

- ECOTROS -
European Cooperation
in
Occupational Therapy Research (OTR)
&
Occupational Science (OS)

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ENOTHE



Special Newsletter
August 2005

Current Occupational Science
Research Projects
within Europe

Content

In this newsletter, you will find information about occupational science projects and researchers in Europe up to the year 2005.

The ECOTROS list ‘Who works on Occupational Science’

(Version 1.0, August 2005)

The ECOTROS list ‘Who works on Occupational Science’ contains three parts: (a) short list of names, email addresses and project level (b) overview about topics being worked upon and (c) abstracts / summaries of the projects.

A. List of names, email addresses and project levels arranged by country and first name

Country	Name	E-mail address	project level and date
Austria	Roman Weigl	r.weigl@creative-orange.com	Master studies 2003/04
Austria	Tanja Stamm	Tanja.Stamm@meduniwien.ac.at	PhD studies in-progress
Germany	Gudula Szuwart	gszuwart@gmx.de	Bachelor thesis 2002
Germany	Sebastian Voigt-Radloff	sebastian.voigt@uniklinik-freiburg.de	planned PhD studies
Netherlands	Fenna van Nes	f.a.van.nes@hva.nl	Master thesis (no abstract)
Spain	Prof. Salvador Simó	salvador.simo@uvic.es	Project (no abstract)
Switzerland	Almut von Bodelschwingh	Almut@vonBodelschwingh.de	Master studies in-progress
UK	Dr. Susan Corr	susan.corr@northampton.ac.uk	14 projects 2003 – 05
UK	Jackie Taylor	j.taylor@salford.ac.uk	PhD studies in-progress
UK	Katy Cogswell	katyinlanzarote@yahoo.co.uk	Master thesis 2004

B. Overview about topics

Topic	Persons
Activity in secure forensic settings	Katy Cogswell, UK
Leisure in different contexts	Jackie Taylor, UK Roman Weigl, Austria (2) Dr. Susan Corr, UK (3) Almut von Bodelschwingh, Switzerland
Occupation & binge eating disorder	Dr. Susan Corr, UK
Occupation & HIV/AIDS	Gudula Szuwart, Germany
Occupation & myocardial infarction	Dr. Susan Corr, UK
Occupation & older adults	Dr. Susan Corr, UK Sebastian Voigt-Radloff, Germany
Occupation & stroke	Dr. Susan Corr, UK (2) Fenna van Nes, Netherland (no abstract)
Occupation & unemployment	Dr. Susan Corr, UK
Occupational balance & executives	Dr. Susan Corr, UK
Occupational balance & rheumatoid arthritis	Tanja Stamm, Austria
Occupational change & motherhood	Dr. Susan Corr, UK
Occupational performance & motor neurone disease	Dr. Susan Corr, UK
Poetry writing & mental health	Dr. Susan Corr, UK
Social participation & learning disabilities	Dr. Susan Corr, UK

C. Abstracts or summaries of the projects arranged by first name

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This is a research proposal for my master thesis, which will hopefully be completed 11/2006

Young Adults' Experiences of Being Engaged in Creative Occupations

Since the beginnings of occupational therapy (OT), occupation has been the profession's main focus. A type of occupation frequently used in OT, nowadays mainly in the fields of mental health, pain treatment and chronic illness, are creative occupations. Though widely used, little is known about why creative activities work as an intervention and, from the client's point of view, which components of those activities are valued for which properties. Young adults constitute a growing client group for OTs, especially in mental health, and are treated mostly with creative media. There is no scientific evidence that this is an appropriate and meaningful occupation for this age group.

Therefore, this study will examine how young adults in Switzerland experience being engaged in self-chosen creative occupations.

A phenomenological study will be conducted, using data collected in two individual open-ended interviews, following an interview guide. There will be two interviews with each of the four participants. Also, data will be collected through observation during classes. Participants will be young adults recruited from evening-classes focussing on painting and drawing. Information about the study will be distributed through the company organizing the art-classes, interested prospective participants can then get in touch with the researcher.

Data will be analysed using phenomenological methodology; data organization and analysis will be assisted by the computer software ATLAS.ti.

