nature is beyond our control, and we are always working to adapt to the changes it creates. Our research, while focusing on species of conservation concern, is dictated at times by the environment, and we aim to use that to our advantage. As conservationists, we must learn to use nature as a supportive party as we work to protect birds and their habitats.

## **NATURE-BASED EXPERIENCE**

### ***Nature's Beat: Creating and Sensing Through Rhythm***

**Diana Honorat<sup>1</sup>, ppOTD, OTR/L**  
**Mikelia Wallace<sup>1</sup>, MT-BC**

<sup>1</sup>Pacific University & Neurovibes Music Therapy

**Saturday, November 8, 2025**  
**12:40 pm – 1:30 pm**

Participants will create a musical instrument guided by an occupational therapist & music therapist, engage in a drum circle facilitated by a music therapist, and engage in a discussion about emotional & sensory processing through nature and music.

This session will highlight the deep connection between occupation and nature through creative expression, sensory engagement and social participation. Creating musical instruments work on fine motor skills, problem solving and cultural appreciation, which aims to reinforce the role of occupation in identity and making meaningful connections. Engaging in a drum circle supports co-regulation, rhythm-based communication as well as embodied connection, showing that shared occupations do enhance well-being. Discussions on emotional and sensory processing help to bridge the connection in appreciating nature as a therapeutic medium and show that engaging in occupations in natural environments do regulate the nervous system and promote overall health.

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**Thursday, November 6, 2025**

We recognize the enduring relationship and intimate connection that exists between Indigenous peoples and their ancestral lands and waters. The region from Galveston, Texas to Corpus Christi, Texas are the ancestral and current homelands of the Karankawa, Lipan Apache, Ishak (also known as Atakapa), Cotoname, and other tribal and detribalized peoples from before recorded history to the present day. We express gratitude to these peoples who have stewarded these lands and waters since the beginning of time. It is because of these Indigenous caretaker stewards that we can gather here today, and we acknowledge this land we stand upon as sacred, historical, and significant to the Karankawa Kadla peoples and relatives. We invite all to learn the true history of the lands on which we reside, and we ask that you treat these lands and waters with dignity and respect, as you would your own relative.

- The Karankawa Kadla Five Rivers Council

## **RITUAL OF REMEMBRANCE**

**Sue Johnson**

Founder and Executive Director, Nia Cultural Center

**Friday, November 7, 2025**

The Nia Cultural Center empowers and improves the community through art, culture, education, and engagement in the birthplace of Juneteenth. Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, the Union General Gordon Granger read General Order No. 3, proclaiming the freedom of all enslaved people in Texas, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation. This act, which occurred in Galveston because the city was the commercial and shipping center for Texas, was the catalyst for the annual celebration of Juneteenth.

## THANK YOU

Thank you to all the presenters for providing the contents of the proceedings – and thanks to the reviewers for their valuable time and commitment to the society. Thank you as well to the SSO:USA leadership for their counsel and guidance.

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## **SSO:USA 2025 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

### **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6: POSTER SESSION**

#### **MAPPING SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH OCCUPATION: A GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR EQUITY AND JUSTICE**

Yousef R. Babish, University of Southern California

Joy Agner, University of Southern California

##### **Abstract**

The ways in which everyday human occupations contribute to social transformation remain underexplored in global scholarship. The International Social Transformation through Occupation Network (ISTTON) has launched the Mapping Social Transformation Through Occupation initiative, a pioneering effort to document and analyze global initiatives that leverage meaningful occupations to drive systemic change. By curating a digital, interactive map, this initiative seeks to increase visibility, collaboration, and advocacy for grassroots and underrepresented efforts addressing social and occupational inequities.

This initiative defines social transformation through occupation as the process of using everyday activities to disrupt exclusionary systems, foster social justice, and enhance well-being. However, mapping such efforts is not just an act of documentation; it actively shapes what is recognized, prioritized, and legitimized as social transformation. Unlike other forms of research that may analyze existing structures, mapping requires decisions about visibility—what gets included, how it is categorized, and whose perspectives inform the process. These decisions influence how power and participation are distributed, potentially reinforcing or challenging dominant narratives.

To navigate these challenges, this initiative follows a participatory methodology in which initiatives self-report their contributions while the ISTTON Mapping Group facilitates review to ensure that diverse efforts are accurately represented. By creating a multilingual, publicly accessible digital repository, this initiative challenges centralized control over knowledge production and offers a platform where grassroots and historically underrepresented initiatives can shape how occupation is understood as a driver of systemic change.

The Mapping Social Transformation Through Occupation initiative challenges Western-centric occupational narratives that prioritize clinical, individualized approaches by highlighting community-driven, systemic change. It raises critical questions: What defines social transformation? How do we ensure inclusivity without gatekeeping? Through a participatory, self-reported approach, it decentralizes knowledge production while critically examining global patterns of change. This initiative broadens occupational science by addressing political, economic, and environmental determinants, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and valuing lived experience as a source of expertise.

This initiative demonstrates how occupation can drive systemic change by documenting grassroots efforts that use everyday activities to resist oppression, reclaim space, and foster social equity. Rather than treating occupation as an individual or clinical concept, the mapping process reveals its broader role in social transformation—whether through economic self-determination, collective healing, or environmental justice. By continuously expanding and analyzing these efforts, the digital map hopes to provide insight into how occupations actively shape, and help reimagine social structures.

**Keywords:** social transformation, occupation-based justice, participatory research, global collaboration, digital mapping

### **Discussion Questions**

What defines social transformation in the context of occupation, and how can it be meaningfully assessed without reinforcing dominant perspectives?

How can mapping occupation-based initiatives contribute to global collaboration while avoiding knowledge extraction or misrepresentation?

What challenges arise in documenting grassroots efforts, and how can researchers ensure that participatory approaches do not unintentionally reproduce exclusionary power dynamics?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to describe the aims and the methodological approach of the 'Mapping Social Transformation Through Occupation' project.

Upon completion, participants will be able to critically examine how participatory research methods shape the representation of grassroots initiatives, including potential benefits and limitations.

Upon completion, participants will be engaged in dialogue about the challenges of determining when and how social transformation occurs, including risks of paternalism, misrepresentation, and unintended consequences.

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**Submission ID:** 2071327

## **GRANDMOTHER'S FLOWER GARDEN: USING A QUILT BLOCK AESTHETIC TO TEACH KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION AND PROFESSIONAL REASONING**

Ashlea D. Cardin, Missouri State University

### **Abstract**

Occupational science and occupational therapy educators are tasked with developing students' understanding of the myriad types of foundational knowledge and “ways of knowing” that inform ethos-centric professional reasoning (Galle & Whitcombe, 2006, p. 187; Mahoney & Smallfield, 2024; Pierce, 2015). Expanding upon Kielhofner’s (2009) visual representation of the concentric nature of knowledge organization and drawing from Wilcock and Hocking’s (2015) occupational perspective of health, reflections on the profession’s ethos (Peloquin, 2005), model creation (Reid et al., 2019), and the historical richness of quilting narratives in the study of human doing (Dicke, 2010; Dunton, 1946), “The Grandmother’s Flower Garden (GFG) Model” was imagined and developed as a didactic visual model to assist students in conceptualizing and organizing the theoretical tenets and patterns of knowledge used to guide professional reasoning in transformational occupational therapy practice. Based on a classic repeating quilt block pattern (Randolph & Spradley, 1933, Short McKim, 1931), Grandmother’s Flower Garden quilts feature colorful, ringed hexagonal flowers encircled by a white “fence” and green “garden.” In a moment of appreciation for this beautiful patterned form, the idea was borne for developing “The GFG Model” to (1) structure a 16-week theoretical foundations course, and (2) develop student understanding of knowledge used to guide professional reasoning.

Educators may find it challenging to present ontological, epistemological, and axiological course content in a way that effectively promotes student understanding and application of occupational therapy knowledge, especially as that knowledge continues to evolve alongside the ever-expanding understanding of humans as occupational beings. While not without limitations, visual models have the potential to serve as symbolic representations of complex phenomena and may advance student understanding and creation along a “mind-to-world path” (Reid et al., 2019, p. 317).

The GFG Model is centered on the professional ethos that occupation is doing, being, becoming, and belonging, and those dimensions are linked to health. Using the GFG Model to structure theoretical courses and direct student learning and assessment has direct implications for developing meaningful insights into human engagement in occupation.

The GFG Model, as a visual representation of an epistemological pattern of occupational therapy knowledge and axiological process for professional reasoning, has the potential to challenge students to ponder occupational therapy's knowledge paradigm, embrace the profession's embedded ethos, think about theories, factor in frames of reference, incorporate informing evidence, choose appropriate conceptual practice models, target contextually-situated and transformational occupation-centered intervention, and reflect on their reasoning and responsibilities in practice.

**Keywords:** epistemology, professional reasoning, axiology, model, education

### **Discussion Questions**

What challenges do OS and OT educators face when teaching ontological, epistemological, and axiological content, and how could visual models like the GFG Model address these challenges?

In what ways does the GFG Model reflect the profession's ethos of occupation as "doing, being, becoming, and belonging," and how might this framework influence students' understanding of human engagement in occupation?

What are the strengths and limitations of the Grandmother's Flower Garden (GFG) Model in organizing and conceptualizing the diverse types of foundational knowledge for student learning?

### **Learning Objectives**

Discuss the heart (ethos) of our current practice paradigm.

Examine how different types of OT and OS knowledge are linked to the ethos.

Consider how types of OT and OS knowledge is layered to guide professional reasoning.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2072597

## **EXPLORING STRESS, OCCUPATIONAL BALANCE, COPING, AND WELL-BEING IN GRADUATE STUDENTS**

Sapna Chakraborty, Missouri State University

### **Abstract**

The research study would help better understand how stressors, occupational balance, and coping strategies contribute to student's well-being. The investigator will explore these factors to determine which constructs might impact healthcare students' well-being.

The mixed methods exploratory design will fit the research problem and the proposed questions. The quantitative measures of this mixed-method study will study the relationship between stressors, occupational balance, coping strategies, and overall well-being among graduate students in the healthcare profession. The qualitative portion of the study will explore how stressors, occupational balance, and coping strategies for stressors impact the overall well-being of these students. By mixing both types of data, the qualitative data will help explain the ways that stressors, occupational balance, and coping strategies contribute to students' overall well-being.

The knowledge obtained from data analysis will provide the commonly used strategies students use to cope with stress and occupational disruptions in their daily lives. The data integration could help point out the extent of stressors present in the current program that could hinder the promotion of well-being in healthcare graduate students.

The stressors and occupational balance during daily life occupational patterns of a graduate could be explained by assessing the student's stress, performance, participation, and engagement in the academic environment. The occupational therapy and occupational science concepts of occupational performance and balance in self-care, productivity, and leisure could help describe how occupational disruption could influence health and well-being (Law et al., 1998). The factors that could impact the stress, performance, participation, and engagement are student's age, financial standing, social roles, family responsibilities, educational environment, and coping capacity (Schad et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2018). The coping strategies that helped the students with high levels of well-being under stress and low levels of occupational balance could be utilized by future students. The knowledge about the stressors and occupational disruptions in healthcare programs could help educators find ways to support and maintain students' well-being during graduate education.

**Keywords:** stress, occupational balance, coping, well-being, healthcare students

## **Discussion Questions**

Explore healthcare students' lived experiences regarding the stressors and occupational disruptions in their academic lives.

Discuss how occupational performance and balance in self-care, productivity, and leisure could help describe how occupational disruption influences health and well-being.

What coping strategies help students with high levels of well-being under stress and low levels of occupational balance that future students could utilize?

## **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, the participant will be able to define the concept of stress, occupational balance, and coping in the context of graduate education.

The participant will be able to articulate knowledge about the impact of stress, occupational balance, and coping on the overall well-being of healthcare students through lived experiences in their programs.

Upon completion, the participant will be able to demonstrate the common coping strategies students use and ways educators can support and maintain students' well-being during graduate education.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2020335

# IMPACT OF SPATIAL NEGLECT ON PARTICIPATION IN OCCUPATIONS IN NATURE

Kimberly Hreha, Duke University

Brian Gonzalez, Duke University

Antoine Bailliard, Duke University

## Abstract

Spatial neglect, a common post-stroke condition, that occurs because of damage to neural networks critical for attention (Chen & Hreha, 2023). Those affected may fail or delay in reporting, responding to, or orienting toward stimuli on the side opposite of their brain lesion, which significantly impairs daily functioning (Chen & Hreha, 2023). Given that spatial attention supports perceptual, cognitive, and motor functions, spatial neglect can impose severe limitations on occupational participation. Specifically, individuals with spatial neglect may struggle to navigate hiking trails, engage in gardening, or participate in outdoor activities such as birdwatching, ultimately restricting their engagement in nature-based occupations. Despite extensive evidence highlighting the physical, emotional, and psychological benefits of nature (Frumkin et al., 2017), no research has examined how spatial neglect influences participation in nature-based occupations. This abstract seeks to raise awareness of these research gaps and the occupational challenges that emerge for individuals with spatial neglect when engaging with natural environments.

Nature-based occupations foster restoration, social connection, and meaningful engagement by alleviating stress and promoting self-development (Eady & Hollywood, 2024). Based on what we know about the behaviors that people with spatial neglect exhibit, and a research report that found worst spatial neglect was a significant predictor of lower community mobility (Oh-Park et al., 2014), it's reasonable to argue that spatial neglect can presents barriers to outdoor participation, such as difficulty detecting obstacles, or safely navigating open spaces. Before environmental modification or evidence-based treatments can be tested, it is essential to first research what specific nature-based occupations individuals with spatial neglect have challenges engaging in and why. Without this proper information, individuals with spatial neglect risk being excluded from the restorative and social advantages of nature-based occupations.

Examining the impact of spatial neglect on nature-based occupations is crucial for addressing barriers and promoting accessibility. Occupational therapists and practitioners must consider how to modify natural settings, implement therapeutic approaches, and advocate for inclusive outdoor engagement. By identifying participation challenges and advancing occupation science in this topic, professionals can help ensure individuals with spatial neglect have equitable opportunities to experience the health-enhancing benefits of nature.

Individuals with spatial neglect should not be excluded from the restorative potential of nature-based occupations. Future research must prioritize occupational participation by identifying and

addressing the specific barriers that hinder individuals with spatial neglect from fully engaging with natural environments.

This abstract highlights the research gap of spatial neglect's impact on nature-based occupational participation.

**Keywords:** spatial neglect, nature, occupation, health

### **Discussion Questions**

What outcome measures should be used to measure participation and engagement in nature-based occupations?

What are the occupational injustices faced by individuals with spatial neglect, particularly regarding access to restorative natural environments?

How might raising awareness about spatial neglect among clinicians and policymakers influence the development of more inclusive occupational therapy practices?

### **Learning Objectives**

Understand the impact of spatial neglect on individuals' ability to engage with nature-based occupations.

Learn about interventions, like prism adaptation treatment, which may reduce spatial neglect symptoms and facilitate participation in nature-based occupations for individuals with spatial neglect.

Explore the potential for macro-, meso-, and micro-level changes to address barriers and support individuals with spatial neglect in connecting with nature.

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## **OCCUPATIONAL INJUSTICE IN THE WAKE OF CLIMATE CRISIS: ADDRESSING OCCUPATIONAL BARRIERS TO SUPPORT CLIMATE REFUGEES**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to identify occupational injustices and barriers attributed to climate-based displacement (Müller and Allen, 2020), investigating the contextual factors and social determinants hindering climate refugees from engaging in meaningful occupations. It will also identify the critical role of occupational science and therapy in addressing these disparities (Du et al., 2024; Lund & Warren, 2021), and explore recommendations.

Although there is a plethora of research highlighting the harmful implications of climate change on health (Müller and Allen, 2020), additional literature exploring the acute and chronic effects of climate-based displacement on occupational choice and participation (Gillard & Salvesen, 2018) is needed. Beyond occupational disruption, climate refugees face systemic barriers that limit access to meaningful participation across all occupational domains, thereby exacerbating occupational deprivation. The positioning of climate change as an aggravator of occupational injustice provides a framework for understanding how climate refugees experience and navigate these barriers, emphasizing the need for systemic changes and cultural humility in policy and practice (Gillard & Salvesen, 2018; Hammell, 2017).

Occupational scientists and practitioners are uniquely suited to understand and address the occupational deprivation for climate refugees (Du et al., 2024). This research will provoke exploration of occupational scientists and practitioners as burgeoning leaders in climate change as it relates to the human experience. It will also serve as a call to action to dismantle occupational injustices and other 'root' causes of occupational deprivation from an 'upstream' approach, rather than exclusively 'downstream.'

Climate refugees deserve an expanded framework of occupational justice (Hammell, 2017) that incorporates the realities of the climate crisis and supports policies and practices that encompasses their intersectional occupational needs. This expansion is key to alleviating

occupational deprivation relating to climate change, and ensuring that the millions of individuals who are forcibly displaced by global environmental emergencies are afforded dignity, agency, reintegration, and equitable opportunities for occupational participation (Müller & Allen, 2020; Gillard & Salvesen, 2018).

This proposal corresponds with the conference theme, drawing connections among climate change, meaningful participation, and occupational justice. It underscores the need for multidimensional, culturally-responsive, and sustainably-informed approaches to supporting displaced populations, positioning occupational science as central to this process.

**Keywords:** climate crisis, occupational justice, social determinants of health, climate refugees, cultural humility

### **Discussion Questions**

How can the occupational justice framework evolve in order to encompass the social and environmental dimensions of climate change to better meet the needs of climate refugees? What are the specific occupational needs of climate refugees that are currently overlooked?

How do the social determinants of health compound the occupational deprivation experienced by climate refugees and how can we address these disparities? What strategies can be employed to ensure cultural humility in occupational therapy interventions for climate refugees from intersectional backgrounds?

What role can interdisciplinary collaboration play in supporting displaced peoples' and climate refugees' occupational needs, and what specific contributions can occupational science and occupational therapy make in such collaborations?

### **Learning Objectives**

Identify systemic barriers and social determinants that prevent climate refugees and displaced populations from engaging in meaningful occupations, and recognize how the global crisis contributes to occupational deprivation beyond displacement.

Explore how occupational scientists and occupational therapists can be leaders in addressing climate change and advance support for climate refugees in research, policy, and practice.

Understand occupational injustice in the context of climate change and consider how occupational justice frameworks can be adapted to better encompass the occupational needs of climate refugees.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2073360

## **THE TEMPORAL CONTEXT AND HOW IT INFLUENCES THE OCCUPATION OF WEIGHT MANAGEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Obesity remains a significant global health challenge, with conventional weight loss interventions often struggling to support long-term weight loss success. The temporal context is a critical but underexamined factor in weight management, shaping daily occupations, biological rhythms, and social participation. This study explores how time-related factors influence engagement in occupations that support sustainable weight management.

A concept analysis was conducted using the Model of Occupational Harmony and Dewey's Action Theory as guiding frameworks to refine key constructs. A literature review identified

2,988 articles, with 15 studies and one report meeting inclusion criteria. Thematic analysis was applied to the selected studies to synthesize findings on the role of time in occupational participation related to weight management.

Seven key themes emerged: (1) longer duration of clinical support time, (2) reduction in time-related barriers, (3) increase positive habits, (4) healthy balance of occupations, (5) motivation for ongoing change, (6) healthy timing of biological functions, and (7) increased social support time. Findings suggest that time is a central factor in enabling or restricting engagement in health-promoting occupations.

This study advances occupational science by emphasizing the temporal nature of the occupation of weight management. Recognizing weight management as an occupation is essential in understanding its multifaceted role within daily life. Examining time as an occupational determinant enhances both the understanding of weight management as a phenomenon and the development of holistic interventions that support sustained engagement in occupations. Understanding time as an occupational determinant can guide the promotion of sustained engagement in health-related occupations while balancing roles, managing competing occupations, and aligning daily routines with personal and social demands.

Examining time as an inherent part of life reveals its interaction with human occupation. Biological and social time structures shape eating, sleeping, and activity patterns, while occupational participation reinforces or challenges these rhythms. Understanding the temporal context offers insight into how occupations evolve through life transitions and cultural expectations, shaping engagement and well-being. This connects to Occupational Balance by illustrating how time use impacts health, role management, and competing occupations. Recognizing time in weight management highlights its influence on engagement, role balance, and social norms, shaping daily life within broader societal and ecological patterns.

