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**Ruth Zemke Lecture in Occupational Science**

***The Challenge of Occupation: Describing the Things People Do***

Simply stated, occupational science is the study of human occupation. There are two elements to that definition - the human and the occupation. While the majority of occupational science scholarship and research has focused on human experiences of occupation, my focus is on occupation itself.

Drawing support for my interest from Nelson's (1988) separation of occupational performance and occupational forms as well as Clark and colleagues (1991) categorisation of the form, function, meaning and context of occupation, I propose the development of in-depth descriptions of human occupations. Using skate boarding, surfing the net, preparing a celebratory meal for the family, and tagging (a form of graffiti) as examples, I illustrate how such descriptions might synthesise historical, geographical, anthropological, sociological and critical perspectives.

In putting forward this suggestion, I consider the contribution such knowledge might make to both occupational therapy and occupational science, the ethics of studying occupations, possible research strategies and the philosophical basis of this endeavour.

**References**

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