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Horne J, Corr S, Earle S. Becoming a Mother: A Study Exploring Occupational Change in First Time Motherhood. *Journal of Occupational Science. In press, due for print in volume 12(3), October 2005.*

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Singlehurst H, Corr S. Activity patterns of those with Binge Eating Disorder: The impact on Occupation. (Paper) *College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Eastbourne, UK, 22nd-24th June 2005.*

In comparison to other eating disorders, little is known regarding the daily activities of those with Binge Eating Disorder. Therefore, this research study set out to explore the activity patterns of those with Binge Eating Disorder and to determine whether the disorder impacts on occupation. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for this study, including a time use method where the allocation of time to various occupations is recorded. The tools used were diaries and questionnaires. Following ethical approval from the School of Health Ethics Panel, University College Northampton, fourteen participants were recruited from a local voluntary support group. Results revealed that the activity patterns of those with Binge Eating Disorder were comparable to the general population within the UK, with the excep-

tion of eating and socialising. Two major themes emerged:

Preoccupation with food, and weight and shape concerns; these determine the occupational behaviour and the level of participation in occupations. The study also found that Binge Eating Disorder impacts on all three areas occupation: self care, leisure and productivity, although the associated occupational behaviour causes the impact to be covert and some occupations to be “hidden”.

“Hidden” meaning that participants appear to carry out occupations that structure their day although the physical “doing” hides the level of engagement and the true experience of participation. Understanding the complex nature of human occupation requires clinicians and researchers to seek out these hidden occupations to understand the true experience and level of participation of each individual.

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Dean E, Griffiths S, Corr S. Social networks and social participation in young adults with learning disabilities. (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Eastbourne, UK, 22nd-24th June 2005.

In order to facilitate participation in meaningful occupation it is necessary to understand people within their environmental contexts. In terms of the social environment, Kielhofner (1995) explains, ‘humans are intensely social creatures...just as occupations is directed at the physical world, it also occurs in and through a world of social relations’ (p3). This study aimed to discuss the functions of the social networks of adults with learning disabilities, investigate participants’ perceptions of their networks, and consider to what extent these networks facilitated participation in participants’ wider social environments.

Following ethical approval from the School of Health Ethics Panel, University College Northampton, five members of the public with mild to moderate learning disabilities were recruited using snowball sampling. All were aged between 20 and 29 years and lived in the community. Data collection and analysis used an iterative process of focus groups and individual interviews, informed by the grounded theory approach.

Findings indicate that participants have little access to fully integrated social opportunities but express satisfaction with their social relationships and do not view themselves as socially isolated. Contrary to previous research, a range of reciprocal functions of participants’ social relationships are identified. Implications for practice are that occupational therapists, when working with people with learning disabilities, allow the development and maintenance of existing relationships and focus on social integration rather than simple physical presence within society. Also, friendships between people with learning disabilities should not be devalued through over concern for promoting normalised social environments.

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Hilse C, Griffiths S, Corr S. The impact of participation in a poetry writing group. (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Eastbourne, UK, 22nd-24th June 2005.

The integration of conscious thoughts, emotions and unconscious images in poetry to form a greater meaning has long been recognised and is referred to in literature as ‘healing’, ‘soul making’ or ‘making whole’ (Bolton, 1999). Little research evidence has been found to date, to show the impact of poetry writing on an individual’s mental health problems.

This poster will outline an undergraduate research project exploring the impact of regular participation in a poetry writing group for two people who had experienced mental health problems before this project was carried out. The project was approved by the School of Health Research Ethics Panel at University College Northampton. A qualitative methodology was applied. Data was collected through observations of a local poetry group open to general public and in-depth interview with two regular participants.

Data was analysed using grounded theory methods. Findings were checked back with participants and second coded by an independent researcher. Four main categories emerged: creations, communication, connection and awareness. Underlying these four themes a unifying concept of meaning was further explored. Literature concurred with the concept of meaning being central to the process of poetry writing as well as to symbolisation, which in turn contributes to building personal identity (Fine, 1999).

The subjects identified positive and negative impacts on their mental health from their occupation of poetry writing and recognised psychosocial benefits of being part of a community poetry writing group. Implications for occupational therapists and future areas of research will be discussed.