**Keywords:** obesity, temporal context, weight management, occupation, occupational balance

### **Discussion Questions**

How does viewing weight management as an occupation shift our understanding of health behavior change, and what implications does this have for occupational science and practice?

In what ways do temporal structures, such as biological rhythms, social time, and daily routines, shape occupational participation in weight management, and how can occupational scientists further explore this relationship?

How does the temporal nature of occupation influence the sustainability of weight management practices within daily routines and life transitions?

## Learning Objectives

Upon completion, participant will be able to describe how temporal context influences engagement in weight management, including its impact on routines, biological rhythms, and social engagement.

Upon completion, participant will be able to identify the seven key themes that emerged from the study, illustrating how time can either enable or restrict participation in health-promoting occupations.

Upon completion, participant will be able to discuss why weight management is an occupation, considering its role in daily life, connection to occupational balance, and interaction with other occupations.

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# **ANALYSIS OF MENTAL HEALTH JOURNEY MAPS TO IDENTIFY COMMON GAPS IN CARE**

Riley Marsh, University of Southern California

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Joy Agner, University of Southern California

## **Abstract**

System level factors, such as the organization and delivery of healthcare services, can strongly influence daily occupations of people with chronic conditions, such as serious mental illness. Mental healthcare is often fragmented and nonlinear, with individuals frequently encountering disruptions and gaps in their care (Mongelli, Georgakopoulos, & Pato, 2020). Such challenges often result in delayed or incomplete care. This can result in disengagement from care due to increased time, frustration, and lack of success in healthcare seeking occupations. Thus, the goal of this research is to use mental healthcare journey maps to understand challenges navigating mental health systems, and to identify when and why individuals seeking mental healthcare fall through the cracks (Rafla-Yuan et al, 2022).

We employed a targeted search in mainstream search engines to identify service maps that depict mental healthcare journeys, using relevant keywords such as, “care management trajectory” and “patient experience map”. Initially, 30 service maps were found and narrowed down by those that included a first-person perspective or outlined a personal narrative, illustrated key transitions in care, and displayed a clear series of steps. The final five maps were selected based on their shared intent, as they were designed for either consumers or care teams with the overarching goal of identifying barriers to care access.

These journey maps depict several healthcare occupations that individuals enacted on their road to treatment, identifying key barriers experienced by many individuals, such as confusion with system navigation, and accessibility of services. Consumers often faced long wait times for an appointment, or inpatient beds, demonstrating significant delays in accessing care. Cost, insurance limitations, and stigma were also significant barriers for several individuals. The perspectives shared by consumers and providers demonstrate the importance of improving communication within the healthcare system and highlight barriers to care that need to be addressed.

This study emphasizes how system navigation affects the daily occupations of individuals seeking mental healthcare and outlines the critical role of effective service integration to improve mental healthcare. By utilizing journey maps to illustrate barriers individuals face, occupational scientists can gain deeper insight into the challenges that disrupt symptom and condition management and hinder access to necessary services. Addressing these barriers is key to enhancing social and emotional health promotion and maintenance, allowing individuals to engage meaningfully in daily activities and improve their overall well-being and quality of life.

**Keywords:** barriers to accessing mental healthcare, personal narratives in mental healthcare, journey mapping in mental healthcare

### **Discussion Questions**

How can current challenges in mental healthcare be reimaged from an occupational science perspective?

In what ways can occupational justice play a role in addressing barriers to mental healthcare?

How can occupational science make mental healthcare more inclusive and accessible?

### **Learning Objectives**

Analyze journey mapping as a tool for barrier identification and improving care navigation.

Understand barriers to mental healthcare access.

Examine how barriers to the healthcare system affect the daily occupations of individuals with mental illness.

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## **EXPLORING THE ELEMENTS, IMPACTS, AND DETERMINANTS OF UNSTRUCTURED OUTDOOR PLAY IN CHILDREN: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

Abigail R. McAllister, University of New Hampshire

### **Abstract**

This poster aims to identify key elements of unstructured outdoor play and to explore its impact on a child's development of motor, cognitive, and social skills. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological

Systems Theory will be utilized to organize and examine the various determinants that may influence a child's ability to engage in this occupation. Finally, this poster will address gaps in current literature and propose strategies to reintegrate unstructured outdoor play into children's daily lives.

Description of methods: Student-led literature review.

Unstructured outdoor play, specifically that which involves loose parts and opportunities for risky play, has profound impacts on childhood development. The variation in movements and play types observed during unstructured outdoor play contribute to the strengthening of skills such as motor coordination and endurance, creativity, problem-solving, and language development (Loebach & Cox, 2021). However, evidence suggests that almost 50% of children globally spend less time engaged in unstructured outdoor play than their parents once did (Tremblay et al., 2015). Factors such as parental attitudes, evolving societal norms, and demographic features may act as barriers to unstructured outdoor play, contributing to reduced engagement in this fundamental occupation (Lee et al., 2021). Despite the recent growth in this area of study, additional studies utilizing indoor play as a control are needed to better understand how the benefits of unstructured outdoor play compare to those of indoor play (Dankiw et al., 2020).

Unstructured outdoor play is an important occupation of childhood as it provides children with opportunities to strengthen and develop skills necessary for their future. However, there are many barriers that can prevent a child from participating in this occupation. By recognizing these barriers, occupational scientists can advocate for policies and programs that expand opportunities for unstructured outdoor play.

During the occupation of unstructured outdoor play, nature offers unique opportunities for play, supports various aspects of development, and strengthens children's connection to the natural world. It is through this connection that the relationship between occupation and nature becomes transactional. As children become more connected with nature, they may develop an appreciation for the natural world which may be reflected in pro-environmental behaviors and attitudes as they mature.

**Keywords:** unstructured outdoor play, childhood development, risky play, loose parts, parental attitudes

### **Discussion Questions**

How can we increase parents' and caregivers' knowledge of the benefits of outdoor play to increase engagement in this occupation?

What are programs or policies that could be put in place to dismantle the barriers that prevent or limit engagement in outdoor play?



How can we shift the perception of risky play from being seen as dangerous and harmful to challenging and rich in opportunity?

### **Learning Objectives**

Identify the elements and characteristics of unstructured outdoor play that contribute to developmental benefits.

Understand how unstructured outdoor play impacts various aspects of childhood development.

Understand the interconnectedness of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems and how multiple factors can have negatively compounding effects, thereby limiting a child's engagement in unstructured outdoor play.

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# **UNDERSTANDING ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENT TRENDS OF TEACHING OCCUPATION IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY CURRICULA**

Thomas Mernar, Gwynedd Mercy University

## **Abstract**

The intent of this poster is to highlight the reduction of ACOTE accreditation standard trends on the teaching of occupation from 2006 to 2023. The findings show that this reduction is consistent across occupational therapy assistant (OTA), entry-level masters for the occupational therapist (MOT), and entry-level doctorate for the occupational therapist (e-OTD) programs. This poster is a continuation of earlier work that centered on ACOTE standards covering 2006-2018.

Learning at higher levels of complexity is dependent on having attained prerequisite knowledge and skills at lower foundational levels of learning. It is important to analyze the history of ACOTE standards so that we can understand the educational preparation of our student's knowledge of occupation prior to practice.

Having increased curricular content centered on the foundations of occupation can enhance our students understanding of occupation and occupational science, so that they can increasingly apply, analyze, evaluate, and creatively use occupation in order to promote best occupation-based practices.

Specific strategies can be implemented in educational programs to elevate the focus on occupation outside of relying on ACOTE B standards. 1. Examine your curricular design and build in foundational course content on occupation aside from the application of occupation to practice. This would occur at the beginning of the program and be reinforced sequentially throughout the program as courses build in complexity. 2. Incorporate an instructional design approach that includes course learning objectives that include lower order cognitive skill action verbs of occupation. Include course content on occupational science for its rich contributions to helping students understand occupation in unique and diverse ways. 3. For MOT and e-OTD programs that offer a pre-occupational therapy undergraduate major before entry into the MOT or e-OTD program, include undergraduate courses that center on occupation and occupational science so that foundational knowledge of occupation can be gained.

**Keywords:** occupation, education, ACOTE, revised Bloom's taxonomy

## **Discussion Questions**

How do the ACOTE B standards from 2006-2023 covering occupation change in lower and higher order cognitive skill levels across OTA, MOT, and e-OTD programs?

Does having a stronger foundation in occupation and occupational science support occupation-based practice in occupational therapy?

What are some strategies that educators can use to increase curricular content centered on the foundations of occupation?

### **Learning Objectives**

Compare ACOTE B standards from 2006-2023 covering occupation in lower and higher order cognitive skill levels across OTA, MOT, and e-OTD programs.

Deduce the impacts of education to practice for students having a minimal number of ACOTE B standards centered on occupation.

Discuss varying strategies for educators to increase curricular content centered on the foundations of occupation.

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# **ROUTINES MATTER: MEN'S EXPERIENCES OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT IN A RESIDENTIAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FACILITY**

Sean R. Sloppy, Pacific Northwest University

Austin Walker, Pacific Northwest University

Jennifer S. Pitonyak, Pacific Northwest University

## **Abstract**

Men, in the United States, generally experience a higher incidence of substance use disorder compared with women and are referred for treatment at greater rates; therefore, it's important to understand men's occupational experiences in residential behavior health facilities (RBHF). The purpose of this descriptive, cross-sectional, mixed methods study was to examine men's experience of and response to treatment routines in a RBHF in a rural, under served community in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. A secondary purpose was to describe how aspects of participants' occupational identity and the RBHF environment influenced their recovery experience.

The study was conducted over a 4-week period in July 2024. Convenience sampling was used to recruit men ages 18+, resulting in ten participants ( $n = 10$ ). Participants completed a semi structured interview guided by the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) and the American Occupational Therapy Association Occupational Profile. COPM scores for occupational importance, performance, and satisfaction were analyzed via descriptive statistics. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the narrative data generated from the interviews. Photographic documentation of the RBHF physical environment in which daily routines occurred was also collected and analyzed.

Combined data corroborated routines that participants identified as important for recovery. A structured daily treatment schedule, social participation, and physical exercise were important routines and participants were highly satisfied with performance of these routines. Conversely, spending time with family, spirituality, and sleep hygiene were desired routines that were less accessible in the RBHF, and participants were collectively less satisfied with performance in these areas.

Study findings are important for understanding the lived experiences of individuals with substance use disorder including their response to daily routines in RBHFs. The findings suggest the significance of personal, familial, and spiritual routines for sustained recovery. While structured daily treatment in the RBHF was supportive of the recovery process, routines often lacked familial and spiritual relevancy. Future occupational science research studying subjective experiences of substance use disorder treatment and recovery in the community can help to inform personally and culturally relevant approaches to substance use disorder treatment. Further, the findings illustrate the value-added that occupational therapy services can bring to behavioral health treatment in a variety of settings.

Findings from this study are implicitly connected with the conference theme, “occupations and nature” as nature is inherent to the rural context and diverse spiritual practices of study participants.

**Keywords:** behavioral health treatment routines, subjective experiences, mixed methods research, substance use disorder

### **Discussion Questions**

What research methods can occupational scientists and occupational therapy researchers use to explore the purpose and meaning of substance use as a daily occupational routine?

How is substance use disorder recovery locally situated?

How might nature-based occupations, and other spiritual practices play a role in establishing occupational routines that sustain substance use disorder recovery?

### **Learning Objectives**

Describe men's experiences of daily treatment routines in a residential behavioral health facility (RBHF).

Discuss the use of mixed methods approaches for examining subjective experiences of substance use and occupational routines for recovery.

Identify opportunities for occupational therapy practitioners to provide personally & spiritually relevant routine-based intervention in RBHFs.

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# **APPLYING THE MODEL FOR THE PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING CHILDREN'S OCCUPATIONS TO HANDWRITING AMONG HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES**

Carrie Smith-Bell, Towson University

Ashley Lankford, Towson University

## **Abstract**

The purpose was to examine the experiences and perspectives of homeschooling caregivers related to the co-occupation of handwriting with their elementary-aged child within the contexts of the home and a handwriting intervention program. The Process for Establishing Children's Occupations (PECO) model was applied to understand whether and how the occupation of handwriting changed following intervention.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 caregivers homeschooling at least one child in West Virginia. A directed content analysis approach was used to explore the experiences of caregivers. Consensus coding was separately conducted on individual interviews by a student of occupational science and faculty mentor with constructs of the PECO model defined in a code book and indicated as major themes. Subthemes that emerged from the data were identified and served to develop and refine constructs of the PECO model as it applied to this population and this occupation.

Major themes of the PECO model were identified in the data including the process stages: (1) exposure, (2) innate drive, (3) initiation, (4) cessation, (5) continuation, (6) re-initiation, (7) transformation, and (8) outcomes, with particular elaboration of the themes transformation and outcomes. Other major themes included the reasons that facilitate the development of occupations including: (1) motivations, (2) opportunities, (3) parent views and values, and (4) resources with elaboration on the themes of parent views and values and resources. The handwriting experience in the home and via the resource of the intervention program were found to consist of transactions between child learners, caregivers, and the occupational therapy practitioner and students that did and had the potential to transform the co-occupation of handwriting as well as parent views and values.

Handwriting, an occupation that is initiated in early childhood, appears to develop in a stage-like fashion as depicted by the PECO model. Handwriting evolves as a co-occupation between the child and the homeschooling caregiver with transactions between the two influencing and transforming the occupation and caregiver perspectives. The resource of the handwriting intervention program has the capacity to transform the occupation, motivations, outcomes, and caregiver perspectives related to their child's handwriting and lends support to the co-occupation between caregivers with their children and practitioners.

**Keywords:** co-occupation, homeschool, childhood occupations, handwriting

## Discussion Questions

The transactional nature of the co-occupation of homeschool education has the potential to enable a holistic and individualized style of learning. What is the value in deeper OS investigation into this transactional nature as it relates to caregiver motivations? Child motivations?

Many homeschool caregivers reported the value in receiving input and feedback from an “outside” resource related to handwriting instruction for their children. In West Virginia, caregiver autonomy in homeschooling practices is highly valued. What are ways that parent empowerment through knowledge can be balanced with caregiver beliefs related to autonomy?

To what degree does education at the primary school level, in any setting, consist of bi-directional transactions? How might these transactions particularly impact the family dynamic outside of educational occupations among homeschooling families?

## Learning Objectives

Interpret constructs of the PECO model as they apply to handwriting and homeschooling families.

Analyze the transactional nature and co-occupation of education in the homeschooling context.

Identify the unique characteristics of homeschooling families and homeschooling occupations.

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**Submission ID:** 2059482

## **FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7: MORNING SESSION**

### **HABIT STACKING IN NATURE: APPLYING MENTAL WELLNESS TO SELF**

Katherine Toon, St. Catherine University

Kristine Haertl, St. Catherine University

Jennifer Hutson, St. Catherine University

#### **Abstract**

“Habit stacking” is a colloquial term for layering activities meant to ingrain healthy habits in an efficient way that allows for time for other occupations. The intent of this session is to present applicable lived experiences of the presenters utilizing and stacking occupations within nature to create meaning and manage wellness through habits and rituals. The session will describe examples of current practices and tangible outcomes fostering participant strategies to develop one’s own habit stacking practices to foster health and well being.

The development of healthy habits within occupational engagement benefits lifestyle behaviors (Fritz & Cutchin, 2016). With society’s increasing emphasis on efficiency, enhancing well being through engagement in stacked nature-based activities, may optimize mental health and well being by freeing up time for additional meaningful occupations.

Participants will be provided with examples of habit stacking in nature-based environments for wellness and then have the opportunity to engage in reflective dialogue about the ways they currently are, or could “habit stack.” Participants will leave the session with suggestions for engaging in occupations in their own meaningful way to maximize time and meaning. This session will promote discussion on application of nature based habit-stacking for the individual and society.

This session is directly related to the conference theme in its focus on habit stacking and nature based occupations. The transaction of time, well-being, and occupation when considered in a nature-based context can be approached from individualistic and collectivist perspectives.

**Keywords:** nature, habit, wellness, habit-stacking, context

#### **Discussion Questions**

What do concepts of habit stacking contribute to occupational science?

How do the development of habits within nature based occupations contribute to the health of the individual, society and the environment?

What research collaboratives on habit stacking and nature based occupations could advance occupational science?



## **Learning Objectives**

Recognize experiences of those who use habit stacking and its perceived benefits to their health.

Define and understand evidence on habit stacking.

Create a list of habits and rituals you can incorporate into your wellness routine.

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Fritz, H., & Cutchin, M. P. (2016). Integrating the science of habit: Opportunities for occupational therapy. *OTJR: Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*, 36(2), 92-98.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1539449216643>

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**Submission ID:** 2069359

## **EXPLORING OCCUPATIONAL ADAPTATION IN RESPONSE TO THE EVOLVING NATURE OF WORK IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

Yiyang Fang, University of Southern California

Rebecca Aldrich, University of Southern California

Gale Lucas, University of Southern California

Shawn C. Roll, University of Southern California

## **Abstract**

The rapid advancement of smart technologies is reshaping work occupations at an unprecedented rate. While these innovations promise to enhance productivity and mitigate labor hazards, they also introduce new challenges, such as job insecurity, time management difficulties, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life (Fukumura et al., 2021). Occupational science (OS) literature suggests that adaptation is a socially influenced occupational response to evolving person-environment transactions (Aldrich & Shank, 2018). Given the changing landscape of workplace technology, OS scholars should take a transactional perspective to expand the knowledge of work and explore occupational adaptation to technological advancements. Instead of framing occupational adaptation as an inherently health-promoting process (Johansson et al., 2018; Walder et al., 2021), this study aims to examine both the positive and negative effects of occupational adaptation across various health and well-being domains due to technological advancements in construction.

This qualitative descriptive research study explores workers' experiences through in-depth, semi-structured, one-hour Zoom interviews. Eligible participants must be over 18 years old and have direct work or training experiences in innovative construction technology, including but not

limited to robotics, artificial intelligence, and other decision-making technologies. Data collection is underway using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling strategies through professional newsletters, conferences, and social media. Two researchers are conducting inductive thematic analysis to generate qualitative thematic categories that offer a rich description of the entire data set.

Preliminary findings shed light on both positive and negative health outcomes resulting from technological adaptation. On-the-ground workers who transitioned from manual to robot-assisted work emphasized robotics' role in improving physical and mental health by easing strenuous tasks and reducing exposure to hazards. They also pointed out that working for companies that invest in robotics technologies improved job security due to reduced time pressure. On the other hand, technology integration requires workforce upskilling to meet evolving worksite demands. While automated machines can reduce labor costs and improve productivity, they also replace laborers in conventional roles. Participants who started as fieldwork laborers (e.g., concrete pouring) transitioned into project engineer roles (e.g., machine modification and operation) as they adapted to using advanced technologies.

This study expands the knowledge of work relative to health and well-being in contexts of the latest technological revolution. Applying a transactional framework to occupational adaptation in this context advances knowledge from an OS perspective, highlighting the discipline's role in informing the development of human-centered technologies and supportive workplace policies.

**Keywords:** occupational adaptation, health and wellbeing, technology

### **Discussion Questions**

What occupational science constructs have emerged from participants' descriptions of the occupational adaptation process in this study?

How do company-level, industry-level, and policy-level factors influence the process of occupational adaptation?

How can occupational science research on occupational adaptation inform new technology development and worker health promotion?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to understand the process of occupational adaptation among construction workers due to technological transformations in the workplace.

Upon completion, participants will be able to identify domains of worker health and well-being associated with occupational adaptation.

Upon completion, participants will be able to describe positive and negative health impacts of workers adapting to technological advancements in construction.

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**Submission ID:** 2064955

## **#LANDBACK: CONTRASTING NATIVE AMERICAN AND SETTLER COLONIAL PERSPECTIVES OF TIME AND PLACE**

Sarah Grinder, University of Southern Maine

### **Abstract**

This theoretical paper will contrast perspectives of time and place in settler colonialism with Native American perspectives. It will demonstrate how the tenets of each perspective differ from each other using interdisciplinary Native American literature and occupational science examples. Here, settler colonialism is purposefully used in place of “Western” or “European” to center the Native American experience of assimilation and oppression and highlight the origins and moral implications underlying current thought.

Time and place are fundamental constructs in occupational science. In the West, settler colonial perspectives reflect industrial, capitalistic views that commodify both concepts as resources to be obtained, harnessed, and used by humans for humans. Time is linear, mechanized, and focused on evolutionary progress, while place is abstracted and separated from humans through globalization and technology. In this hierarchy, humans occupy time and place, making them their own. Even Dewey’s transactional view of humans in their environment descends from this lineage and is not a neutral, abstract framework.

Native American perspectives on time and place are inseparable from the lands on which they have lived for millennia. Land, not humans, is centered; all beings, both human and nonhuman, exist within and because of it. Respect, reciprocity and responsibility, rather than conquering and commodification, form the core themes of human relationships in place and time. Place and time exist in a context of relationality. This framework offers an opportunity to explore what occupation might mean in a decolonized context.

In one of very few occupational science discussions of Native Americans, Frank (2011) applied Dewey's transactionalism to occupation for Native American tribes. This paper will suggest that given the differences between these perspectives, occupational scientists ought to be more cautious in applying colonial perspectives to Native American understandings of doing and being while being curious about how Native American views may inform occupational science.

Interrogating the philosophical and historical heritage of constructs in occupational science is important to disciplinary integrity. Making space for alternative perspectives on occupation and its associated concepts advances our science.

Native Americans have been largely ignored, silenced, romanticized, and infantilized within settler colonialism. This paper will suggest implications for the study of occupation arising from both perspectives.

Native American theorists opt to use "land" over "place", necessarily incorporating the natural world. Our perspectives on time and place provide a significantly different understanding of the relationship of humans to nature than are exposed in a settler colonial viewpoint.

**Keywords:** time, place, Native American, settler colonialism

### **Discussion Questions**

What are some implications for occupation science of viewing time and place through a Native American perspective?

Can "occupation" exist in a decolonized framework?

How can we make space for Indigenous perspectives in occupational science?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon complete, participants will be able to describe the differences between Native Americans and settler colonial perspectives of time and place.

Upon complete, participants will be able to describe the implications for understanding occupation from these two perspectives.

Upon complete, participants will be able to question colonial assumptions found in occupational science discourse.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2059824

## UNDERSTANDING HOW NATURE MANIFESTS IN NORTH AMERICAN RETIRED AND PRECARIOUS WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF THIRD PLACES

Rebecca Aldrich, University of Southern California

Debbie Laliberte Rudman, Western University

### Abstract

Since the late 1980s, 'third' places beyond home ('first' place) and work ('second' place) have been framed as important sites of social connection and participation. As the concept of third places has evolved, it has grown to encompass many types of physical and virtual places, from coffee shops and curbsides to online message boards and mobile apps. Natural spaces, such as parks and beaches, have featured in some accounts of third places, with some work suggesting particular relevance for persons without stable access to workplaces.. This presentation will explore ways that natural spaces and connections with nature feature in the third places of retired and precariously employed workers in North America.

A cross-national study of third places is currently underway in two North American cities. The first phase of the study (ongoing) is generating data through occupational mapping, photo elicitation, and semi-structured interviews. This presentation will share findings related to retired (n=24) and precarious (n=15) workers' perspectives on and experiences of third places, attending to the ways in which nature-based third places and natural elements of third places were present or absent in the data.

Participants sought and valued nature-based third places in diverse ways. Nature-based spaces represented in the data included outdoor physical activity spaces (e.g., pools or tennis courts), hiking trails, and walking routes along streets or rivers. For some participants, natural aspects of third places (e.g., landscapes) enhanced occupations and connections that occurred through those places; for other participants, natural elements (e.g., weather) impeded occupational engagement. The presence or absence of nature-related data will be explored in relation to contextual factors of each study site, such as climate and accessibility of natural spaces, as well as aspects of participants' situations, such as financial stability and primary mode of transportation.

Conceptualizations of third places can be expanded by understanding how occupational engagement helps 'make' third places what they are. As recognized by a transactional perspective, such engagement occurs through situational elements that include but are not limited to aspects of the natural environment. Thus, understanding how and why people access nature-based third places can enhance situated perspectives on occupation and placemaking.

By exploring the ways that nature and natural elements shape occupational engagement in third places, this presentation will deepen understandings of transactions that connect nature and occupation.

**Keywords:** third places, nature, precarious workers, retirees

### **Discussion Questions**

What situational elements can shape access to and participation in nature-based third places?

How might changes associated with climate change present challenges to engagement in nature-based third places?

In what ways does occupation contribute to a dynamic process of making third places?

### **Learning Objectives**

Gain an appreciation for how nature and natural elements are implicated in third places.

Reflect on how third places are dynamically (re)produced through occupations.

Understand diverse contributions that nature-based third places can have in the lives of persons without stable workplaces.

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**Submission ID:** 2064886

## **PROBLEMATIZING ‘AUTONOMY’ IN U.S. MENTAL HEALTHCARE AND LEGAL SYSTEMS: AN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE**

Camille Parchment, University of Southern California

Amber Angell, University of Southern California

### **Abstract**

Mental health reforms in the 1950s led to deinstitutionalization and helped establish patient rights such as ‘autonomy,’ i.e., the right to make one’s own treatment decisions. However, the ways in which the concept of autonomy has unfolded in medical and legal systems may have unintentional consequences, particularly in the case of severe mental illness (SMI) wherein the patient does not perceive themselves as needing treatment. Existing research on autonomy in mental healthcare rarely takes a critical lens nor focuses on those with more complex needs. Therefore, this theoretical paper will critically examine the principle of autonomy as applied in legal and mental health treatment settings, taking an occupational perspective to explore how, for people with SMI, autonomy can simultaneously produce power for some while disempowering others, particularly those with high support needs.

We first show that the legal and medical concept of autonomy excludes individuals who lack ‘insight’ into their treatment needs. Second, we argue that the ‘choice’ implied within autonomy is an illusion; the only constructive choice is to agree to treatment and services, especially when

measured against potential negative outcomes. Third, we argue that this system inadvertently reinforces criminality by deferring care to the criminal justice system as a necessary means to adjudicate crimes that were likely committed due to mental illness. However, treatment in the criminal justice system is the secondary priority and a means to legally adjudicate the illegalities. Fourth, we argue that autonomy can place the full responsibility of care on families, who may have limited resources to properly address the mental health needs of their loved one. Caregiver burnout can contribute to patient homelessness, isolation, and prolonged recovery.

An occupational perspective on the legal and medical principle of autonomy highlights how its rigid application can hinder recovery, leading to occupational deprivation and injustice. Our critical analysis of autonomy in mental healthcare, from the lens of the occupation of navigating complex service systems, reveals the difficult or even hindered path to recovery for those with SMI and complex support needs.

The current emphasis on autonomy in medical and legal systems can unintentionally cause harm for individuals who lack insight into having a mental illness. A failure to examine such systems critically hinders our ability to devise creative solutions, leaving this population effectively re-institutionalized within the criminal justice system. Occupational analyses of these systems, at multiple levels, can reveal these occupational injustices for individuals and their families.

**Keywords:** occupational disruption, mental healthcare, autonomy, critical occupational lens

### **Discussion Questions**

Do you agree that the concept of autonomy, as applied in current medical and legal systems with regards to people with severe mental illness, is empowering only for those who have insight into their illness, and is harmful for those who do not?

Occupational science has a rich history of in-depth qualitative research focused on lived experience. What other methodologies might help to understand this phenomena at various levels?

I have presented a critical analysis of how our current system does not benefit people with SMI who do not have... However, it can be reasonably argued that forcing people into treatment is unethical. How can we think about potential solutions to this dilemma?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to describe the unintended consequences of autonomy for individuals with SMI, including its impact on recovery, family caregiving, and the criminal justice system.

Upon completion, participants will be able to critically analyze the role of autonomy in mental healthcare.



Upon completion, participants will be able to recognize how mental healthcare policies contribute to occupational disruption and impede recovery.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2071065

## WHY WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT OCCUPATIONS IMPACTED BY WARMER WINTERS

Karen M. Sames, St. Catherine University

### Abstract

The aim of this session is to stimulate thought and conversation around the impact our changing climate is having on human occupation, especially in winter, in communities in the upper Midwest, and ways we can work to reverse or slow down the impact of climate change in our communities.

Occupational science is concerned about how engagement in occupations impacts health and well-being. When climate change negatively impacts how people engage in occupations, we need to take notice and consider ways we can positively impact climate change. Occupational therapy practitioners and others can engage in sustainable practices to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Health and well-being are negatively impacted when people are deprived of their ability to engage in work and recreation due to climate change. More research needs to be done to explore the impacts of climate change in winter and steps that can be taken to mitigate the impacts it has on human occupation.

The Upper Midwest is experiencing an overall warming of the environment as a result of climate change at a faster rate than many of the southern and coastal states, especially in winter. This has had and will continue to have a direct impact on occupational engagement, especially, but not exclusively, on outdoor occupations. We need more attention and research on the links between climate change and occupational participation.

This presentation is directly related to the theme because it draws connections among the natural environment, climate change, and engagement in occupations.

**Keywords:** climate change, winter, occupations, occupational disruption

### **Discussion Questions**

How has your engagement in occupations been impacted by climate change, in any season? How have your client's occupations been impacted by climate change?

What concerns do you have about the long-term effects of climate change on occupational engagement?

What are some things we can do in our professional and personal lives to mitigate the impact of climate change?

### **Learning Objectives**

Discuss the impact of warmer winters on paid workers, volunteers, and those engaging in outdoor recreational activities.

Relate the impact of climate change on health and well-being.

Identify ways in which we can push back on climate change to try to mitigate its negative consequences.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2056455

## **FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7: AFTERNOON SESSION**

### **OCCUPATIONAL QUESTIONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE: AN INTERACTIVE FORUM**

Kristine Haertl, St. Catherine University

Charles Christiansen, University of Texas Medical Branch

#### **Abstract**

Since its inception, the definition, scope and parameters of occupational science have evolved. Clark et al. (1991) identified occupational science as the systematic study of humans as occupational beings. Recent contributors (e.g. Backman et., 2021, Christiansen & Haertl, 2024) emphasize the importance of studying occupation through a contemporary lens and have sought to understand concepts based on existing literature and expert consensus. This session will cover insights from writing a book about occupation, including the interdisciplinarity of occupational science, the difficulty in defining parameters around occupation based models, the importance from a global perspective, and future directions for occupational science. The session includes an active discussion around concepts presented.

In an era that has seen a growth in OS around the world, occupational science literature has expanded to include text books, journals, blogs, and informal means of idea exchange. This interactive format will pose key questions for discussion on future directions for higher education and occupational science based on previous evidence and anticipated global trends.

From this session participants will:

1. Describe evidence based key insights related to current and future trends in occupational science
2. Engage in active discussion on means to best apply educational pedagogies and global strategies in the teaching of principles of occupation

The concepts presented relate to all areas of occupational science including the importance of context, nature and the environment. By illustrating the interaction between environmental factors and occupational practices, the session will provide participants with a nuanced understanding of how these elements are integral to the field's advancement.

**Keywords:** occupational science, global perspectives, future trends

#### **Discussion Questions**

Discuss the state of occupational science and suggestions for future global directions.

What are recommendations for the future of educational efforts in occupational science?

What impact might AI and emerging technologies have on the future of occupational science?

## Learning Objectives

Describe key concepts of occupational science and how they have changed over time.

Discuss future science principles and their potential impact on occupational science.

Engage in active collaborative discussion on how occupational scientists may collaborate to inform global strategic directions.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2043722

## PERSPECTIVES OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY PARKINSON'S DISEASE WHO ARE PARTICIPATING IN A PROGRAM INCORPORATING HORSES

Glen S. Cotton, Midwestern University

Lisa Mahaffey, Midwestern University

Lydia Royeen, Midwestern University

## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the lived experience of people with Parkinson's disease who are participating in a community-based program incorporating horses, and to study how participation has influenced occupational adaptation.

This qualitative phenomenological study took place at a facility that incorporates equines in their leisure and life skills programs, adaptive riding, and skilled therapy services. The facility offers a program for people with Parkinson's disease (PD). Participants are enrolled in weekly sessions including a 30-min. group mounted (on the horse) activity and a 30-min. 1:1 unmounted horse care activity (e.g., grooming). Semi-structured 1:1 interviews of participants, along with a focus

group of family members, explored the experience of living with PD and engaging in an adaptive horseback riding program. Formulation of interview questions and focus group topics was guided by key constructs in Kielhofner's Model of Human Occupation (Taylor, Bowyer, & Fisher, 2023) (i.e., occupational adaptation) and the Occupational Performance History Interview (OPHI-II) (Kielhofner et al., 2004). After transcribing recordings, 3 researchers completed coding and thematic analysis of data following the guidelines of Saldana (2021).

Eight participants with PD currently enrolled in the adaptive riding program joined the study: 4 men and 4 women, age 68 to 85 years. Five family members – 4 spouses, 1 adult child – took part in the focus group. Participants shared the experience of living with PD and evolving limitations on occupational participation. They appreciated how the program challenged their physical, cognitive and social skills. Family members reported the experience of the program has been profoundly positive. They believe participation has improved their loved one's outlook, overall happiness. Some believe balance and endurance have improved. Both participants and family highlighted the importance of interaction and bonding with horses and making new friends with other people faced with similar challenges.

This study reinforces the importance of creating opportunities that facilitate occupational adaptation among people with a neurodegenerative disease. With the onset of PD, comes new limitations and changes in occupational identity. Unique activities like adaptive riding and equine care are opportunities to engage in motivating occupations, learn new ways to participate, and take steps toward rebuilding occupational identity.

This research highlights the value of humans connecting and bonding with animals in natural settings – the equestrian environment. Some participants of the program believe this experience with horses is “magical” and both horse and rider mutually benefit from their close interaction.

**Keywords:** adaptive riding, Parkinson's, occupational adaptation, lived experience, horse

### **Discussion Questions**

This program includes a group mounted activity and individual unmounted horse activities. How else could program facilitators incorporate the equestrian environment and culture to support occupational adaptation?

How should similar programs targeting people with PD and incorporating equines communicate the benefits to referring health professionals? Based on the results of this study, what should they prioritize?

Participants of this program recognized the uniqueness of incorporating horses in a program for people with PD. To what degree do unique activities and environments motivate people with chronic conditions to participate in occupations that may otherwise seem overly challenging?

## **Learning Objectives**

Comprehend how equines can be incorporated in community program to address occupational identity disruption and support the process of occupational adaptation.

Describe the benefits of participating in an adaptive riding program as perceived by people affected by Parkinson's disease.

Distinguish between the unique features and benefits of an adaptive riding program and the benefits of traditional community-based programs that do not include animals.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2065742

## **“THE OCEAN DOESN'T CARE:” CONNECTIONS AND TRANSCENDENCE WITHIN SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES OF ADAPTIVE SURFERS**

Aaron Bonsall, University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Maureen E. Johnson, University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Ashlyn Carter, University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

## **Abstract**

This study uses the experiences of adaptive surfers as a point of departure in examining spirituality and occupation. While engagement in occupations expresses and establishes spirituality, spirituality can imbue occupations with meaning (Louw & van Niekerk, 2024). Surfing is an occupation commonly associated with the mindful and connected aspects of spirituality (Amrhein et al., 2021). The natural environment of surfing provides a context for the examination of spirituality.

A narrative phenomenological approach is used to examine the experience of spirituality and surfing. Narrative phenomenology is used as a theoretical lens to examine the social, cultural, and historical influences on the experiences of individuals (Mattingly, 2010). Interviews over

time and observations are combined to obtain a rich view of the spiritual experience of surfing. Three male surfers participated in four interviews each and were observed at the US Open Adaptive Surfing Championships. While the researchers identified themes both within and across cases, this paper presents two stories, taking a narrative approach described by Frank (2010) that prioritizes what stories do in informing human lives.

This presentation focuses on a narrative analysis of two stories that best personify the three identified themes: connection to others, connection to nature, and the ability of occupations to transcend time and place. The first story was told by a blind adaptive surfer who related an experience alone in the ocean. The connection with nature in this story is best described in his own words: “The ocean does not care.” The second story was told by an adaptive surfer with a brachial plexus injury who recounted an experience when he met a grandmother whose grandson had a similar injury. This story reflects on how the experience of surfing goes beyond the beach and extends to connections with family and friends that challenge concepts of disability.

While occupational scientists have identified a relationship between occupation and spirituality, this presentation looks at experiences of transcendence during the occupation of surfing. The surfers’ stories explore spirituality as a narrative process where present moments take on spiritual meanings. This study adds to the understanding of how spirituality is entwined in the meaningful nature of occupations.

This presentation directly relates to the conference theme in that we are looking at the experiences of surfers. The stories we explore identify and examine a complex process of making connections and transactions within contexts of social and natural environments.

**Keywords:** spirituality, narrative, adaptive surfing, surfing

### **Discussion Questions**

What are the transactions demonstrated within the two stories told in this presentation?

How can the contexts of setting and scene influence spiritual representations of occupations?

Does the conceptualization of spirituality in this presentation fit with the definitions in occupational science and the enactments in participants' lives?

### **Learning Objectives**

Participants will consider the natural environment of the beach as a context for connection and transactions.

Participants will identify the narrative process of spiritual meaning-making within two narratives.



Participants will expand their concepts of the spiritual realm beyond religion and personal experience through the consideration of social transactions and connections to the natural environment.

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**Submission ID:** 2067856

## **PILOTING PARQ: TOWARDS A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE, INTERSECTIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF PRIVILEGE IN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE**

Yousef R. Babish, University of Southern California

Joy Agner, University of Southern California

## **Abstract**

Occupational science has long examined the relationship between social structures and human occupation. However, discussions of privilege, how it shapes knowledge production, research methodologies, and participation, remain limited. This work presents a developing theoretical analysis that positions privilege as an essential lens for analyzing occupational injustice and systemic inequities. It introduces PARQ (Privilege Awareness Reflection Questions) as a pilot set of reflective questions designed to foster critical reflexivity among researchers and practitioners. The 24-question PARQ pilot set was developed through literature review on privilege, reflexivity, and positionality in occupational science research and through the researcher's eagerness and personal commitment to examining their positionality and maintaining reflexivity. The questions are designed to prompt researchers to examine their positionality, consider how privilege influences their work, if so, and strive towards inclusive research practices.

Discussions on privilege in academic discourse can provoke resistance, particularly in disciplines where objectivity and neutrality are emphasized. However, scholarship in occupational science has increasingly recognized the importance of reflexivity and epistemic justice (Frank, 2022;

Darawsheh, 2014; Peters et al., 2024). Avoiding critical engagement with privilege risks reinforcing methodological frameworks that fail to account for intersectional experiences and systemic barriers. This work frames privilege not as a static identity but as an analytic tool that can reveal how power operates within research. PARQ consists of 24 guiding questions designed to support this critical inquiry. For example: 1) How do my social and cultural privileges shape the research questions I ask and the voices I prioritize? 2) Whose experiences are centered in my study, and whose perspectives might be overlooked? 3) How does my positionality influence the practices I consider valid or effective?

The PARQ pilot set contributes to ongoing conversations about equity in occupational science by offering a structured mechanism for embedding reflexivity, expanding methodological inclusivity, and adopting anti-oppressive research strategies. Specifically, this work highlights the necessity of:

Embedding critical reflexivity in research design to acknowledge systemic biases. (Darawsheh, 2014).

Expanding methodological approaches to ensure inclusion of diverse lived experiences. (Peters et al., 2024).

Implementing participatory, anti-oppressive research strategies that challenge dominant paradigms and amplify marginalized voices. (Minarik, 2017).

This work calls for occupational science to engage with privilege—not as a social detriment of occupation but as a critical lens for analyzing power dynamics in research and practice. PARQ provides a structured mechanism for examining privilege and reflexivity, ensuring that occupational science evolves as an inclusive, equity-driven field.

**Keywords:** privilege, intersectionality, inclusivity, culturally responsive, PARQ

### **Discussion Questions**

How can occupational science move beyond acknowledging privilege to actively addressing its impact on research, education, and practice?