References

- Bolton G (1999) *The therapeutic potential of creative writing – writing myself*. London: Jessica Kingsley
Fine SB (1999) *Symbolisation: making meaning for self and society*. In: Fidler GS & Velde (Eds) *Activities – Reality and Symbol*. Thorofare: Slack

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Hayes S, Corr S. The meaning of participation in leisure - an exploration of two women's experience. (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Eastbourne, UK, 22nd-24th June 2005.

Occupational therapists require knowledge about the meaning and purpose people place on their occupations in order to promote quality of life. The aim of this study was to explore the similarities and differences in the experience of engaging in leisure occupations for two retired women. One woman had no major diagnosis; the other lived with rheumatoid arthritis.

A qualitative method was used to allow the richness of experience of engaging in leisure occupations to be understood. Following ethics approval from the School of Health Ethics Panel at University College Northampton, semi-structured interviews were performed which were interpreted using the phenomenological approach. Once the participants had verified the transcripts, horizontalisation highlighted descriptive statements which were clustered into meaning units. Data analysis revealed that the women considered family time, church work, knitting and socializing amongst others as leisure occupations. Both women received a largely positive experience from their leisure pursuits, expressed as enjoyment, feeling privileged and creativity. Nonetheless, negative experiences such as regret and frustration were also articulated, particularly by the woman with rheumatoid arthritis. Additionally, the study revealed that rheumatoid arthritis may cause an individual to change their leisure occupations from those they would like to perform to those they were able to perform.

The study highlighted similarities and differences in the way these two women experienced the meaning of leisure. Through understanding and valuing unique experiences of individuals, occupational therapists can ensure they use a client centred approach to practice.

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Lee J, Johnson H, Corr S. Participation! The experience of physically disabled sailors. (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Eastbourne, UK, 22nd-24th June 2005.

There is limited research available examining the value of sporting activities within the context of occupational therapy. The aim of this study was to identify the meaningful components of sailing, as perceived by physically disabled individuals.

A qualitative approach was adopted, utilising a phenomenological framework. Five individual interviews, each lasting between thirty minutes to one hour, fifty minutes, were conducted on a convenience sampling basis. Horizontalisation of data drew out significant statements that were then coded to generate a number of themes. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was employed as a framework to sort data. The results indicated a correlation between participation in sailing and feelings of wellbeing, and that disabled recreational sailors reported that sailing provides them with the opportunity to experience a sense of spirituality. The study concluded that the individuals who participated in the study were able to experience satisfaction to both basic, but more significantly, higher being needs.

The relevance of these findings in relation to occupational therapy are that occupational therapists should be aware of the potential benefits of sporting activities such as sailing, in order to facilitate the opportunity for clients to engage in purposeful occupational activities that may potentially meet an individual's basic and higher needs. The findings suggest that further research would be of interest to explore the value of sailing in helping individuals come to terms with disability, or as a means of satisfying higher needs of individuals with learning disabilities or mental health issues.

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Clifton D, Siddons L, Corr S. Cardiac rehabilitation's role in facilitation participation in occupations. (Poster). College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Eastbourne, UK, 22nd-24th June 2005.

Occupational therapy is a unique profession, which holds the belief that engagement in occupation maintains and enhances health. Following Myocardial Infarction (MI), physical, psychological and social limitations may impact on the occupational performance.

The aim of this study was to gain insight into participation in occupations post MI. A mixed method approach utilising a descriptive, retrospective, non-experimental design was adopted. Following ethical approval from the School of Health Ethics Approval, University College Northampton, participants were recruited via charity based heart support groups. One hundred and eighty questionnaires were posted to potential participants via the support groups and 67 (37.2%) were returned. Descriptive statistics were conducted on the quantitative data using the SPSS program, while the qualitative data was analysed using content analysis.

The results show that occupation was considered by the majority of participants as essential for survival as participation in meaningful occupations enhanced their quality of life and wellbeing, enabled roles and provided a meaningful life. The activity, that showed greatest decline, was garden maintenance, with 46 (68.7%) participants engaging in this activity pre MI compared with 24 (35.8%) post MI. The findings show that MI can have an impact on an individual's occupational performance, with the majority of participants describing negative

emotions such as “frustration”, “inadequacy” and “depression” at not being able to participate in activities as they once did. The results from this study support the need for occupational therapy involvement in the rehabilitation of individuals post MI to facilitate returning to an active lifestyle.