How can occupational scientists ensure that discussions of privilege do not center dominant voices but instead amplify marginalized perspectives?

What are the ethical considerations when applying reflexivity and privilege awareness in occupational science research?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to identify ways in which privilege influences occupational science research and practice.

Upon completion, participants will be able to use the Privilege Awareness Reflection Questions (PARQ) to examine their own research biases.

Upon completion, participants will be able to discuss how reflexivity can contribute to more inclusive and equity-focused occupational science.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2032144

## A WALK IN THE PARK: APPLYING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY METHODOLOGY IN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE

Tessa L. Boston, Towson University

### Abstract

This presentation will explore appreciative inquiry as a methodology to advance occupational science (OS). A case example of participant observations in a community park will demonstrate the value of appreciative inquiry as a generative framework for examining occupation, elevating strengths, and expanding occupational possibilities in communities.

Appreciative inquiry is a strengths-based change methodology rooted in social constructivism. By challenging tacit assumptions of what is, it cultivates an imaginative vision of what can be. This perspective appreciates the best in any situation, guiding inquiry toward untapped potential and pathways for growth (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Appreciative inquiry shifts research from identifying and solving problems to discovering and embracing opportunities, underscoring that unveiling a community's strengths and capacities can bring a better reality to life (Boyd, 2015). Appreciative inquiry is carried out through the 4D cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny.

Appreciative inquiry is an underutilized yet highly relevant methodology in OS, offering a powerful lens for exploring the relational, contextual, and transformative aspects of occupation. This approach responds to key priorities in OS scholarship, which emphasize occupation beyond the individual level, dynamic contextual factors that shape participation, and collaborative, community-engaged research methods. It aligns with a transactional perspective on growth that celebrates diversity and is centered on strengthening community connections (Aldrich, 2018; Boyd, 2015). Appreciative inquiry can deepen understandings of how occupation supports well-being and unifies communities through collective engagement (Lavalley, 2017; Mace et al., 2015).

Appreciative inquiry has the potential to mobilize knowledge in OS to foster positive transformation in communities. It complements prevailing qualitative and participatory methodologies by providing an alternative to a problem-centric approach. It does not overlook systemic challenges and injustices; rather, it critically examines how existing community strengths can be leveraged and scaled to enable participation and inclusion. Appreciative inquiry may be used by occupational scientists to explore conditions that enable individuals and communities to thrive, supporting both theoretical advancement and real-world impact.

By contributing a melioristic and action-oriented lens, appreciative inquiry advances the discipline's means to understand how occupation is situated within broader social and environmental contexts. Its application in OS offers new ways to examine the complex interactions that shape occupation, generating knowledge that bridges scholarship with meaningful, community-driven transformation.

The integrated case presentation exploring communal occupation in the park will highlight how the natural and built environment, transactions among community members, sociohistorical contexts shape participation and belonging.

**Keywords:** knowledge mobilization, participatory research, social constructivism, unifying occupation

## Discussion Questions

How might appreciative inquiry be integrated with other qualitative and participatory research methods to enhance the study of occupation?

How does appreciative inquiry align with or challenge dominant paradigms in occupational science?

How might a generative, opportunity-focused approach like appreciative inquiry be leveraged to advance the role of occupational science in influencing community development and system change?

### **Learning Objectives**

Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of appreciative inquiry, including its guiding principles and 4D cycle.

Describe the value of employing an appreciative inquiry approach to explore occupation in communities.

Discuss how appreciative inquiry can mobilize knowledge in occupational science to support community growth and development.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2032725

## **IS THAT A THING? THE THING-POWER OF NATURAL AND MANMADE OBJECTS**

Kyle E. Karen, New York Institute of Technology

## **Abstract**

To examine the relevance of ‘thing-power’ to occupational science by exploring human experiences with objects, environments, and artificial intelligence. ‘Thing-power’ is a sociological ‘new materialist’ concept attributing quasi-agency to the things in the world that humans interact with. ‘Thing-power’ emphasizes the connection between human and non-human actors.

When humans confront natural phenomena beyond human control (earthquakes, volcanoes, extreme weather) they often perceive the event as an act of God, or Mother Nature. Humans sometimes sense a powerful actor with a degree of control or intention regarding their fate is behind the event. Although science offers explanations for natural events, direct human experience of powerful natural phenomena elicits feelings that scientific explanations do not always satisfy. ‘Thing-power’ relates to this tendency to imagine an agentic force at work when interactions with nonhuman objects results in humans experiencing a lack of control. At these times, objects seemingly conspire against us. For example, when a key fails to unlock a door, one angrily faults the door because ‘it won’t open.’ Sometimes the car ‘won’t start’ or the computer ‘has a mind of its own.’ By contrast, AI asserts its ‘thing-power’ by accomplishing cognitive tasks with lightning speed and human-like intelligence. Currently, the human response to AI ranges from excitement to awe and fear of economic displacement. Other, less dramatic examples of the possible effects of ‘thing-power’ include aesthetic emotional experiences such as feeling irresistibly drawn to an object by its beauty, novelty, or rarity.

Objects are interesting because objects are material, cultural, and intrinsic to occupation and to human health. A ‘new materialist’ approach to human-object interactions offers occupational scientists new interpretations of the complex material and technological world encompassing everyday occupation by ascribing quasi-agency to objects. This approach conceptually de-centers and realigns human agency in more equal relation to things.

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly prominent in everyday life, ‘thing-power’ may be a useful concept to occupational scientists.

The transactional nature of the person-occupation-environment blurs conventional distinctions between natural and non-natural objects, places, systems, or events. ‘New materialism/Thing-power’ is a theoretical approach potentially useful for understanding occupations that transcend human-nonhuman and natural-non-natural distinctions due to its emphasis on matter and culture as simultaneous phenomena.

**Keywords:** thing-power, artificial intelligence, agency

## **Discussion Questions**

What objects affect you in ways that might support the concept of ‘thing-power’ and how do these objects relate to your occupations?

How might AI alter your thinking about person-occupation-environment interaction?

What objections or concerns do you have to the concept of ‘thing-power’ regarding its potential to contribute to occupational science?

### **Learning Objectives**

Define ‘thing-power’ and provide examples of ‘thing-power’ in everyday occupations.

Formulate their own opinion of the potential value of the concept of ‘thing-power’ to occupational science.

Articulate who or what has agency in the world and how AI may change our perceptions of agency.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2025005

### **INVITING MIDDLE-SCHOOL STUDENTS TO DESIGN THEIR OUTDOOR SPACES: COMPARING & CONTRASTING COVID-19 & POST-COVID COHORTS**

Elizabeth Larson, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Erin Custod, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Delaney Davis, University of Wisconsin-Madison

## **Abstract**

Middle-schoolers need to be included in designing outdoor spaces they use (Amholt et al., 2022; 2024). We collaborated with an urban middle school to redesign their impoverished outdoor space in 2020. The school was committed to improving student wellness and increasing time allocated to recess, but noted there was little for students to do outside beyond basketball and soccer. In 2025, we are working with the same school to develop a new design for an outdoor space at a new site. We will compare and contrast middle school students' desires for "things to do" in outdoor spaces during these two point in time. This will illuminate commonalities in students' desires as well as the impact of the pandemic.

In 2020, using Zoom to host focus groups, we elicited student preferences (N=40 students; 4.76% Asian; 16.6% Black; 2.38% Indian; 14.3% Latinx; 61.9% White) by asking them what they wanted to do/be able to do in the outdoor space, and what experiences would help them feel refreshed after being in the schoolyard. Focus groups were audio-recorded (with cameras off) and transcribed. The research team systematically coded transcripts for key categories and dimensions, quantified the data, and selected key quotes to illustrate these categories (Eldh et al, 2020). Using this same approach but in-person, current middle school students attending the same school are participating in focus groups to develop a design for an outdoor space for a new school site. This data will be analyzed using the same procedures and then the two data sets will be compared and contrasted.

In 2020, in addition to typical play options (play structure and obstacle course), students requested green, blue and gray features (Sanz-Mas et al., 2025): shade coverage for gathering spaces, beautiful gardens to sit or gather, water fountains, and winding walking paths to help them refresh, relax and socialize with friends. We will contrast the 2020 findings with the current analysis of data collected in 2025.

In attending to users' preferences to design their environments to support participation in desired occupations, this project employs both a public health approach and occupational science principles to promote wellness. This project's findings also align well with European initiatives to create climate friendly spaces, employing green, blue and gray features (Sanz-Mas et al., 2025) to increase the beauty, comfort, restorativeness and enjoyment of the outdoor environment.

This work examines how user-generated environmental design that includes natural features can support well-being for middle-school students.

**Keywords:** environmental design, wellness, middle school students

## **Discussion Questions**

Middle school staff are often concerned about students' participation in risky or "dark" non-socially sanctioned occupations; how can we work with both the users and those who supervise the use of these outdoor space to support student's participation--balancing risk and autonomy?



Enactment of the student-guided design was limited by costs and institutional policies. What strategies might occupational scientists use to influence institutions to investment in green, blue and gray features in outdoor spaces?

How have other occupational scientists partnered with other disciplines and experts to create more projects like this that create community wellness-promoting spaces?

### **Learning Objectives**

Describe a user-driven design process for outdoor spaces.

Describe the things tweens desire to do in outdoor school spaces and elements they identify as restorative.

Articulate the similarities and differences in students' preferences of those who attended middle school during the COVID-19 pandemic and a current cohort.

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**Funding:** Virginia Horne Henry Award

**Submission ID:** 2071602

# **ECOCEPTION AND THE NATURELED APPROACH: RECLAIMING NATURE CONNECTION AS A FOUNDATIONAL HUMAN OCCUPATION**

Kathleen Lockyer, RxOutside and the NatureLed Approach

Sarah Pultorak, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Megan Barrow, RxOutside | Thriving Wild OT

## **Abstract**

We propose nature connection as a foundational human occupation to be included in the domain of occupational therapy (OT) practice. This is based on the concept of ecoception, a term the main author created, which refers to the innate readiness of the human sensory-motor system to respond to nature's stimuli as a means to develop, function, and thrive. We present the NatureLed Approach, a framework that integrates nature-connective interventions into OT practice and research. By highlighting nature's role in shaping human neurology, supporting sensory-motor development, and fostering mental health, this framework offers practitioners a pathway to engage clients in nature as both a therapeutic support and a meaningful occupation in and of itself.

Increasing rates of mental health challenges, developmental disorders, physical illness and other diagnoses can be at least partly linked to the modern disconnection from nature. OT, a profession dedicated to fostering health and well-being through meaningful occupation, must address the consequences by including nature connection as a human occupation within our domain. We argue for inclusion of the term "ecoception" in scholarly discourse as a way to discuss our sensory motor systems in relation to the environment in which they developed. Grounded in evolutionary biology, neuroscience, sensory processing and occupational science, the NatureLed Approach considers the meaningful relationship between people, occupation, and the natural environment.

Incorporating nature connection as an occupation offers a lens with which to conduct scientific research on areas such as development, occupational engagement vs. deprivation, and mental and physical health. This conceptualization asks us to consider our meaningful relationship to outdoor environments and may reduce the negative impacts humans have on nature. Exploration of ecoception and its role in function presents opportunities to investigate sensory development and processing through a holistic perspective. Future research may explore the impact of implementing the NatureLed Approach on outcomes related to occupational performance and wellbeing.

Disconnection from nature has profound impacts on health across the lifespan. Occupational therapists and scientists may effectively prevent these detrimental consequences by incorporating language that reflects the inherent link between our health and nature into clinical practice and scholarly discourse. Inclusion of nature connection as a human occupation within the domain of OT is one impactful way to acknowledge our innate need for relationship with the natural world

in order to thrive. The NatureLed Approach presents a viable framework for implementing principles of nature connection within occupational therapy practice and research.

**Keywords:** nature connection, ecoception, wellbeing, natureled

### **Discussion Questions**

How do you see disconnection from nature showing up among populations you study via research or work with as a clinician?

What impact might inclusion of nature connection as an occupation in the OTPF have on practice and/or research?

What elements of the NatureLed Approach are feasible to implement in your practice or research and why?

### **Learning Objectives**

Define the concept of ecoception and explain its importance to our neurology, development, and function.

Recognize the evidence-based value of nature connection as a historical and foundational human occupation.

List tenets of the NatureLed Approach and their utility in promoting healthy development, occupational engagement, and wellness across the lifespan.

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**Submission ID:** 2053511

## **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8: MORNING SESSION**

### **RESOURCE SEEKING: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE CONSTRUCT**

Svitlana Stremousova, University of Southern California

Bethany Gruskin, University of Southern California

Jordan C. W. Major, University of Florida

Rebecca Aldrich, University of Southern California

Erna I. Blanche, University of Southern California

Mary C. Lawlor, University of Southern California

#### **Abstract**

Resource seeking, or how people procure “the income supplements, goods, and services to meet basic survival needs” and more (Aldrich et al., 2017, p. 2), is gaining recognition as an important occupation worthy of study.

The purpose of this panel is to explore occupations related to assessing needs and resource-seeking and acquisition, examine existing theoretical foundations within the context of broader occupational science constructs, and reflect on future directions of research in this area. The panel will include three research presentations and a moderated discussion.

The first presentation will share thematic findings of a parallel literature review (102 included articles) on the intersection of nesting (43 included articles), place-making (48 included articles), and resource seeking (n=11).

The second presentation will share resource seeking-related findings from a narrative phenomenological and thematic analysis of individual and collective narrative interviews with caregivers of autistic children, educators, and therapy providers working with autistic children in California (n=75).

The third presentation will highlight preliminary resource-seeking findings from a mixed-methods study characterizing and understanding the life factors and lived experiences of pregnant individuals with type 1 diabetes (n=30).

Needs for resources, information, and services constantly evolve through the situations that constitute daily life. The presentations and moderated discussion will highlight the dynamic and relational nature of resource seeking as well as the broad relevance of resource seeking in everyday life in the United States.

Resource seeking is an emerging occupational science construct that highlights an important function of how many people spend their time. This construct may have increased relevance for

disadvantaged groups, individuals experiencing precarity, and people experiencing major life changes or transitions.

**Keywords:** occupation, participation, multiple perspectives, conceptualization

### **Discussion Questions**

How does understanding resource seeking fit into your research or practice?

What aspects of resource seeking are we overlooking?

What other constructs should resource-seeking be considered in relation to?

### **Learning Objectives**

Participants will be able to describe occupations related to assessing needs and resource-seeking and acquisition.

Participants will be able to identify the theoretical foundations for the notion of resource-seeking within the context of broader occupational science constructs.

Participants will be able to outline future directions for research in the area of resource seeking occupations.

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# **TACIT CLINICAL REASONING IN DEMENTIA PRACTICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY INCLUDING THE BLACK CARIBBEAN BRITISH EXPERIENCE.**

Lesley Garcia, University of Nottingham

## **Abstract**

This research identifies evidence-based approaches applicable to people living with mild dementia as well as highlights how explicit occupationally scientific clinical reasoning of occupational therapists could strengthen innovative practices particularly for people from minoritised ethnic groups. Occupational therapy has been identified by the World Health Organisation as a key discipline to provide therapeutic interventions for people living with dementia (5). The theory of personal recovery codified as CHIME (Connectedness, Hope and Optimism about the future, Identity, Meaning in life, and Empowerment) has been shown to be relevant for older adults including people living with dementia (1).

This research followed the Medical Research Council (MRC) Framework on complex interventions and focused on the development stage of theory building (2). A systematic review was conducted, followed by an exploratory descriptive qualitative study, with a focus on the Black Caribbean British experience, which was conducted with ethnically diverse occupational therapists around the suitability of the recovery approach for people living with mild dementia. The findings from both studies were synthesised and theoretically mapped against the core elements of the MRC to produce an explanatory model.

Thematic analysis (3) of the synthesised data conceptualised five main themes around recovery-oriented occupational therapy dementia practice: 1. Flexible modes of technology, 2. Adaptive interventions, 3. Culturally humble practitioner approach 4. Explicit application of CHIME and 5. Transformative learning. The findings indicate that a recovery-oriented, CHIME-informed, culturally humble approach to occupational therapy practice would enhance the therapeutic encounter and could improve engagement for people affected by mild dementia particularly from minoritised ethnic groups.

Innovative post-qualification workplace training approaches, and pre-qualification education are needed to operationalise explicit occupation-centred clinical reasoning in occupational therapy practice. Reflection on the value of the experience of the CHIME elements as experienced by people affected by dementia beyond traditional OT models (4) could strengthen professional identity of occupational therapists, and the understanding of the occupational experience of people affected by dementia.

In this study participants reported the desire of people living with dementia of Caribbean heritage to engage in occupations involving their plants, farms, and animals. In the context of urban life in the UK this was often mis-understood or constrained.

**Keywords:** clinical reasoning, occupational engagement, chime framework, mild dementia, minoritized ethnic groups

## **Discussion Questions**

If clinicians' clinical reasoning is grounded in occupational science, why are they still tacit about this with their clients?

Why would being explicit about engagement in occupations be particularly helpful in dementia care with people from minoritized ethnic groups?

How can we operationalise being explicit about the value of occupations in dementia practice in different settings?

## **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion participant will be able to identify how tacit clinical reasoning diminishes and obscures OT dementia practice.

Upon completion participant will be able to recognize four themes impacting recovery-oriented OT dementia practice in community-based settings.

Upon completion participants will be able to appraise approaches to strengthening explicit occupation-centred practice in dementia practice.

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## **FACULTY VIEWS ON INTEGRATING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INTO OT CURRICULA: A NATIONAL SURVEY**

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Elizabeth Richardson, Mary Baldwin University

Audi Santos, University of New Mexico

Tyler R. Hood, Washington University in St. Louis

Cameron Murdock, University of New Mexico

### **Abstract**

Climate change is arguably the greatest threat to global public health (Atwoli et al, 2021). This study explored the perspectives of occupational therapy (OT) educators in the US on the relevance, importance, and feasibility of integrating climate change and environmental sustainability content into entry-level OT education programs.

An online questionnaire was developed on the Qualtrics platform. The survey incorporated a modified version of the Six Americas Super Short Survey and a novel survey instrument created and piloted by a team of occupational therapy researchers. Occupational therapy faculty in entry-level programs across the US were identified using publicly available databases and recruited to participate via email and AOTA's discussion boards. 64 occupational therapy educators completed the survey. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-squared analysis, while qualitative data (i.e., survey comments) underwent thematic analysis by the research team.

Most respondents acknowledged that climate change will significantly affect future generations. Most affirmed the importance and relevance of addressing climate change and sustainability in OT curricula. However, fewer expressed confidence in feasibility of doing so. Barriers identified included overloaded curricula, limited time, a lack of awareness of how sustainability corresponds with OT, and skepticism about climate change as a core concern within OT practice. The findings suggest a need for educational outreach to faculty, development of materials to support teaching and curricular integration, explicit connection to existing ACOTE objectives, and continuing education on population-level analysis and social and environmental drivers of health.



Climate change is a contemporary crisis of nature that is caused by patterns and systems of human occupation over the past two centuries. Human occupation may provide meaningful ecological solutions and strategies (Ung et al, 2020). Occupational scientists have called for action on climate change, but the implementation gap within OT education is great. By uncovering faculty perspectives, this study is a step toward addressing this significant area of crisis and potential contribution.

Climate change presents an existential threat to ecosystems, planetary health and human survival by threatening biodiversity, causing more frequent and severe natural disasters, reducing food security, enhancing vector-borne diseases, forcing mass migrations and prompting conflicts over resources. Climate change should compel all health professions to recognize the inextricable dependence of human health on the natural environment and ecosystem services, and to take significant, concrete steps toward mitigation, adaptation, and supporting community-level resilience.

**Keywords:** climate change, environmental sustainability, curriculum

### **Discussion Questions**

What is occupational science's role and responsibility, if any, in influencing occupational therapy curricula to address contemporary issues?

What do you see as the most promising contributions of human occupation to climate mitigation and adaptation?

Do occupational scientists need additional or specialized grounding in the natural sciences to make substantive contributions to climate and sustainability research, education and practice? Or is interdisciplinary collaboration the way forward?

### **Learning Objectives**

Identify at least two impacts of climate change in their local area, and how these impacts may harm human health and/or occupational engagement.