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Corr S. Occupations matter if you have a stroke and are of pre-retirement age (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Harrogate, UK, 8-10th June 2004.

In addition to older people, individuals that are pre-retirement age can also have a stroke. A study was conducted to establish the characteristics and needs of individuals aged between 18 and 55 years post stroke. The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure and Role Checklist was used to identify the occupations and roles they had difficulty doing but were important to them. Twenty-six individuals were recruited, with a mean age of 48 years (range 34 to 55) and on average they were 21 months post-stroke. The results indicate that between them these individuals had 84 self-care problems, with shopping and dressing the most frequently identified; 77 productivity problems with undertaking their previous job and cooking the most frequently identified; and 81 leisure problems with reading and socialising the most frequently identified. Their present role profile was low although problems with reading and socialising more frequently identified. Their present role profile was low although most retained the role of friend and family member. The majority (20, 77%) considered work to be very valuable although only one person had returned to work. These findings illustrate the breadth of occupations that matter to this group. These occupations should be considered when planning services for this group.

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Duddy S, Corr S. Motor Neurone Disease: the impact on occupational performance and quality of life (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Harrogate, UK, 8-10th June 2004.

There is limited research on the occupational performance changes associated with Motor Neurone Disease, despite the debilitating nature of the disease. The aim of this study was to show the change in occupational performance as a result of Motor Neurone Disease and to establish the present quality of life. A quantitative approach using postal questionnaires was adopted. The questionnaires included the Nottingham Extended Activities of Daily Living Scale, of which the participants completed two copies to measure occupational performance at the time of diagnosis and present time, and the Short Form-36, to measure current health related quality of life. Thirty-three participants, recruited by means of purposive sampling via the Motor Neurone Disease Association, were included. The results indicated a significant decrease in abilities to perform extended activities of daily living with a median Extended Activity of Daily Living score of 17 at diagnosis vs. current median score of 4 ($p=0.000$). Although a significant decrease ($p=0.000$), the median leisure sub-score changed least (5 at diagnosis vs. 2 currently). In terms of health related quality of life, perceived physical functioning was extremely low (mean = 7.24, range 0-100) while the participants perceived mental health status was relatively high (mean = 67.6, range 16-92). The importance of engagement in occupation to health and well-being is increasingly being consid-

ered. These findings suggest that further research should be conducted to establish the extent to which the decrease in occupational performance as a result of Motor Neurone Disease affects individual quality of life.

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Fox D, Corr S. The effects of stroke on the occupational performance of young stroke survivors (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Harrogate, UK, 8-10th June 2004.

Each year in the United Kingdom one hundred thousand individuals experience a first ever stroke, of whom 10,000 are under 55. Survivors will experience varying degrees of occupational disability. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the extent to which young stroke survivors' occupations were affected during their first two years of recovery. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six stroke survivors aged between 18 and 50. All attended stroke support groups. The six areas of concern that emerged from the interviews were work, leisure, self-maintenance, psychological and physical impact and lack of support. The loss placed great emphasis on productivity and occupational achievement. They reported decreased self-esteem, lack of role, loss of routine and feelings of worthlessness. Coming to terms with the need to redefine roles and objectives appeared particularly problematic, often requiring the individual to accept a reduction in performance. Findings suggest that those who are unable to create a clear sense of future self, experienced anxiety and settled for a restricted life.

In conclusion, this study endorsed the need for occupational therapists to address occupational matters in a truly holistic manner, since it is clear that, as the physical effects are overcome, the psychological aspect presents the enduring challenge, further compromising occupational performance.

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Mayhew E, Corr S. Unemployed men's perceptions: Obtaining the latent benefits of employment through Occupation (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Harrogate, UK, 8-10th June 2004.

Employment is considered as an occupation that matters in today's society as it provides the manifest benefit of financial reward (income) as well as additional latent benefits such as time structure, social contact, collective purpose (for shared experiences), social identity (or status) and regular enforced activity. These latent benefits are considered to be vital for the maintenance of psychological wellbeing. The aim of this study was to establish if engagement in occupation enabled unemployed men to access the latent benefits of employment. This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach and used semi-structured interviews. In addition participants were invited to maintain a diary log of activities participated in over a one week period. The sample was made up of five unemployed men within the middle adulthood age range. Eight themes emerged which were associated with obtaining the latent benefits of employment through engagement in occupation during unemployment. These were engagement in occupation; time use; attitudes towards unemployment; financial concerns; serious leisure activities; social support; desire for wellbeing and the use of information technology. Four of the five participants indicated that they were able to access a combination of the latent benefits of employment by participating in enough meaning-

ful activity to fill their time during the day. The findings from the fifth participant suggest that although employment matters in society's view, some of the benefits of this occupation can also be gained via other occupations.

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Harrison S, Corr S. Exploring the qualities of leisure occupations. (Poster) College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference, Glasgow, UK, 9th July 2003.

Leisure is one of the three categories of occupations required for living life, with self-care and productivity being the other two. As such, leisure is central to occupational therapy theory and practice (Suto, 1998). Currently much of what is known about leisure occupations is tacit knowledge, rather than based upon empirical research. Interventions, which aim to enable individuals to lead a full and satisfying life, should however be based upon empirical evidence. The aim of this research was to investigate the qualities of leisure occupations from the perspective of those participating. The method used was qualitative, taking the form of five semi-structured interviews. The sample was taken from the general public, using the snowballing method. This paper will present the 13 qualities that were identified using content analysis. These range from relaxation through to achievement and learning. The findings suggest enjoyment to be a silent element or quality of leisure occupations. An additional quality found was leisure changing an individual's perspective of the world. This small research study reiterates the subjective nature of participating in occupations. It reinforces the need for occupational therapists to consider leisure when designing interventions for living life.

Reference:

Suto, M (1998) Leisure in occupational therapy. Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy 65(5) p. 271-278

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Quill, S, Corr S. Identifying executives' perceptions of balance in relation to their occupations: A Q-methodological study. (Poster) Association of Occupational Therapists in Ireland annual conference, Killarney, Ireland, 28th March 2003.

This study investigated the perceptions of balance of occupations in the lives of individuals who work in executive positions. Executives often face long working hours, high levels of responsibility and work in a high stress environment. This may result in an imbalance of self-care, productivity and leisure occupations which could have an impact on their health. Twenty-six banking executives working in management positions in Ireland were recruited. Q-method, a research method using both quantitative and qualitative methods to study subjectivity, was used. This poster will outline the five factors identified. The results suggest that a perception of balance is dependent on context rather than on time spent between the occupational areas. Occupational balance occurs when the individual has the ability to meet their unique set of challenges in relation to needs, interests, roles and volitional choices. Occupational therapists should consider individuals perception of balance when facilitating independence in self-care, productivity and leisure.

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Current research activity – no presentations or publications to date.

Knight J, Corr S, Ball V and Turner A. An investigation of older adults' occupations.

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This paper is the bachelor thesis from our studies in the Hogeschool Zuyd, Heerlen, Netherlands. The authors: Gudula Szuwart and Bettina Brünner.

Burden of Virus and Love of Life – an occupational therapy reflection about HIV/AIDS based on the Model of Human Occupation, May 2002

This paper is an approach to the topic of HIV/AIDS which has been neglected by German occupational therapy for a long time. The qualitative research design is based on the *Model of Human Occupation*. By conducting and interpreting interviews with people with HIV/AIDS, it offers insight into changed occupational behaviour. The research results give evidence of occupational dysfunction in all areas of occupational behaviour such as work, daily living tasks and leisure. The results presented suggest that further research on the subject area promises to be fruitful. Finally, the paper presents ideas about how occupational therapy can intervene to support people who have HIV/AIDS.

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The following describes my work-in-progress for my doctoral studies.

Exploring identity in narratives of leisure.

Leisure is an area of occupational performance that offers the participant some degree of choice. This research is based on the narratives of serious leisure participants (i.e. those who commit considerable resources to their chosen activity). A postmodern, social constructionist perspective is taken. Through narratives people make meaning and construct identity. The actions and events of leisure participation are re-lived in the telling of stories to the researcher. The complexities of occupational engagement can be explored, so that the interactions of individual, occupation, others, culture, environment, time and space can be understood, in relation to identity construction.

Participants involved in a range of leisure pursuits have been interviewed, including a runner, a musician, a singer, a bird-watcher and an artist.

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The Masters thesis was completed in August 2004 as part of the Master of Science in "Health through Occupation" at Brighton University. Supervisor: Jon Wright

The Experience of Engaging in Activity in a Secure Setting using the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), Katy Cogswell et al.