Describe the perspectives of occupational therapy faculty on integrating climate change and environmental sustainability into entry-level OT curricula, based on a US survey.

List two strategies to overcome current barriers to preparing climate-responsive and sustainability-committed occupational therapy practitioners.

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**Submission ID:** 2070524

## **SWITCH TO SURVIVE: EXPLORING AUTISTIC PEOPLE'S INTERSECTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF MASKING AND CODE-SWITCHING**

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Jessica M. Cogger, University of Southern California

Amber Angell, University of Southern California

### **Abstract**

As part of my broader dissertation data corpus, I examined autistic adult participants' (n=10) experiences of autistic masking (i.e., presenting as non-autistic) and code-switching, or altering language, appearance, and mannerisms based on nationality, race, ethnicity, and/or culture. I further explored the consequent impacts on participants' subjective health and well-being.

I purposively sampled ten autistic adult participants with a range of intersectional identities and experiences. Half of participants were non-White; six were first, second, or third generation immigrants to the United States. Over eight months, I conducted 2-3 semi-structured interviews with each participant for 1-1.5 hours via Zoom. I used a semi-structured narrative interview approach while incorporating multiple accommodations for supporting autistic participants'

participation preferences (e.g., including verbal or written responses). I am conducting thematic analyses on the data with an autistic collaborator who has expertise in intersectional research and qualitative methods.

Participants reported routinely simultaneously masking their autism and code-switching to survive among social majorities. Some described constantly suppressing both their native languages and their autistic communication styles (e.g., talking at length about interests) to assimilate safely into the United States as “quiet, respectable” immigrants. Others detailed having to strictly monitor themselves in White neighborhoods to not let any autistic mannerism that might be perceived as aggressive (e.g., hand-flapping) “escape.” Some noted their privileged status in having the maturity and cognitive resources to both mask and code-switch, fearing for their autistic children’s safety when unable to do the same. All participants reported experiencing chronic physical and mental health problems from these dual masking and code-switching demands. All further expressed wanting education and interventions specific to their intersectional identities (e.g., autistic immigrant women).

This is the first empirical study, in occupational science and in research broadly, to examine intersections between autistic masking and code-switching. Findings elucidate novel considerations for autistic people’s health and well-being, as well as highlighting needs for interventions tailored to autistic people with intersectional identities. They further initially indicate how intersectional stigma (e.g., ableism and nativism) shapes the daily occupational participation of autistic people, with resultant social, health, and occupational injustices.

**Keywords:** autism, intersectionality, health, occupational injustice, masking

### **Discussion Questions**

What are the implications of dual masking and code-switching for autistic people's daily occupational participation and social belonging?

What forms of occupational injustice might result from autistic people's masking and code-switching for survival?

How might the health implications of masking and code-switching for autistic people reinforce or challenge traditional autism occupational science discourses and therapeutic practices?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participant will be able to define autistic masking and code-switching.

Upon completion, participant will be able to list at least three reasons why some autistic people both mask and code-switch.

Upon completion, participant will be able to describe as least one health implication resultant from autistic people's dual masking and code-switching.

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## OCCUPATION ACROSS FRONTERAS: A SINGLE CASE STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FROM INTERNATIONAL BORDER CROSSINGS

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the demands and opportunities associated with routine international border crossings in a binational community and understand the meaning associated with routine international border crossings.

The participant was a 54-year-old male who moved to the United States 26 years ago after moving from Durango, Mexico, to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, eight years prior. The participant routinely engages in crossing the U.S./Mexico border via pedestrian and vehicular modes for

non-business purposes. The participant completed a semi-structured interview, and the transcribed data were analyzed using thematic analysis to reveal patterns in behaviors and meaning.

Preliminary results describe international border crossings as an opportunity and demand for occupation. Crossing the border at times allowed access to occupations in Mexico that were not available in the U.S., and other times, crossing the border was a self-selected choice to engage in occupation in a different form, context, or with people who are unable to enter the U.S. Preliminary themes discovered in analyzing international border crossings included opportunity, time use, access, and meaning associated to another country.

International border crossings offer a complex interaction of occupation with social, cultural, political, and physical boundaries that benefit from an occupation-based analysis and understanding. This presentation will reflect on the description of meaning making and meaning destruction related to occupations surrounding international border crossings, highlighting the concepts of occupational justice, choice, opportunity, and transaction.

The U.S./Mexico binational community separated by a man-made international boundary and natural border, the Rio Grande, impacts human occupation on each side of the border and in the transnational movement of people and occupations. The proposed presentation will foster discussion on the meaning creation and meaning destruction from crossing international borders to engage in occupation and international border crossing as an occupation.

**Keywords:** case study, international border crossing, binational, occupational opportunities

### **Discussion Questions**

How do natural and man-made borders impact human occupation? Do they differ in impact?

How do the social, cultural, and political factors of a binational community impact occupational opportunities and occupational deprivation in relation to international border crossings?

What is the role for occupational science in addressing occupational justice in binational communities and international border crossings?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participant will be able to describe the impact of natural and man-made borders on human occupation.

Upon completion, participant will be able to analyze international border crossings as an occupation and facilitator of occupation.

Upon completion, participant will be able to evaluate the demands and opportunities of international border crossings.

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## THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF SPACE: LESSONS IN OCCUPATION AND ACCESS

Nancy Bagatell, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Linn L. Wakeford, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

### Abstract

The intent of this session is to introduce and describe the ethnographic study of space. This approach not only reveals inequities in access to and use of public spaces but also examines which occupations take place, why, and by whom. The method offers a means of examining the culture and “everyday life” of a space through aesthetics, artifacts, the activities that are supported, and the human interactions that occur (Kallio et al., 2015; Low et al., 2019).

Recent discussions in occupational science have called for methodologies that better capture the contextual aspects of occupation (Pugh & Heatwole Shank, 2024). While ethnography of space was not originally developed with occupation as a central focus, we argue that applying this method enriches our understanding of occupation and the influence of space on opportunity and participation.

In this paper, we outline the methods used in the ethnographic study of space and describe how we have applied them in research seminars with master’s-level occupational therapy students. Student investigations of bookstores, libraries, grocery stores, and playgrounds serve as examples of the process and findings that illuminate occupation. We also will identify and discuss key points of learning for both students and instructors, along with ideas for further use of this method in occupational science.

Recent studies have used various approaches, including photo-elicitation, traditional ethnography, and participatory action research to examine the relationship between occupation, space, and place. Ethnographic studies of space, however, offer a time-efficient method for capturing a ‘snapshot’ of culture within a physical setting, encompassing interpersonal interactions as well as structural and cultural influences. This method highlights how space shapes occupation, access, and belonging, moving beyond aesthetics and spatial affordances to assess who can engage in specific activities and where. Importantly, it provides occupational therapy students with a valuable tool for deepening their understanding of occupation in real-world contexts.

Ethnographic methods of space offer occupational scientists a means to study occupation as it unfolds in context, revealing issues of access and equity. They also provide an effective way to introduce students to observing and understanding occupation in everyday public spaces through an occupational science lens.

**Keywords:** methods, occupation, space

### **Discussion Questions**

In what ways does studying the everyday life of a public space align with theoretical understandings of occupation?

How might the findings from an ethnography of space be used by occupational scientists as well as community members?

What other methods can be used in research projects with students to support their understanding of occupation and occupational science?

### **Learning Objectives**

Identify methods used in the ethnography of space.

Discuss how an ethnography of space enhances understanding of occupation.

Identify ways ethnography of space can be used with students.

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## **AUTISTIC BURNOUT: EXPERIENCES AND OCCUPATIONS OF AUTISTIC ADULTS**

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Melanie Guzman, University of Southern California

### **Abstract**

Autistic burnout preliminary defined as “... resulting from chronic life stress and a mismatch of expectations and abilities without adequate supports.” (Raymaker, 2020), has been minimally researched despite the term circulating online autistic communities as early as 2008. Despite the high influx of social media posts and conversations in online autistic communities surrounding the topic defining it, claiming its existence, and requesting advice as early as 2008, the condition was not researched until 2020 with the focus of autistic research instead surrounding the burnout of their support system. This qualitative phenomenological (Peat et al., 2019) study aims to turn the lens back to autistic individuals themselves by further defining autistic burnout within the context of the autistic community and give a voice to their own experiences. Additionally, this study aims to identify environments, occupations, and personal factors that can support or exacerbate burnout.

We recruited autistic adults ages 18-35 with a formal or self-diagnosis. Based on participant preference, 11 semi-structured narrative interviews and one small focus group were conducted. Two researchers utilized an interpretive phenomenological analysis to derive overarching themes relating to individuals' autistic burnout experiences. A second interview for member-checking was completed where participants reviewed the interpreted themes to ensure authenticity and accuracy to their experiences.

Three preliminary themes were identified surrounding streams of support, personal experiences, and control. We describe how the experiences of autistic individuals experiencing burnout show patterns of reduced capacity for occupational engagement specifically surrounding ADL/IADL, work/school, and social tasks as well as a reduced threshold for sensory information and/or social interaction. We explore how an autistic individual's level of control over their environment, occupations, and sensory information can cause or reduce their autistic burnout.



We discuss autistic individuals' perspectives of how they utilize the broader autistic community and their close network as a compensatory way to receive knowledge, support and regulation.

The transactional perspective is utilized to analyze how the context of autistic burnout is responded to by changes in an autistic individual's occupational experience and participation. This perspective allows us to better understand complexity of autistic burnout through the lens of the autistic community; how their individual experiences come together to shape an overall understanding of burnout, how they seek support, and how they experience and participate in occupations. With this information, occupational scientists can determine how we research topics surrounding occupations of autistic adults; and support and recognize individuals experiencing autistic burnout.

**Keywords:** autism, mental health, occupational experiences, sensory processing, transactional perspective

### **Discussion Questions**

Given the knowledge that many neurotypical people receive mental health benefits and feel calmer after spending time in nature (Lackey et al., 2021) and the fact that the autistic individuals in the study needed to control different components of their environment to feel relief during burnout, is it possible for individuals experiencing autistic burnout to find support in nature? Or are the unknown and uncontrollable factors of nature counterintuitive to supporting autistic burnout?

How can occupational scientists and therapists work with autistic communities to support recovery from autistic burnout?

What are the implications of autistic individuals primarily seeking autistic burnout knowledge and support from the online autistic community?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to define autistic burnout from the perspective of autistic individuals' experiences.

Upon completion, participants will be able to identify 2-3 ways that control plays a factor in burnout for autistic adults.

Upon completion, participants will be able to brainstorm 2-3 ways that the symptoms and factors of autistic burnout can impact occupational participation.

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**Funding:** n/a

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## **PROPOSING NESTING AS AN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE CONSTRUCT FROM PLACE-MAKING AND RESOURCE SEEKING**

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Marinthea Richter, University of Southern California

### **Abstract**

To propose an occupational science nesting model grounded in the perspectives of first-time expecting parents and professional experts through the constructs of place-making and resource seeking.

Resource seeking and place-making are occupational science constructs concerned with how people procure affordances and embed them into their everyday environmental contexts (Aldrich et al., 2017; Delaisse et al., 2021; Johansson et al., 2013). However, these concepts have not been studied within the perinatal period (from pregnancy through early postpartum). Nesting is a term that captures the physical (built and material), social, and emotional (apprehension, anticipation) preparations that expecting parents undertake to ready themselves and their family for the life changes that accompany the arrival of a new infant (Anderson & Rutherford, 2013; Shahvisi, 2020). In addition to the biological and cognitive changes during pregnancy for birthing and support parents, some of these nesting occupations align with resource seeking (e.g. making a baby registry) and place-making (e.g. designing a nursery). Therefore, a model is proposed that considers the three intertwined constructs of nesting, place-making, and resource seeking through the emic perspectives of professional experts and first-time expecting parents.

During the perinatal period, multiple factors (biological, psychological, social, political, spiritual, etc.) influence occupational engagement for birthing and support parents. However, the profession of occupational science has not systematically evaluated how these factors impact daily engagement for the entire family unit. The proposed model attempts to fill these gaps through considering how the interactions between the expecting couple and their environment are influenced by nesting, place-making, and resource seeking.

By combining data and literature, the proposed model will innovatively consider the intersection of the three occupational science constructs of nesting, place-making, and resource seeking during the perinatal period. This developmental stage is precariously marked by substantial changes across multiple domains of occupational performance. A strong case for future research will be made regarding how this model may be leveraged to benefit expecting couples.

Nesting is a term readily found in the lived world, especially on social media (Shahvisi, 2020); however, it is largely absent from academic literature despite the natural occurrence of this phenomenon. Moreover, preparing for the birth and care of a newborn is one of the most natural, embodied, and emplaced human experiences, which occurs through connections between the infant, parents, community, and environment.

**Keywords:** nesting, place-making, resource seeking, expecting parents, qualitative methodology

### **Discussion Questions**

What are the broader applications of this model for other life stages beyond pregnancy?

How might other occupational science constructs contribute to the development of this model?

In what ways has this model influenced the ways place-making and resource seeking may be conceptualized?

### **Learning Objectives**

Describe the proposed model of human nesting.

Differentiate between nesting, place-making, and resource seeking.

Discuss the the theoretical foundations of the proposed model.

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## **RACE, TYPE 1 DIABETES, AND MOTHERING: REFRAMING OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE RESEARCH THROUGH A RACE-CONSCIOUS PERSPECTIVE**

Jordan C. W. Major, University of Florida

Stefanie C. Bodison, University of Florida

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the application of Public Health Critical Race Praxis (PHCRP) as a critical framework for addressing racial and health inequities in occupational science research on mothering and Type 1 Diabetes (T1D). While occupational science has examined the complexities of mothering as an occupation, the field has largely failed to incorporate race-conscious methodologies that account for the structural determinants of health affecting Black birthing individuals and more specifically, those with T1D. The lack of race-disaggregated data in T1D maternal health research limits the development of meaningful, evidence-based interventions that reflect the lived experiences of Black birthing individuals.

This paper argues that occupational science must adopt Public Health Critical Race Praxis (PHCRP) to critically examine race, chronic illness, and systemic inequities in maternal health research. PHCRP offers an iterative, equity-driven framework that integrates theory, lived experience, scientific inquiry, and action to dismantle oppressive systems rather than reinforce them. Occupational science has largely dismissed the impact of racialized experiences of Black birthing individuals, particularly with Type 1 Diabetes, despite their disproportionate maternal health risks. By incorporating PHCRP, occupational science can critically analyze the systemic barriers that shape health outcomes, challenge dominant research paradigms, and contribute to transformative scholarship.

Integrating the Public Health Critical Race Praxis into occupational science research on mothering and chronic illness strengthens the field's commitment to equity and justice. This framework challenges race-neutral research designs, ensuring that studies reflect the nuanced experiences of Black birthing individuals with Type 1 Diabetes. A race-conscious occupational science approach can inform policy, education, and intervention development that better supports

marginalized communities while advancing the field's broader mission of understanding the complexities of human occupation.

This paper calls for a paradigm shift in occupational science research, urging scholars to apply PHCRP in maternal health studies to center race-conscious inquiry, challenge systemic barriers, and produce transformative knowledge. By prioritizing intersectionality, racial equity, and disability justice, occupational science can redefine how mothering and chronic illness are conceptualized and researched, ensuring that the field remains both scientifically rigorous and socially responsive.

Mothering is one of the most fundamental and natural human occupations, yet the ability to engage in it safely and equitably is shaped by sociopolitical, environmental, and structural forces. This paper aligns with the conference theme, "Occupation and Nature," by interrogating how systemic racism, healthcare inequities, and chronic illness, such as Type 1 Diabetes, disrupt what should be a natural, life-sustaining occupation.

**Keywords:** maternal health, Type 1 Diabetes, race-conscious research, mothering, public health critical race praxis

### **Discussion Questions**

How can occupational science expand its understanding of mothering as an occupation by incorporating race-conscious and disability-inclusive frameworks, such as Public Health Critical Race Praxis?

What role does occupational science play in addressing systemic barriers—such as racial disparities in healthcare access and chronic illness management—that shape maternal health outcomes for Black birthing individuals with Type 1 Diabetes?

How can occupational scientists actively challenge race-evasive research paradigms and ensure that methodologies, assessments, and interventions reflect the diverse lived experiences of marginalized birthing populations?

### **Learning Objectives**

List 3 ways Public Health Critical Race Praxis can be applied to maternal health research in occupational science to address racial and disability-related disparities in Type 1 Diabetes pregnancy outcomes.

Describe the impact of systemic racism, implicit bias, and race-evasive research paradigms on the occupational engagement and health experiences of Black birthing individuals with T1D.

Define key concepts related to Public Health Critical Race Praxis, occupational science, maternal health disparities, and Type 1 Diabetes to establish an understanding of their intersection in research and practice.

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## RESEARCH-IN-PROGRESS: DIMENSIONS OF EXPERIENCE IN REPAIR AS A COMMUNITY OCCUPATION

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## Abstract

This phenomenological study explores the lived experience of participating in Repair Café programs in southeastern New York communities. Repair Café is a manualized program aiming to reintroduce repair skills to everyday life. Approximately 4000 programs around the world successfully repair 190,000 items per year.

Participants include a purposive sample of adults encountered by the research team at Repair Café events during the 2024-25 academic year. The team (a primary investigator and three

graduate students) with permission— approached, informed, and interviewed consenting adults. Semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, anonymized, and analyzed. Analysis was conducted using manual methods and NVivo14 software.

Preliminary results include these emergent themes 1. Purpose and motivation (“I [am] just...trying to be responsible or economical... really trying to do the right thing and save the earth.”). 2. Accomplishment (“Getting the job done.” And “It’s very rewarding.”). 3. Opportunity within the Community (“...What I can fix, I do, and things that -- since this was being run today, I thought I’d come down and take advantage of this rather than having to do it myself.”) 4) Community Feeling (“One of the points of repair Cafe is a community feeling -- you get to know people, you get to see people, you get to meet people and talk to them.”) 5. Intergenerational Connections (actions and objects that communicate values —“My mom taught us to take care of our things.”).

Ecological destruction resulting from human activity is a problematic situation to which some communities respond with coordinated efforts including repair as occupation. Occupational scientists recognize the link between everyday occupations and the ecological health of the planet. Persson and Erlandsson (2013) promoted ecopositional actions undertaken on multiple social levels to increase wellbeing through sustainable actions. This research explores consequential questions about participation in ecological occupations in communities.

The Repair Café program may support wellbeing by allowing participants to embody their values (taking care of things, helping people) through community occupation, meeting present challenges, and contributing to a better ecological future. Perhaps the philosophical boundaries of the person-occupation-environment construct extend beyond the immediate time and place through concern for the future and collective ecopositional action impacting nature.

**Keywords:** community occupation, Repair Cafe, phenomenology

### **Discussion Questions**

How might the aesthetics of repair (the desire for an object to be ‘like new’ or an appreciation of obvious repair as an enhancement) be influenced to encourage repairing over replacing objects?

How might increased intergenerational participation in community programs affect the design, outcomes, and participants of the programs?

Anxiety about the health of the planet is on the rise. Could Repair Cafe programs play a role in decreasing ecoanxiety?

### **Learning Objectives**

Articulate the value of repair as a community occupation.

Discuss different repair aesthetics and their ecological implications.

Describe how the Repair Cafe contributes to the wellbeing of the community.

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## INFLUENCE OF AN INCLUSIVE, NATURE-BASED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM ON THE WELL-BEING OF NEURODIVERGENT INDIVIDUALS

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### Abstract

This study explores the impact of an inclusive, nature-based occupational therapy program on the perceived well-being of neurodivergent individuals. Addressing a gap in the literature, this research prioritizes the perspectives of neurodivergent participants, examining how specific environmental and sensory factors influence their experiences.

The study, guided by the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) model, used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative data, gathered through a Well-Being Scale and a Labeled Magnitude Scale (LMS) measuring sensory experiences, were followed by qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and observations.

The findings indicated that participant well-being was influenced by the interplay of work and social contexts, weather conditions, engagement in work-related tasks, and individual sensory experiences. Positive social interactions, opportunities for vocational skill development, and outdoor settings enhanced well-being, while sensory sensitivities and negative weather conditions diminished it. Participants also expressed a general sense of stress relief as a direct result of their time in the program. Occupational therapists contributed to the program by



emphasizing individualized supports, environmental modifications, and personal strategies to facilitate participation.

This program aligns with occupational science principles by promoting occupational participation, performance, and well-being through engagement in meaningful activities within a natural, supportive context. Findings highlight the importance of incorporating neurodivergent voices in research and program development. By providing equitable access to nature-based occupations that enhance well-being and quality of life, this study demonstrates the potential of inclusive, nature-based programs to foster occupational justice for neurodivergent individuals. The study reinforces the need for future research to explore the long-term effects of such programs and to identify key environmental components that can be adapted to create sensory-friendly and neurodiversity-affirming spaces.

This paper directly aligns with the SSO conference theme, “Occupations and Nature: Connections and Transactions,” by exploring the influence of inclusive, nature-based programs on the well-being of neurodivergent individuals. The study focuses on participation in outdoor and horticultural occupations that shape identity and social connections. It integrates social science perspectives, examining social interactions, community integration, and psychological factors such as stress and self-efficacy. By employing the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) model, the research emphasizes the transactions between environmental affordances, individual participation, and well-being in nature, guiding adaptations to enhance participation and overall well-being for neurodivergent individuals.

**Keywords:** neurodiversity, nature-based programs, inclusive programs, self-efficacy, well-being

### **Discussion Questions**

How can the concept of self-efficacy be fostered in inclusive occupational therapy programming to enhance the well-being and occupational possibilities of neurodivergent individuals?

In what ways do the sensory experiences within nature-based programs influence the well-being of neurodivergent individuals, and how can these insights inform the design of sensory-friendly environments?

How can the findings of this study be used to advocate for the development of more inclusive and accessible community programs?

### **Learning Objectives**

Participants will be able to identify key social and environmental factors that impact the perceived well-being of neurodivergent individuals in nature-based programs.

Participants will be able to discuss the importance of including neurodivergent voices in occupational therapy research and program development.

Participants will be able to describe the interrelationship between social contexts, individual sensory experiences, and perceived well-being.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2067218

## UNCOVERING THE NUANCE OF FAMILY OCCUPATION VIA A SYSTEMATIC MAPPING REVIEW

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## Abstract

Family occupation is a construct used and interpreted with great variability within occupational science (OS) and occupational therapy (OT) literature on family experiences and daily routines (DeGrace, 2004; Kantartzis, S., & Molineux, 2014; Segal, 1999). While it is arguably undesirable to attempt to ‘fit’ subjective experiences of family life into discrete categories or definitions, examining and understanding the use of the term family occupation within the OS and OT fields

may illuminate the nuanced meanings of family participation in activities that range from mundane to celebratory rituals. In addition, deeper understanding of how the term “family occupation” is used in OT and OS literature is needed to anchor future research on this complex construct. Thus, this study investigated the question: How is the term “family occupation” used in occupational therapy and occupational science?

We used systematic mapping review methodology (Roberts et al., 2015) to identify peer-reviewed OS and OT literature utilizing the term family occupation, to develop a data extraction tool, collect and analyse data from the final set of included articles. Articles were managed using the software Covidence.

85 articles were included in the final review. The term was most commonly found in articles describing family experiences of young children. Definitions and descriptions of family occupation rest on a variety of foundations which creates wide contrasts regarding the nature and situation of the described occupations. A great variation was observed regarding participants and their involvement, temporal aspects, purpose and outcomes. Activities associated with family occupations related to feeding and mealtime were particularly prominent.

Family occupation is a term interpreted and utilized with great variability. Our findings suggest the importance of considering the central axis, temporality, activity, participation and the issue of who's involved. This review was limited by the primarily Western/Global North perspective and themes such as individualism, the value of productivity and the gloriousness of occupation will be discussed. Family occupations move beyond shared occupations and into the realm of doing for another person, engaging in different activities within the same overall occupation, or even doing occupations that have been influenced by past generations. The OS and OT literature discussing family occupations mostly focused on family experiences with positive connotations with little to no reference of generational poverty, domestic violence, substance use, and other occupational experiences that may be taboo.

Family occupations are about, rooted in and constructed through connections and transactions, family occupations are human nature.

**Keywords:** family, construct, complexity, meaning

### **Discussion Questions**

What approaches could be used to study family occupation from global perspectives?

How can a construct fully embrace the breadth and complexity of family occupation?

How is it so difficult to discuss family occupations without praising them?

### **Learning Objectives**

Describe three area in which the construct of family occupation varies greatly within occupational science and occupational therapy.

Demonstrate the importance of considering the variability of the family occupation construct in occupational science by discussing three arguments.

List and discuss three issues relating to the influence of the Western/Global North perspective.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2069431

## **APPLYING SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM TO UNDERSTAND SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN OCCUPATION IN YOUNG ADULTS WITH T1D**

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Ngozi D. Nnoli, University of Southern California

Elizabeth Pyatak, University of Southern California

## **Abstract**

Young adults (YAs) with Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) represent a highly active group on social networking sites (SNS), using online platforms to gather information, connect with peers, and share personal experiences. Yet, the effects of SNS use on everyday life and health outcomes among young adults remain contested. Occupational scientists proposed a concept of occupational identity to link occupations and health conditions. This can provide a perspective that helps to untangle the interaction between online occupations and offline life. This theoretical paper applies symbolic interactionism to articulate social media use and occupational identity,

illuminating its impact on real-life self-management practices. It aims to guide future research on whether and how SNS can benefit YAs with T1D.

SNS occupations among young adults with T1D can be characterized as exposure to and creation of T1D-related content.

Meaningful and relevant online occupations foster a ‘digital occupational self’ by merging an extended offline identity with the “looking-glass” self that occurs in virtual contexts.

Collective meaning-making arises through presenting a T1D-specific ‘digital occupational self’ and (implicitly or explicitly) forming T1D-focused communities.

T1D-related occupations, including SNS occupations and real-life self-management, transaction the meaning of ‘digital occupational self’ to the construction of diabetes identity, a process of integrating diabetes into one’s identity, which in turn influences real-life practices.

By expanding the occupational lens to include the digital realm, this framework illustrates how SNS use can be a meaningful occupation for YAs with T1D. Inviting SNS use to an occupational identity dialogue provides a conceptual understanding of meaning-making and meaning-transaction within and outside the digital world.

The theoretical framework also informs occupational scientists to harness social media use as a meaningful occupation and promote effective health strategies for individuals with chronic conditions.

We highlight the importance of identity in understanding social media’s impact on health. By utilizing symbolic interactionism and occupational science literature, this argument presents how social media activities shape the digital self and identity through ongoing, meaningful interactions in everyday occupations. Future research will empirically validate the model using mixed methods.

**Keywords:** social media, digital self, symbolic interactionism, Type 1 Diabetes

### **Discussion Questions**

What are the potentials of occupational science in the context of online communities?

What OS theories are suitable for understanding identity formation across real-life and online contexts?

How do occupations in digital contexts differ from those in physical environments, and what implications does this have for occupational therapy interventions?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, the participants will be able to understand the current discussion about the effect of social media use in chronic conditions and young adults.

Upon completion, the participants will be able to illustrate the role of occupational identity in connecting digital occupational engagement with daily life.

Upon completion, the participants will be able to anticipate future OS research directions regarding life with digital technologies.

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**Submission ID:** 2063838

## CULTIVATING EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM: GROWTH IN THE FIELD

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## Abstract

Despite emphasis on natural settings for research, intervention, and ‘emerging practice’ partnerships in entry-level OT education, no formal prioritization of knowledge or experience engaging individuals, groups, or populations in natural settings exists. This presentation outlines the unique value of integrating nature-based learning experiences into curriculum and offers theoretical justification for this transformative potential.

The link between human health and the natural world is well-established, but leveraging this association is not routinely part of OT education, nor a foundation for designing health-promoting programs or interventions. While some nature-based therapeutic approaches, like horticultural therapy, use nature as a tool, the potential of nature as an immersive setting for learning and wellbeing is often missed (Firby & Raine, 2023). To strengthen the connection between nature and occupation-focused practice, it must become embedded in the content, setting, and learning experiences for students of occupation. This paper highlights three exemplar student service-learning projects who engaged in real “field” work with community organizations. These projects are evaluated via outcomes, feedback, and community impact. Just as unstructured outdoor play fosters creativity, problem-solving, and resilience in children (Spencer et al., 2021), learning in nature promotes critical thinking, adaptability, and real-world engagement for graduate students, enhancing their ability to implement meaningful, context-driven interventions. We outline key elements of this approach, advocating for a theory-grounded model of embodied learning in nature.

Learning in nature-based settings offers multidimensional benefits. Embodied experiences in the natural world help students develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and appreciation for co-constituted occupation (Coppola, 2013). Additionally, they grapple with how human health and wellbeing are deeply connected to the natural environment (WHO, 2025). The situated relationship of humans and their environments becomes part of the worldview and field of impact for students. This work is also impactful as it prepares practitioners and scholars who will perceive ways occupation affects the environment, influences health, and has a connection to sustaining ecosystems or threatens long-term wellbeing. Ultimately, embedding nature in occupational therapy education benefits students, clients, the profession, and communities alike by promoting holistic, sustainable, and ecologically responsible practices.

Integrating nature-based learning into occupational therapy education encourages embodied and authentic experiences, enabling students to develop a foundational understanding of participation, performance, and health, within a broader ecological framework. This organically enhances awareness of environmental influences on occupation, reinforcing the need for sustainable practices that support both human and planetary health.

Nature is intentionally positioned within participation-enabling curriculum, informed by OS theory.

**Keywords:** education, place-based learning, nature

### **Discussion Questions**

What are the valued student learning outcomes of including nature-based settings in experiential and service learning in the curriculum?

What is the valued community impact of collaborating with nature-based partners?

How does this advance a view of therapeutically using occupation in emerging practice?

## **Learning Objectives**

Identify the reciprocal relationship between human occupation and the environment, stating how ecological systems influence health and wellbeing.

Explore how nature-situated learning integrated into graduate student curriculum benefits not just the student, but populations and communities as well.

Promote strategies for sustainable and ecologically responsible practice into occupational therapy.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2066271

## **SENSORY HEALTH IN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH**

Antoine Bailliard, Duke University

MaryBeth Gallagher, Duke University

Emma Place, Duke University

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to explore the sensory health of adults with serious mental illness and its impact on their occupational participation.

We are performing 40 semi-structured interviews with 20 adults with serious mental illness to explore the relationship between their sensory health and occupational participation. Interviews



are supported with elicitation activities such as drawing about sensory experiences or discussing sensory experiences in relation to photos from the Activity Card Sort (Baum & Edwards, 2001). Participants are encouraged to select their preferred elicitation method. These elicitation techniques provide participants with tangible images to stimulate discussions about their sensory experiences in relation to their occupations. The photos or drawings are solely for elicitation purposes and will not be analyzed as data. We are also performing 2 focus groups with each of the following cohorts (total of 8 focus groups): (1) occupational therapists in community mental health, (2) caregivers of adults with serious mental illness, (3) providers of community mental health services, and (4) leaders of community mental health teams. Data analysis will use open and focused coding to explore the relationship between the sensory health of adults with serious mental illness living in the community and their occupational participation. To enhance rigor, each member of the research team will independently code data prior to meeting with the remaining of the research team to discuss analyses and achieve consensus regarding findings. The team will engage 3 rounds of this iterative analytic process.

We are currently in the data collection phase and will begin the analysis protocol soon.

Occupational scientists and therapists have historically been at the forefront of exploration and discovery regarding the relationship between sensory processing and occupational participation. Findings from this study will contribute to the development of a conceptual model on sensory health in occupational science. The purpose of the model is to describe the critical role of sensory health and embodied sensory experiences in occupational participation.

Expanding understandings of sensory health will also help occupational scientists consider the transactional connections that characterize occupations in nature. Findings from this study will help occupational scientists understand how sensory health affects whether a person experiences wellbeing during their occupations in nature.

**Keywords:** sensory health, mental illness, community participation

### **Discussion Questions**

Describe how the occupational participation of adults with SMI is affected by their sensory health.

Explain the conceptual model on sensory health.

Describe the relationship between sensory health, occupation, and wellbeing.

### **Learning Objectives**

Describe how the occupational participation of adults with SMI is affected by their sensory health.

Explain the conceptual model on sensory health.

Describe the relationship between sensory health and occupation.

## **References**

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**Submission ID:** 2069104

## **SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8: AFTERNOON SESSION**

### **LESSONS LEARNED FROM A NATIONAL STUDY OF THRESHOLD LEARNING IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY EDUCATION**

Jennifer S. Pitonyak, Pacific Northwest University

Sheama Krishnagiri, Private Practice

Pollie Price, University of Utah

Steven D. Taff, Washington University in St. Louis

William Roberts, University of Texas at El Paso

Joanna Behm, Messiah University

#### **Abstract**

This forum intends to engage participants in dialog about research approaches for examining learner outcomes of occupational therapy education, namely, knowledge of the professions' core construct of occupation. We aim to generate new ideas for methods best suited for capturing student learning about occupation and their application of this knowledge to the practice of occupational therapy.

Occupation is the threshold concept in occupational therapy curricula and learning threshold concepts is significant for transformative learning that can then be applied to practice (Fortune & Kennedy-Jones, 2014; Mezirow, 2000). Given there is no one 'signature pedagogy' guiding the instructional approach to teaching about occupation and assessing related learning outcomes, this presents challenges when designing occupational therapy education research studies. A decade ago, a team of occupational therapy education researchers conducted the first-ever national study of instructional methods used to teach occupation (Krishnagiri et al., 2019) building on Hooper's subject-centered, integrative learning model for occupational therapy curriculum design (Hooper et al., 2015). Our current team of researchers continued that work by conducting the first phase of a national study on student knowledge of occupation. To inform the design of this empirical study, we first completed a scoping review to ascertain what the occupational therapy/occupational science literature included about how student knowledge regarding occupation is taught and assessed (Taff et al., under review). Findings of our scoping review and early themes from qualitative analysis of data collected in the current study of what students understand about occupation, raise evocative questions about best approaches for occupational therapy education research. While qualitative methods are useful for elucidating patterns and generating themes, other approaches are needed to study questions such as how transformative learning about occupation occurs, and differences in learning outcomes when occupational science content is explicit in occupational therapy curricula.

Participants in this forum will be able to describe the methods used to conduct a national study of students' knowledge of occupation at degree completion and critically appraise those methods. Through the exchange of ideas, participants will identify research approaches that offer promise

for further study of threshold learning in occupational therapy education. At the end of this forum, participants will be able to consider new research methods for studying occupational therapy teaching and learning, with the potential to inform future study design.

**Keywords:** education research, subject-centered curricula, threshold learning, occupation

### **Discussion Questions**

What research approaches are best suited for examining student learning outcomes of occupation within occupational therapy education? What other methodological challenges need to be consider when conducting education research about occupational therapy curricula?

Can research effectively capture and describe complex, subjective constructs and processes such as occupation and transformative learning?

What opportunities exist for national data collection, such as incorporating assessments of student knowledge of occupation into the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) exam?

### **Learning Objectives**

Critically appraise the methods used to conduct a national study of students' knowledge of occupation.

Generate novel approaches for studying occupation in education.

Identify next steps of the research agenda for studying occupation in education.

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## **RELATIONALITY AS WELL-BEING: AN INDIGENOUS CRITIQUE OF INDIVIDUALISTIC OUTCOMES IN OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE**

Sarah Grinder, University of Southern Maine

### **Abstract**

This theoretical paper will introduce relationality as a concept for Indigenous well-being and contrast it with models of well-being in traditional occupational science discourse. Western perspectives on well-being skew disciplinary discourse toward individualism, and in the process, may be insufficient by themselves to frame the health needs of society at large. Discussions of human well-being could be augmented by incorporating relationality as a framework for occupational outcomes.

When the Creator made humans and presented them to the rest of creation, Salmon were the first to offer themselves as a gift of sustenance for them. In reciprocity, Native American tribes in the Northwest have continued to stand up for salmon and against factors that may lead to their extinction. In Western traditions, the occupations surrounding salmon fishing may be viewed as a transactional, embedded relationship between humans and their environment with the ultimate outcome of these transactions resulting in individual or group well-being.

This interpretation through the Western transactional model is largely missing the moral implications of Indigenous relationality expressed as respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. In Indigenous relationality, social participation is not a category of occupation nor are social relationships merely supports or barriers to occupational performance. Relationship is being. Relationship is doing. Relationship is becoming. This paper will suggest ways this orientation may shift occupational outcomes and perspectives in our discipline using stories from the presenter's tribal nation and interdisciplinary Indigenous research and theory.

Occupational scientists have long called for reconsidering individualistic framings of occupation. This paper posits that the outcomes of occupational engagement as currently conceptualized are one of the barriers to studying occupation outside of an individualistic lens. Indigenous relationality has a robust literature in other social sciences that ought to be considered in occupational science.

Occupational science inquiry may not fully realize an non-individualistic perspective on occupation until it interrogates its own frameworks and makes space for non-Western perspectives to inform the future of the science.

Relationality in many Indigenous contexts refers to the relationships between humans, non-human persons, and other relations in the natural and made world. This presentation will incorporate this relationship to land and nature as a part of the discussion, highlighting ways in which, even when Indigenous people align their work with health, ecological or sustainability initiatives, relationality provides a fundamentally different way of being well.

**Keywords:** well-being, relationality, Indigenous

### **Discussion Questions**

What is the potential of Indigenous relationality for understanding occupation?

When reality is viewed through Indigenous relationality, does occupation exist? If so, how is similar or different to other models?

What are ways that occupational science can make space for non-Western views of occupation and occupational outcomes?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to describe relationality as a framework for being well.

Upon completion, participants will be able to describe how well-being in a Western framework contributes to individualistic understandings of occupation.

Upon completion, participants will be able to describe how relationality may expand future theorizing about occupation.

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## **NATURE-BASED OCCUPATIONAL ENGAGEMENT: A MULTI-THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Hannah K. Burke, Developmental FX

Tracy M. Stackhouse, Developmental FX

### **Abstract**

We explore the relationship between nature-based occupational engagement and well-being, incorporating existing theories about human-nature interactions with the Polyvagal Theory (PVT) to consider nature's impact on development. We discuss the potential benefits of nature-based interventions in pediatric occupational therapy practice.

Nature-based occupational engagement is understood to have positive impacts across domains of health, supported by theories like the biophilia hypothesis and Attention Restoration Theory (ART). The biophilia hypothesis suggests that humans have an inherent affinity for nature (Wilson, 1984), while ART suggests engagement with natural environments reduces mental fatigue, supporting cognitive functioning (Kaplan, 1995). However, these theories do not explicitly address relational aspects of nature-based occupational engagement, which are integral to well-being.

PVT, which describes physiological states underlying human behavior, offers an additional lens for understanding nature's impact. Key components of PVT include hierarchical organization of the autonomic nervous system, neuroception (ability to detect safety/threat), and co-regulation (Porges, 1995). PVT proposes that humans detect safety/threat cues, produce a response based on autonomic nervous system activation/deactivation, and build resilience through co-regulation. When combined with the biophilia hypothesis and ART, PVT highlights nature's role as a co-regulator, promoting physiological states that support well-being. The inherently co-regulating features of nature suggest that, in pediatric occupational therapy, nature-based interventions may produce a greater impact on development, to which regulation is foundational. Therapists must therefore be in relationship with nature as a co-regulator and co-therapist to best support child development through occupational engagement.

A multi-theoretical approach is essential for understanding nature's impact on well-being. Integrating PVT with existing theories like biophilia and ART enriches professional reasoning about how nature-based occupational engagement contributes to regulation. When applied to pediatric occupational therapy, these theories suggest that to address regulation - and

development - comprehensively and effectively, nature-based occupational engagement should be considered in intervention.

PVT is complementary to the biophilia hypothesis and ART, and, when combined, these theories enhance our understanding of the impact of nature-based occupational engagement. This multi-theoretical perspective underscores nature's therapeutic potential in pediatric occupational therapy, highlighting its role as both a co-regulator and co-therapist to promote development and well-being.

In this paper we specifically focus on the impact of nature-based occupational engagement on human health, development, and well-being. We apply multiple theories to explore the relationship between human occupational engagement and nature as more than just a context, but a true co-regulator and co-therapist.