The need for research into the patterning and experience of daily activities and subsequent psychological state of residents in forensic settings has been identified as a priority topic. The purpose of this study was to understand the frequency and patterning of daily activities, social interactions, changes in location and psychological state of residents in forensic units. Hypothesised relationships between an alert mood state and the importance of the activity and between a bored and drowsy mood state were tested. This study used the 'Experience Sampling Method' (ESM) to collect empirical data regarding daily experiences and psychological mood states of nine participants on two secure forensic units. A modified version of an Experience Sampling Form (ESF) was given to participants at random times between 9am and 9pm. Each participant completed the ESF up to 40 times over a period of seven days.

The results indicate that residents of the secure units were predominantly engaged in passive leisure activities 51.5% of the times approached. The highest proportion of times approached, participants were alone in their bedrooms. The highest percent of the time they reported feeling bored and drowsy was during passive leisure activities. Drowsiness was reported more often in the mornings and participants reported feeling most alert in the evenings. Some support is provided for the hypothesised relationships but the results are not statistically significant so the null hypotheses cannot be rejected.

The secure environment and consequences of mental health problems are suggested to have contributed to the high percentage of engagement in passive leisure activities. Findings from this study help us to understand the nature of time-use and its effect on the psychological states of boredom and drowsiness.

Roman Weigl

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This research was completed in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Health Science (Occupational Therapy) Honours at the University of Sydney, Supervisor: Dr. C. Chapparo.

KEY WORDS: freelancer, grounded theory, individual work and leisure definition

The work and leisure definition of male freelancers and self-employed males who work from home

The organisation of work and leisure is an increasingly discussed topic both within the mass media and the research literature. While research projects are often using work and leisure definitions derived from theory, less research is involved with exploring the individuals' definition. Research conducted to explore how humans are classifying tasks, found that the work environment is as major a factor to define a task as a work task. However, not all people change their environment when they fulfil their work. This pilot study wanted to explore the leisure and work definition of male freelancers and self-employed males working from home. Using the snowballing sampling method 2 males with a family, 2 males living in a relationship and 1 single male were narratively interviewed. The interview data was analysed using grounded theory procedures. Using a qualitative analysing computer programme, code categories were named, defined and the connections between the code categories were described. Although all participants stated that there is no real separation between their leisure and their work, specific descriptors for work and leisure tasks were found. Work and leisure tasks both shared similar characteristics for all participants and other characteristics which were only specific for some participants. Work usually was seen

as something obligatory, while leisure generally was freely chosen. Work and leisure tasks shared two characteristics across all participants: both being a source of happiness and providing energy. An association between work and leisure existed, called separating and blurring by the participants. Separating refers to the clearly distinguishable aspect of alternating work and leisure task sequences while blurring characterises the ever-changing aspect of one's task classification according to internal or external factors, e.g. a task defined leisure becoming a work task. Both values and a range of emotions were associated with work and leisure. For the definition of work and leisure the environmental factors of space, objects and time, as well as the social environment, played an important role. Work and leisure definitions appeared to be a dynamic process; this liquidity being both a resource for stress-reduction and a source of stress. Occupational therapists have to be very careful in their use of the terms work and leisure, because the therapist's definition could be very different to the client's definition, triggering different emotions than intended. For future projects a bigger variety of participants needs to be sought, for example female freelancers or single-parent freelancers.

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This Honours Dissertation was completed in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Health Science (Occupational Therapy) Honours at the University of Sydney, Supervisor Prof. A. Bundy.

KEY WORDS: playfulness, adulthood, leisure experience

German-speaking adults' report of playfulness as a leisure experience using an internet survey