**Keywords:** nature-based occupational engagement, nature-based therapy, pediatric, occupational therapy

### **Discussion Questions**

Consider a nature-based occupation you engage in - what cues of safety or danger do you perceive in this context? How does engaging in this occupation impact your state regulation?

How does PVT inform your understanding of the role of nature in your life? What other theories might you draw from in your own practice or life to contribute to your understanding of the impact of nature-based occupational engagement?

How do the theories discussed contribute to your understanding of the different benefits from being in vs. doing with nature?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to identify existing theories used to understand the impact of spending time in and with nature on human health.

Upon completion, participants will be able to apply the Polyvagal Theory to nature-based occupational engagement to describe the role of nature as a co-regulator.

Upon completion, participants will be able to describe the role of nature as a co-therapist for supporting outcomes related to development in pediatric occupational therapy.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2064689

## **BRIDGING PAST AND PRESENT: OCCUPATIONAL INSIGHTS FROM GHANAIAN TRADITIONAL HEALERS**

Joana Nana Serwaa Akrofi, New York University

Janet Njelesani, New York University

### **Abstract**

Occupational therapy has traditionally emphasized individual-centered interventions, often overlooking the ecological dimensions of occupation embedded in non-Western worldviews (Akrofi, 2025; Iwama, 2006). From an Afrocentric perspective, occupation is inseparable from the land, ancestral knowledge, and spiritual balance, making the natural environment an active agent in health and well-being (Asante, 1987). This study explores how traditional healing practices in Ghana integrate ecological principles into occupational engagement and rehabilitation, offering new insights for occupational science (Appiah-Kubi, 1993; Kwame, 2021).

This participatory study is part of a larger project exploring Afrocentric occupational therapy and indigenous healing practices. This dataset focuses on nature-based healing as an occupation and its role in rehabilitation. Using one-on-one conversations with traditional healers and talking circles with persons with disabilities, the study explores the connection between land, spirituality, and daily activities in Ghanaian healing traditions. Guided by an Ubuntu methodological approach, the study highlights how communities share knowledge and use nature as a partner in healing and meaningful activities.

This study aims to contribute to a more ecologically grounded understanding of occupational science by exploring the deep connection between occupation and the natural environment. We anticipate that traditional healing practices in Ghana will reveal an interdependence between humans and nature, where the environment is not just a setting but an active participant in the healing process. Through spiritual and ecological rehabilitation, we expect to see how healing

occupations such as herbal medicine preparation, water rituals, and land-based ceremonies incorporate nature as a vital force in restoring well-being. This research aims to illuminate how these practices can inform a more holistic and culturally relevant approach to occupational therapy.

This research supports the decolonization of occupational science by centering African knowledge systems that challenge Western frameworks, which often separate occupation from its ecological and spiritual dimensions. By advocating for nature-integrated interventions in occupational therapy, this study encourages more culturally relevant and holistic approaches to rehabilitation.

This study directly aligns with the theme by exploring how traditional healing in Ghana integrates nature into occupational engagement and rehabilitation. It highlights occupation as an ecological transaction, where nature is not merely a setting for activity but an active participant in healing and well-being.

**Keywords:** indigenous knowledge systems, Afrocentricity, traditional healing, occupation

### **Discussion Questions**

How can occupational science integrate the concept of nature as an active participant in occupation, rather than just a setting for human activity?

What are the challenges and opportunities in incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Systems into mainstream occupational therapy education, research, and practice?

How does an Afrocentric perspective expand our understanding of occupation beyond Western individual-centered models to include ecological and spiritual dimensions?

### **Learning Objectives**

Explain how Indigenous Knowledge Systems contribute to a more holistic understanding of rehabilitation in occupational science.

Analyze the ways in which nature functions as an active participant in occupational engagement and well-being.

Discuss strategies for integrating nature-based, culturally relevant interventions into occupational science and occupational therapy practice.

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## **CONSUME, INHABIT, INHERIT: TRANSACTIONS WITH “NATURE” IN NATURE-BASED THERAPY DISCOURSE**

Denise M. Nepveux, Duke University

### **Abstract**

Nature-based occupational therapy practices have gained traction over the past two decades, supported by alternative healthcare trends and parallel developments in fields such as eco-psychology. Nature-based OT does not always signal a fundamental shift away from the medical model, however. This exploratory theoretical paper seeks to uncover assumptions embedded in nature-based occupational therapy literature and practice concerning the nature of “nature,” its relationship to humans as individuals and communities, and the relevance of socioeconomic contexts and cultural locations of our field and clients in shaping these meanings.

This paper examines how transactions between humans and nature are portrayed in contemporary nature-based OT practice and literature. It discusses how assumptions and associations embedded in middle class values and traditions have shaped nature-based therapy, particularly as practiced in the US, into a field rich in cultural resonance for many clients, but that risks limited relevance to communities with inequitable access to natural environments (Ung et al, 2020; Bonham-Corcoran et al, 2022). Further, it argues that nature based therapies risk perpetuating individualistic, one-way relationships between humans and nature rather than promoting mutual, restorative and community-centered relationships with the natural environment (Bonham-Corcoran et al, 2022; Simo Algado & Townsend, 2015) that are needed in the context of the climate crisis.

This paper explores possible roles for occupational science in supporting expansion of nature-based occupational therapy theory and practice. Researchers and practitioners of diverse

communities have vital perspectives to inform this discussion. Respectful, culturally humble and community-engaged occupational science research may offer insights on how communities reclaim and restore ties of mutuality with the earth.

This project is the first step in a larger project of researching several small-scale, grassroots projects by indigenous and African American communities in North Carolina and Ghana, West Africa. The goal is to understand community-grounded reclamations of natural places and practices, especially how communities are reclaiming nature as heritage and reframing their connection to nature and place through occupation.

This paper seeks to explicate multiple meanings of “nature” and its connection to human individuals and communities. It explores how meanings are embedded in historically-situated assumptions with implications for both occupational therapy practice and occupational science research. It considers the risks of perpetuating assumptions that nature exists for human dominance or consumption, or that nature is an unlimited resource, not in need of human protection.

**Keywords:** transaction, nature-based, community, consumerism, individualism

### **Discussion Questions**

How do you conceptualize your relationship with nature? How is this reflected in your daily occupational transactions with nature?

How can occupational science support and inform nature-based occupational therapy practice?

How may occupational therapy practice look different if nature is viewed, for example, through a lens (or concept) of inheritance rather than consumption?

### **Learning Objectives**

Identify three assumptions commonly embedded in occupational therapy literature about the relationship between human beings and the natural environment.

Discuss the cultural and historically-driven nature of assumptions about the human/natural environment relationships.

Locate assumptions embedded in brief samples of text about nature-based occupational therapy practices.

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## **ADAPTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE ENGAGEMENT IN MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES SURVEY IN BAHASA INDONESIA**

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Andrew Persch, Colorado State University

Bryan Dik, Colorado State University

Aaron Eakman, Colorado State University

### **Abstract**

We sought to validate the Engagement in Meaningful Activities Survey (EMAS) in an Indonesian context. Such work will help to clarify mechanisms linking engagement in meaningful activities to well-being.

We first followed best practice in the translation and cultural adaptation of the EMAS into Bahasa Indonesia (EMAS-BI). Then a validation study involved 1915 college students from three Indonesian universities who completed the EMAS-BI, and well-validated Indonesian versions of the World Health Organization Quality of Life - Brief Version (WHOQOL-BREF), the Flourishing Scale (FS), and the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II). The response rate was 65.5%. A two-week retest of the EMAS-BI was conducted in Central Java. All participants provided informed consent.

The adaptation process resolved translation discrepancies by adding self-referential statements to some EMAS-BI items. For example, “The activities I do (enable me to) help other people.” The EMAS-BI demonstrated a three-factor structure including a Personal Needs Component (PNC), a Personal Competence Component (PCC), and a Social Competence Component (SCC).

Confirmatory factor analysis substantiated this structure, e.g., RMSEA = .064, 90% CI [.055 - .075]. The EMAS-BI demonstrated moderate test-retest reliability (ICC = .66, p .85). Zero-order correlations indicated meaningful activities positively correlated with life quality and flourishing and negatively with depression.

This study advances understanding of meaningful activity in an Indonesian context, reinforcing the mutually influencing roles of activity (occupational) engagement, quality of life, and well-being. Meaningful activity enriches participation and optimizes human performance (Christiansen & Townsend, 2010). The novel 3-factor structure found in this study implicates experiences of agency, mastery, purpose, social connectedness, pleasure and satisfaction as central to meaning in occupation (Eakman, 2013; Goldberg et al., 2002), aligning with the altruistic goals of occupational science and therapy.

This study does not directly address the conference theme. Rather, it offers evidence in favor of the notion that meaningful activity engagement may influence quality of life and well-being in an Indonesian context. This research offers Indonesian healthcare providers a valid, culturally sensitive assessment to develop and test effective occupation-based interventions.

**Keywords:** meaningful activities, translation and adaptation, measurement properties, factor analysis, convergent validity

### **Discussion Questions**

Why does engagement in meaningful activity matter?

To what extent does measuring engagement in meaningful activities matter?

Why do we need to quantify the level of engagement in meaningful activities?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to explore the importance of meaningful activities for health and well-being.

Upon completion, participants will be able to identify why measuring engagement in meaningful activities is important.

Upon completion, participants will be able to list possible ways to measure the engagement in meaningful activities.

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**Submission ID:** 2050377

## **NATURE-BASED OCCUPATIONS AS CATALYSTS FOR WELL-BEING: EXPLORING THE TRANSACTIONS AMONG YOUTH, ENVIRONMENT, AND PARTICIPATION**

MaryBeth Gallagher, Duke University

Alexa Adamo Valverde, Center for Community Connection

Alice Geis, Rush University College of Nursing

Darren Peters, Center for Community Connection (C4CC)

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the role of nature-based occupations as mechanisms for fostering well-being and social participation among youth, particularly those experiencing systemic barriers to engagement. Drawing on an occupational science framework, we analyze the dynamic transactions between young people, the natural environment, and meaningful participation,

underscoring how engagement in nature-based occupations (e.g., horticulture, animal care, ecotherapy) can enhance resilience, identity formation, and social inclusion.

Occupational science has long examined the transaction between occupation, context, and participation. However, limited research has specifically addressed the distinct ways in which nature-based occupations shape the occupational identities of youth, particularly those from underserved communities. This paper argues that nature-based occupations:

- Provide sensory-rich experiences that support self-regulation and emotional well-being.
- Facilitate social connection through shared activities, reducing isolation.
- Structure daily routines that cultivate a sense of responsibility and agency.
- Offer opportunities for mastery, fostering a sense of accomplishment and personal efficacy.
- Challenge the dominance of biomedical models of care by emphasizing participation, community, and environment over pathology.

Advancing a transactional perspective on youth engagement in nature underscores the importance of ecological and community-driven approaches within occupational science. Framing these discussions within occupational justice highlights how disparities in access to natural spaces reflect broader inequities in occupational engagement and health outcomes, emphasizing the need for inclusive, contextually embedded interventions that promote well-being and participation.

Nature-based occupations present a powerful yet underutilized means of supporting youth well-being, particularly for those facing occupational deprivation due to socioeconomic, racial, or mental health barriers. Occupational scientists and practitioners must advocate for integrated, ecologically embedded interventions that prioritize participation as a pathway to health.

This paper aligns with the conference theme, “Occupations and Nature: Connections and Transactions,” by examining how nature-based contexts influence occupational engagement and how human occupation, in turn, impacts ecosystems and natural spaces. The farm-based, nature-oriented programs discussed in this paper exemplify innovative approaches to community-based occupational therapy and interdisciplinary collaboration in mental health support.

**Keywords:** nature-based occupation, occupational justice, mental health and wellbeing, youth participation, ecotherapy

### **Discussion Questions**

How do nature-based occupations influence identity formation and social participation among youth?

How can occupational science further integrate ecological perspectives into models of occupational engagement?



In what ways can knowledge of occupation in nature disrupt the dominance of biomedical discourses on health and well-being?

### **Learning Objectives**

Identify how nature-based occupations (e.g., horticulture, animal care, ecotherapy) support youth well-being, social participation, and identity formation, particularly for those experiencing systemic barriers.

Analyze the dynamic interactions between youth, natural environments, and meaningful participation, recognizing how these occupations contribute to resilience, self-regulation, and social connection.

Evaluate the implications of nature-based occupations within an occupational justice framework and explore strategies for integrating community and nature-based interventions to promote equitable access and participation.

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# THE MEANING OF ANCESTRAL GRAINS CULTIVATION TO YOUNGER GENERATIONS IN JAPAN

Saori Ogura, Tohoku University

## Abstract

Small grains, such as millet and sorghum, have been cultivated in different parts of the world for thousands of years and contributed to the survival of humanity. They have high nutritional values, are adaptive to climate change, and play a key role in food security and agricultural resilience in this time of uncertainty. However, such cultivation practices, which are traditional occupations, are falling under neglect due to not being adapted to high-input agricultural production systems, and marked shifts in generational commitment to small grains cultivation and changing relationships with the land. This results in the loss of seed and agricultural diversity and traditional knowledge of the traditional occupation often based on reciprocal relationships with non-human beings. In order to maintain the seeds and the practice, it is critical to understand the motivations of younger generations who chose to engage in small grains cultivation.

Using ethnography with an occupational perspective, this case study explored the meaning of small grains and their cultivation to younger generations in three communities in Japan: Karumai Town and Towa Town in Iwate Prefecture, as well as Shiiba Village in Miyazaki Prefecture. A total of 10 community members completed recorded semi-structured interviews. Videography was also used to record and analyze the interviews.

19 meanings, across the 10 participants, were identified and clustered under six meaning clusters: such as Health and well-being; and Reciprocity, harmony, and appreciation for the environment. We found that younger generations who have typically migrated from cities are finding richness and enjoyment in the cultivation practices, especially their engagement with plants and the land, despite the laborious physical activities. They are also re-casting the popular negative perception of poverty and labour intensiveness that many older generations hold.

Occupational perspective plays an important role in advancing our understanding of meaning around traditional occupations, and particularly the relationship of the human experience to the natural environment, insights that are typically neglected in the modern societies of the 21st century. This study provides insights into maintaining a traditional occupation that are both critical for human survival in a time of climate emergency and provides meaningful relationships to more-than-human world.

This research found that younger generations who engage in traditional occupation of small grains cultivation in Japan are finding meaning in their relationships to the plants and the land.

**Keywords:** traditional occupation, millet, farming

## **Discussion Questions**

What is the strength of occupational perspective in understanding human-nature interactions?

How can the field of occupational science further contribute to understanding the intersections of human and ecosystem well-being?

When studying a traditional occupation, such as traditional farming practices, what aspects and understanding can the field of occupational science offer that other disciplines, such as anthropology, would not?

## **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participant will be able to describe the strengths of the field of occupational science in studying human-nature relationships.

Upon completion, participant will be able to describe the strengths of the field of occupational science in studying the meaning of traditional occupations that have deep engagement with the land.

Upon completion, participant will be able to conduct fieldwork with ethics and relationality with human and non-human beings.

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**Submission ID:** 2067192

## **OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY (RE)CONSTRUCTION IN THE WAKE OF CHRONIC DISABILITY: THE ROLE OF ONLINE COMMUNITIES**

Jessica M. Cogger, University of Southern California

Amber Angell, University of Southern California

## **Abstract**

Although occupational science has explored how occupational identity often changes at the onset of disability or during the diagnostic process, less attention has been paid to the complex ways that online communities shape the ongoing development of disability-related identities,

especially complex and heterogeneous disabilities such as postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (PoTS), a chronic form of dysautonomia affecting multiple function domains, that is increasingly identified in autistic women. Existing research has not recognized the cyclical nature of disability identity development for individuals with PoTS, which is impacted by long and arduous diagnostic processes and poor healthcare provider education about symptoms. Therefore, drawing upon Lave and Wenger's (2001) notion of 'situated learning in communities of practice (CoP),' the purpose of this theoretical analysis was to explore the role of various online communities in the process of identity (re)construction and (re)configuration for autistic women with PoTS by facilitating occupational adaptation.

First, I will argue that there is a need for occupational science to explore more deeply the role of situated learning in online CoP in the ongoing processes of shaping disability and occupational identities, particularly in the case of chronic disabilities like PoTS. This may require novel research methodologies to capture the intricacies of participation across multiple platforms and sites.

Second, I will argue that the identity processes for individuals with PoTS are cyclical and iterative. Standard identity development is a lifelong process; however, those facing involuntary shifts through repeated occupational disruptions experience divergent (re)conceptualization and (re)configuration.

Lastly, I (first author) will draw on my experience as an autistic person with PoTS to illustrate my arguments. Exploring and defining the roles of online communities can enhance the understanding of disability-related identity changes and occupational adaptations experienced by chronically disabled individuals through an occupational lens.

This presentation aims to expand existing theoretical scholarship on occupational identity by applying situated learning theory to online CoP, arguing for a cyclical and iterative understanding to better capture the experience of individuals with complex and heterogeneous disabilities like PoTS, including identity (re)construction and (re)configuration.

In this theoretical paper, we have argued for more complex and cyclical understandings of occupational identity development, particularly in the context of people with chronic disabilities like PoTS. In doing so, we seek to understand how certain online environments promote meaningful engagement for disabled individuals.

**Keywords:** identity, occupations, situated learning, communities of practice, disability

### **Discussion Questions**

How does occupational science conceptualize identity and occupational identity development for chronically ill or disabled individuals, and have your perspectives on this topic changed since the presentation?

How can occupational scientists and their research on this topic inform and connect knowledge in other fields and healthcare?

How can we improve the well-being of chronically ill and disabled individuals who have similar experiences, and how can we effectively disseminate this information to reach and engage this population?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participant will have a deeper understanding of how online communities may influence the formation and evolution of disability-related identities, specifically for people with chronic conditions like PoTS.

Upon completion, participant will be able to consider the health outcomes related to continued and related identity and occupational identity disruptions for chronically ill and disabled individuals.

Upon completion, participant will be able to think of and incorporate inclusive novel research methodologies that reflect the complexities of identity development in online settings.

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<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnint.2021.787037>

**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2070297

# **ROOTED IN SONG: AN ETHNOGRAPHY ON THE USE OF MUSIC WHILE SHARECROPPING**

Jian Jones, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

## **Abstract**

This study examined the interplay of music, land, and labor in sharecropping through an ethnographic lens. Utilizing the Sankofa concept, the study explored how song and sound structured agricultural work, provided emotional relief, and fostered spiritual connections to the land. By engaging participants in embodied musical experiences, the research highlights music's role in shaping the occupational experiences of a sharecropping family.

Rooted in Song engaged a family of six from a rural town in Georgia, whom participated in sharecropping alongside their now-deceased parents. Their lived experiences offer valuable insights into the intersection of labor, music, and cultural memory. Data collection involved recorded narrative interviews, capturing firsthand accounts of how music functioned within their occupational experiences, providing a nuanced perspective on the interplay between music, labor, and resilience. Employing a narrative inquiry approach within an ethnographic framework, thematic coding was utilized to identify key themes such as rhythm regulation, emotional coping, and communal bonding. Triangulation with historical artifacts, archival materials, and secondary literature further contextualized these narratives within broader historical and sociocultural discourses.

Findings revealed that humming, hymnal singing, call and response, and listening to music through the radio were integral to the participants' ability to pass time, cope with the arduous conditions of sharecropping, and make tending land that was not their own more manageable. These musical practices not only functioned as mechanisms for emotional and physical endurance but also cultivated an intimate connection to the land. The use of various musical mediums allowed participants to foster a sense of agency and collective resilience, reinforcing the role of sound and song as both a survival strategy and a means of reinforcing cultural identity within oppressive labor systems.

This study highlights how music served as an adaptive occupational tool, demonstrating how cultural and environmental factors shape engagement in work. The findings reinforce the significance of sensory and rhythmic elements in sustaining endurance and well-being. Additionally, reclaiming historical occupational narratives informs contemporary perspectives on resilience, work, and cultural identity, emphasizing the transformative role of music in occupational science.

This session highlights the reciprocal relationship between nature and human occupation. Sharecroppers engaged with the land not only through physical labor but through the cultural practice of music, transforming their work into an embodied, mindful experience. By exploring the sensory and emotional dimensions of work-song traditions, this session underscores the ways

in which occupation and nature intertwine to shape human experiences, resilience, and well-being.

**Keywords:** sharecropping, music, work-song, cultural memory, Sankofa

### **Discussion Questions**

In what ways can occupational engagement with nature be enhanced through sound and rhythm?

How did music influence the experience of labor in sharecropping communities?

How does reclaiming historical occupational narratives contribute to present-day understandings of work, resilience, and healing?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion, participants will be able to analyze the role of music as an occupational strategy for endurance and resilience in historical labor contexts.

Upon completion, participants will understand the application of the Sankofa concept to explore and reconstruct historical occupational narratives.

Upon completion, participants will be able to evaluate the impact of sound and rhythm in facilitating occupational engagement in nature-based labor settings.

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**Funding:** n/a

**Submission ID:** 2070654

# **DEVELOPING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PUBLIC HEALTH AND INTEGRAL ECOLOGY TRAVEL COURSE: REFLECTIONS THROUGH AN OCCUPATIONAL LENS**

Jennifer K. Whittaker, The University of Scranton

## **Abstract**

To share reflections on developing an interdisciplinary travel course on public health, occupation, and integral ecology in Uganda. I recognize my position as a White Catholic professor of occupational therapy who was educated in the Global North, and I seek dialogue addressing tensions related to power dynamics, colonialism, and ethical concerns related to temporary travel courses.

In January 2025, I was invited to travel to Uganda with theology faculty and students for a course focused on Christianity's role in Ugandan culture, especially related to education, justice, health, and nature -- concepts bound together through integral ecology and enacted through occupation. In his 2015 encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*: On Care of Our Common Home, Pope Francis popularized the term integral ecology, the understanding that nature, society, and justice are inextricably linked. He urged Catholics to see care of the Earth and for people as an essential expression of faith.

I will offer reflections on the development of an interdisciplinary public health course that grew from that first visit and is intended to run in tandem with the theology course. I will begin with a quick orientation to Ugandan public health needs related to alienation from the natural environment because of ecological degradation (Kotongole, 2022) and displacement due to conservation efforts (Kokunda et al., 2023). Next, I will draw parallels and discuss tensions between integral ecology and occupational science concepts including transactionalism, communal belonging and occupation, and occupational consciousness (Ramugondo, 2024).

I will discuss the process of collaboration and teaching/learning with Ugandan community leaders, health care workers, and Indigenous healers. I will discuss challenges and successes of centering Ugandan, Indigenous, African, and Global South knowledge on occupation, disability, belonging, and health (Mbazzi, 2024; Ramugondo, 2024). I am aware of my position as a White Catholic academic and wish to address the power dynamics present when seeking relational co-learning and accompaniment rather than extractive knowledge experiences.

Understanding relationships and tensions between integral ecology and occupational science concepts may provide a shared language for supporting occupation in communities experiencing ecological alienation.

I invite dialogue to continue my reflection and support the development of a culturally respectful public health travel course to Uganda that advances the study of occupation and integral ecology through relational learning.



This paper will discuss a course designed to explicitly draw connections between the health of the Earth, the health of communities, and the ability to engage in meaningful occupation, framing each as equally important and interconnected.

**Keywords:** integral ecology, travel course, Uganda, relational learning

### **Discussion Questions**

How do we reckon with the marginalization of Global South perspectives on occupation, health, and disability in Global North classrooms, especially those in historically White campuses?

What are the ethics of temporary, travel experiences and extractive models of immersive learning versus relational co-learning (action versus presence and accompaniment)?

How do we bring occupational science texts into occupational therapy and other disciplines' classrooms such as public health to support interdisciplinary knowledge sharing and professional practice?

### **Learning Objectives**

Define integral ecology and identify connections to relevant occupational science concepts.

Identify strategies for using occupational science concepts in non-occupational science or occupational therapy courses.

Reflect on ethics related to temporary travel courses to Global South countries.

### **References**

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**Submission ID:** 2065359

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## 2025 CONFERENCE SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

\*SSO Traditions/Rituals are marked with an \*

NOTE: Primary presenters are listed here, all contributing authors will appear in the proceedings

	<b><u>Society for the Study of Occupation: USA</u></b> <b><u>2025 Annual Research Conference</u></b> <b>Occupations and Nature: Connections and Transactions</b>	
	<b><u>Pre-Conference</u></b> Location: Moody Gardens, Galveston TX Thursday Events all occur in Salon E	
	<b>Thursday, November 6, 2025 [Salon E]</b>	
9:00am - 11:30am	<b><u>Pre-Conference Education Session</u></b> <b>Connecting around Occupational Science Education: A conversation for all</b> Presented by the inaugural SSO:USA Education Committee, Jenny Womack, Chair	
11:30pm - 1:00pm	<b>Catered Lunch for All-day Registrants</b>	
1:00pm - 5:00pm	<b><u>Pre-Conference Research Institute:</u></b> <b>Water: Muddying Doing, Knowing, and Being</b> Irene J. Klaver, PhD Professor, Department of Philosophy & Religion, University of North Texas	
5:00pm - 7:30pm	<b>Dinner On Your Own &amp; Occupational Balance Break*</b>	
7:30pm - 9:30pm	<b>Welcome Ceremony* (Cash Bar) &amp; Poster Sessions [Moody 1]</b>	
7:30pm - 8:00pm	<b>Land Acknowledgement*</b> <b>Welcome and Opening Remarks – Kendra Heatwole Shank</b> <b>SSO:USA Society Traditions – Pollie Price &amp; John White</b>	
	Yousef Babish	Mapping Social Transformation Through Occupation: A Global Initiative for Equity and Justice
	Ashlea Cardin	Grandmother's Flower Garden: Using a Quilt Block Aesthetic to Teach Knowledge Organization and

	Professional Reasoning
Sapna Chakraborty	Exploring stress, occupational balance, coping, and well-being in graduate students
Kimberly Hreha	Impact of Spatial Neglect on Participation in Occupations in Nature
Heather Locasha	The Temporal Context and How it Influences the Occupation of Weight Management
Riley Marsh	Analysis of Mental Health Journey Maps to Identify Common Gaps in Care
Abigail McAllister	Exploring The Elements, Impacts, and Determinants of Unstructured Outdoor Play in Children: A Literature Review
Jennn Mei Koo	Occupational Injustice in the Wake of Climate Crisis: Addressing Occupational Barriers to Support Climate Refugees
Tom Merner	Understanding Accreditation Requirement Trends of Teaching Occupation in Occupational Therapy Curricula
Jennifer Pitonyak	Routines matter: Men's experiences of substance use disorder treatment in a residential behavioral health facility
Carrie Smith-Bell	Applying the Model for the Process for Establishing Children's Occupations to Handwriting Among Homeschool Families

**\*SSO:USA Traditions & Rituals**

**Welcoming Ceremony, Land Acknowledgement, Recognition of attendees, Conference format**

**Occupational Balance Breaks**

**Celebration of Accomplishments**

**Talent Share & Sing-along**

## Main Conference: November 7-8, 2025

Location: Moody Gardens, Galveston TX

Note: Presenters are on this schedule. All authors will be included in the Proceedings.

**FRIDAY NOV. 7, 2025**

**7:00am - 8:30am**

**Breakfast and Networking**

**7:30am - 8:15am**

Ritual of Remembrance – Sue Johnson, NIA Center  
Conference Orientation & Announcements – Cynthia Evetts

**8:15am - 9:15am**

**ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING** – Kendra Heatwole Shank

**9:30am - 10:30am**

**Theme Speaker [Moody 1]**  
**Wild and Well: Nature's Effect on You**  
Rebecca Bracken, PhD, Conservation Research Director, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

Time	Salon E	Salon F	Salon G	Salon H
<b>10:45am - 11:15am</b>	Katherine Toon  Habit Stacking in Nature: Applying Mental Wellness to Self	Yiyang Fang  Exploring Occupational Adaptation in Response to the Evolving Nature of Work in the Digital Age		Sarah Grinder  #Landback: Contrasting Native American and Settler Colonial Perspectives of Time and Place
<b>11:25am - 11:55am</b>		Rebecca Aldrich  Understanding how nature manifests in North American retired and precarious workers' experiences of third places	Camille Parchment  Problematizing 'autonomy' in U.S. mental healthcare and legal systems: An occupational science perspective	Karen Sames  Why We Should Care About Occupations Impacted by Warmer Winters

**12:00am - 2:00pm**

**Lunch On-Your-Own\* & Occupational Balance Break**

- Beach clean-up
- On-site outdoor birding

FRIDAY	Salon E	Salon F	Salon G	Salon H
2:00pm - 2:30pm	Kristine Haertl  Occupational Questions for Occupational Science: An Interactive Forum	Glen Cotton  Perspectives of People Affected by Parkinson's Disease Who Are Participating in a Program Incorporating Horses	Aaron Bonsall  “The Ocean Doesn’t Care:” Connections and Transcendence within Spiritual Experiences of Adaptive Surfers	Yousef Babish  Piloting PARQ: Towards a Culturally Responsive, Intersectional Understanding of Privilege in Occupational Science
2:40pm - 3:10pm			Tessa Boston  A Walk in the Park: Applying Appreciative Inquiry Methodology in Occupational Science	Kyle Karen  Is that a thing? The thing-power of natural and manmade objects
3:20pm - 3:50pm		Elizabeth Larson  Inviting middle-school students to design their outdoor spaces: Comparing & contrasting COVID-19 & post-COVID cohorts	Kathleen Lockyer  Ecoception and the NatureLed Approach: Reclaiming Nature Connection as a Foundational Human Occupation	
4:00pm - 5:30pm	<b>Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science* [Salon E]</b> <b>“Let’s Take a Moment: Temporality and Significant Experiences”</b> Mary C. Lawlor, ScD, Med, OTR/L, FAOTA			
5:30pm - 6:00pm	<b>Break</b>			
6:00pm - 6:30pm	<b>2025 Ruth Zemke Lecturer Reception [Foyer]</b> <b>Cash Bar</b>			
6:30pm - 8:30pm	<b>RZLOS Celebration Dinner* honoring Dr. Elizabeth Yerxa [Moody 1]</b> Silent Auction Benefitting Student Scholarships & Research Grants; Celebration of Accomplishments*			
8:30pm - 10:30pm	<b>Talent Share* – John White &amp; Karen McCarthy</b> Make a joyful noise, move like you mean it, share, watch, listen and learn.			
LATE NIGHT	<b>Occupational Balance Break</b> • Star Gazing on the Patio • Night cap on the top floor at Shearn’s, or at the pool			



	SATURDAY NOV. 8, 2025			
7:30 – 9:00am	Continental Breakfast and Networking			
8:00am - 9:00am	Member Networking – Karen McCarthy, Membership Committee [Moody 1]			
Time	Salon E	Salon F	Salon G	Salon H
9:10am - 9:40am	Svitlana Stremousova  Resource Seeking: The Development of an Occupational Science Construct	Lesley Garcia  Tacit clinical reasoning in dementia practice: A qualitative study including the Black Caribbean British experience	Denise Nepveux  Faculty Views on Integrating Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability into OT Curricula: A National Survey	Elinor Taylor  Switch to survive: Exploring autistic people’s intersectional experiences of masking and code-switching
9:45am - 10:15am		Daisy Alvarado  Occupation across fronteras: A single case study of occupational opportunities from international border crossings	Nancy Bagatell  The Ethnographic Study of Space: Lessons in Occupation and Access	Olivia Henrion  Autistic Burnout: Experiences and Occupations of Autistic Adults
10:20am - 10:50am	Bethany Gruskin  Proposing Nesting as an Occupational Science Construct from Place-making and Resource Seeking	Jordan Major  Race, Type 1 Diabetes, and Mothering: Reframing Occupational Science Research Through a Race-Conscious Perspective	Kyle Karen  Research-in-progress: Dimensions of experience in repair as a community occupation	Lauren Villa  Influence of an Inclusive, Nature-Based Occupational Therapy Program on the Well-Being of Neurodivergent Individuals
11:00am - 11:30am	Jennifer Pitonyak  Uncovering the nuance of family occupation via a systematic mapping review	Yujia Mo  Applying Symbolic Interactionism to Understand Social Media as an Occupation in Young Adults with T1D	Allysin Bridges-German  Cultivating embodied knowledge outside the classroom: Growth in the field	MaryBeth Gallagher  Sensory health in community mental health

<b>11:30am - 1:30pm</b>	<b>Lunch on your own &amp; Occupational Balance Break</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student Gathering with Dr. Lawlor [Salon F] – 11:45am – 12:30pm</b></li> <li>• <b>Drumming experience: Nature's Beat: Creating and Sensing Through Rhythm, Diana Honorat [Rooftop Gardens weather permitting, or Salon H] – 12:40 – 1:30pm</b></li> </ul>			
<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>Salon E</b>	<b>Salon F</b>	<b>Salon G</b>	<b>Salon H</b>
<b>1:30pm - 2:00pm</b>	Jennifer Pitonyak  Lessons learned from a national study of threshold learning in occupational therapy education	Sarah Grinder  Relationality as Well-Being: An Indigenous Critique of Individualistic Outcomes in Occupational Science	Hannah Burke  Nature-Based Occupational Engagement: A Multi-Theoretical Perspective	Joana Nana Serwaa Akrofi  Bridging Past and Present: Occupational Insights from Ghanaian Traditional Healers
<b>2:05pm - 2:35pm</b>		Denise Nepveux  Consume, Inhabit, Inherit: Transactions with "Nature" in Nature-Based Therapy Discourse	Eko Sumaryanto  Adaptation and Evaluation of the Engagement in Meaningful Activities Survey in Bahasa Indonesia	MaryBeth Gallagher  Nature-Based Occupations as Catalysts for Well-Being: Exploring the Transactions Among Youth, Environment, and Participation
<b>2:45pm - 3:15pm</b>	Aaron Eakman & Jeanine Blanchard  Toward SSO:USA Research Priorities	Saori Ogura  The meaning of ancestral grains cultivation to younger generations in Japan	Jessica Cogger  Occupational Identity (Re)Construction in the Wake of Chronic Disability: The Role of Online Communities	
<b>3:20pm - 3:50pm</b>		Jian Jones  Rooted in Song: An Ethnography on the Use of Music While Sharecropping	Jennifer Whittaker  Developing an Interdisciplinary Public Health and Integral Ecology Travel Course: Reflections Through an Occupational Lens	
<b>4:00pm - 5:00pm</b>	<b>Wrap Up Session &amp; Closing Reception*</b> <b>Remembrance and Visioning: Legacies, Current work, and looking forward</b> Storytelling, Memory making, and future orientation. Remembering Dr. Elizabeth Yerxa, summing up what was shared in this conference, and looking to the future study of Occupational Science. Reception/refreshment included.			

## **EXPLANATION OF TRADITIONS**

This narrative represents oral history documented for our benefit by Pollie Price with John White, gathering also from the memories of others who are steadfast supporters of SSO.

**Welcoming ceremony:** recognition of traditions; acknowledging the indigenous land and the local traditions, sometimes have had performances by local groups. Recognition of attendance: 1st conference, 5 conferences; 10 conferences, all conferences, and international attendees, student attendees.

**Format/ content of the conference:** can include works in progress, e.g. ROL; preliminary findings, etc. Historical: desire to support students and developing researchers, and to facilitate networking/ collaboration through feedback. Generous amount of time for discussion guided by questions generated by the presenters as part of the abstract; e.g. 15 minutes presentation/ 15 minutes discussion (could be 20/10). Passing time, and networking breaks (15 minutes is ideal periodically in addition to balance breaks or adjacent to them).

**Conference Theme:** Probably prompted by AOTA's use of conference themes, each year the Board and/or Conference Committee and possibly in collaboration with the local hosting institution, selects a theme that highlights current events, scientific breakthroughs, regionally significant features, or a specific topic. The theme is often used to encourage presentations that align with the theme as highlighted in the call for papers.

**Introduction to the Society's traditions,** their history, significance and importance, and how they have evolved and could evolve.

**RZLOS/ kaleidoscope:** The Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science is a fundamental tradition for the Society for the Study of Occupation USA. Dr. Zemke is an outstanding occupational scientist, in fact one of the founders of the discipline at USC. She has coined her own occupational science concepts but most important for this award, is that she was extremely dedicated to the OS students and early graduates, gently but continually nudging them to take the next step to deeply explore their ideas and contribute to the emerging science of occupation.

Dr. Zemke strongly endorsed developing a community of scholars. The day after the annual USC Occupational Science conference, Dr. Zemke would gather the recent graduates, and present students to share their ongoing and emerging research but also their thoughts, concerns, and dreams for occupational science. SSO: USA emerged from these meetings –

To me it was interesting that 4 individuals independently came up with the idea of The Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science Award and at one early conference? committee meeting passionately established it to honor a person who celebrates the growth of ideas. It is important that I say growth of ideas. Unlike the Slagle award where people often present their life's work, the award is for people in process of working toward the growth of occupational science through scholarship, practice or being a member of the OS community.

The tradition of the award goes beyond the lecture. An engraved kaleidoscope, is formally presented to each year's recipient/ who opens it on stage and after having the first amazing look shares it with the OS community. Dr. Zemke chimes in to explain the finer details of the type and make of the kaleidoscope.

But, Why a Kaleidoscope? According to Dr. Zemke, the kaleidoscope serves as a metaphor for occupation. It is a collection of simple, everyday items

that can create beautiful and often complex images. People change their perspectives by rotating the kaleidoscope to see the endless variety of images created. Indeed, the kaleidoscope is a well-chosen keepsake for the recipients of the Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science.

In recognition of Dr. Ruth Zemke's mentorship, questing intellect, and ongoing efforts to foster an occupational science community of researchers, this lectureship was named in her honor.

**RZLOS Banquet:** This event typically takes place in the evening following the delivery of the lecture in order to celebrate the honored lecturer and provide a platform for announcing the next year's lecturer (though the announcement sometimes happens at other times). This event also sometimes folds in other traditions such as celebration of accomplishments etc.

**Celebration of accomplishments:** champagne/Martinelli toasts: this year's RZLOS speaker, people who have completed the PhD/ SciC, PPOTD; published in the last year, presented in the last year, gotten a grant, earned promotion and/or tenure; retirements, full professor...next year's RZLOS.  
History: started before the SSO-USA was established. Students and graduates would gather at The annual AOTA conference for dinner and we would toast our little victories of our building science.

**Occupational balance breaks:** Professional conferences are typically a flurry of activity. In recognition of our belief and value in occupational balance, the SSO:USA conference intentionally schedules breaks of unopposed time to step away from the conference to play, socialize, and network. Each year, the breaks are 1-3 hours in length and allow conference attendees to explore the local area and attractions. You can find a list of this year's sessions in the program.

**Conference-provided meals and cocktail events:** Because dining is a valued occupation by so many of the participants and planners, conferences often include a high percentage of meals that are provided. These shared meals often provide opportunities to highlight, kick off, or celebrate other elements of the conference and/or traditions (e.g. the RZLOS Banquet with heavy hors d'oeuvres or dinner, The Annual Business Meeting - most often accompanied with a breakfast). One challenge of this tradition has been in how it may add to the cost of the conference (however since most conference hotels require a minimum food and beverage charge, careful planning can make these meals and events fit within the cost of contracting with the hotel).

**Talent share/ sing along:** Bring your talent! It doesn't have to be a song; it could be dance, poetry...whatever moves you and expresses your being.

History: This has been a tradition since before SSO-USA was established and it actually did start in a hot tub! In the beginning, we were a relatively small group, so it was easy to gather in a hot tub with wine and sing spontaneously started by whoever was inspired. At the first SSO-USA Conference in Galveston, TX, we were in a large acoustically resonant hall, and song broke out spontaneously. From there, a group would informally gather somewhere at the conference hotel and share songs, poetry, etc., but mostly songs. Within a few years of these informal gatherings formal time was set aside for this emerging tradition, and remained a spontaneous circle for several years. John White and Doris Pierce began to bring instruments, song books, and karaoke-type lyrics, adding structure. In the last few years, especially prompted by the pandemic and virtual meetings, and in an effort to be more inclusive, it has become a bit more structured in the form of a "talent share" that has invited a broader range of talents to be shared