The scope of this research was to evaluate the experience of playfulness of adults in leisure activities using an existing research tool, The Experience of Leisure Scale (TELS). The TELS was translated into German and revised for use as an Internet survey. Snowballing technique was used as a sampling method. A total of 235 adults participated in the survey, ranging in age between 19 to 73 years. The participant survey data were analyzed with the Rasch analysis method. In a first analysis 82.4 % of the persons and 76 % of the items of the four categories Internet TELS conformed to the expectations of the Rasch model. The TELS scores indicated a highly playful sample. Rasch measures of the TELS and the self-rating of playfulness showed a moderate correlation, both increasing. No relationship was found between: (a) the TELS measures and gender, (b) the TELS measures and age, and (c) the playfulness self-rating and age. Participants, who scored the TELS twice showed significant differences in their two TELS measures, indicating a relationship between playfulness and the type of chosen activity. Because the TELS item categories appeared to be too differentiated for this sample, the TELS was transformed for a second analysis into a dichotomous scale, which resulted in an increased item fit of 92% and a person fit of 93.9%. Both TELS versions had problems evaluating the playfulness within activities with inherent rules such as "singing in a choir". For typically developed adults the TELS behaved like a dichotomous scale. Further research is suggested before the TELS is used as a clinical tool or used with typically developed adults.

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Exposé for PhD studies

Community-based civic volunteering in preventative home visits, health promoting occupation for older adults - A client-oriented programme development and evaluation of its feasibility, acceptance and impact

Objective: to develop a health-promoting occupational programme for older adults. Using preventative home visits, retired seniors, mostly lightly disabled, shall stimulate older people with a need for moderate nursing care in mental, physical and social activities and support them in independent living. The programme is orientated to the interventions of the well elderly study (Clark et al., 1997) and the CORPS project (Fried et al., 2004). Both the visiting and the visited seniors should evaluate the programme's practicability, acceptance and impact on their health-promoting occupations. The aim is to provide a practical and accepted programme, which may supplement or replace the conventional preventative home visit (review, see Lübke & Meinck 2003) by a community-based civic volunteering of seniors who will possibly be affected themselves in the future. The long-term objectives are randomised controlled trials investigating the impact of the programme on hospitalization, quality of life, functional status and health costs. However, such outcome studies are not the subject of this dissertation.

Design: a participatory action research (Waterman et al. 2001), where the clients in moderated focus group discussions adapt an experience and evidence-based draft programme to their context. Evaluation is planned by triangulation of results from the focus group protocols, a SF-36 pre/post comparison, German socio-demographic standards and semi-structured questionnaires completed by the participants.

References

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PhD studies in progress

Occupational balance in people with rheumatoid arthritis

Occupational balance is a fashionable concept in occupational therapy and in society at large and could be a key concept in that it may link occupation and health. In occupational therapy the term 'occupation' includes all kinds of meaningful activity for human beings. There is no single definition of occupational balance and there is a lack of empirical evidence in relation to the common idea of 'balancing' work, rest and play. The aim of this study was to critically

examine the existing assumptions regarding occupational balance and to explore this concept in the context of people with rheumatoid arthritis, a client group that was assumed to experience an imbalance due to a loss of physical occupations.

The study adopted an open qualitative approach, namely the narrative biographic methodology in order to include the life context of the participants and to deliberately exclude pre-definitions of the concept. Ten people with rheumatoid arthritis who retired early due to the disease participated and were interviewed three times according to a narrative biographic interview style. The biographical data and the interview texts were analysed both individually and in comparison to each other by a panel of three people who formulated hypotheses and explored different perspectives.

The individual analyses resulted in ten re-constructed narrative life stories, each with a main theme. Some participants regarded rheumatoid arthritis as a challenge for mastery in their lives. They valued the chance which they had been given, and viewed their condition positively overall. In the first step of the general analysis, the ten life stories were examined for similarities and differences. This process resulted in two typologies: (1) rheumatoid arthritis as ‘a source for new challenges’ and (2) rheumatoid arthritis as ‘something to get used to’ and ‘to make the best out of a bad situation’.

In the second step of the general analysis, the concept of occupational balance was revisited and data were examined from this perspective. Three dimensions of occupational balance related to health and grounded in the data, were discovered: a balance between (a) challenging versus relaxing occupations and activities, (b) activities meaningful for the individual and activities meaningful in a societal context and (c) activities intended to care for oneself and productive activities. The rigour and accuracy of the analysis were enhanced by applying processes for reaching credibility, trustworthiness and reflexivity.

This positive dimension of a chronic musculoskeletal disease found here has been rarely described in the literature. The three dimensions of occupational balance constitute a new framework for defining the concept of occupational balance. The biographic narrative methodology proved to be a useful design for this study, although adaptations were made according to a critical analysis of the applied method.