Occupational Science: Society, Inclusion, Participation

Occupational Science: Society, Inclusion, Participation is the must-have resource for occupational therapists, occupational scientists, students and researchers. This forward-looking book explores and critically examines the field, setting the parameters and direction for the development of occupational responses to critical health and social concerns.

Reasons for the field's limited impact are proposed, including its focus on individuals rather than groups and communities, the genesis of occupational science in Western ideologies, its feminized lens, and its narrow focus on socially approved occupations.

Chapter authors propose the adoption of emancipatory knowledge paradigms and draw attention to social processes that marginalize vulnerable populations and limit human flourishing. This is followed by a section on methodological and structural considerations which guide the way to understanding the complexity of vulnerable people's occupational patterns and needs, and the authors inquire into sociopolitical influences on occupational choice. The concluding chapter offers a critical reflection on methods, strategies, values and relationships for the future, to achieve a relevant science that makes a difference to current occupational realities.

Written by an internationally renowned team of contributors, this book offers a truly comprehensive critique of the field.

Features
• Internationally renowned editors and contributors
• First comprehensive critique of occupational science
• Fully up to date with the latest thinking and research
• Challenges occupational scientists to step up to an emancipatory agenda

Editors
Gail E. Whiteford, PhD is Pro-Vice Chancellor (Social Inclusion), Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia.
Clare Hocking, PhD is Associate Professor, Department of Occupational Science and Therapy, Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Related Titles
Occupation Analysis in Practice
Edited by Lynette Mackenzie and Glyn O'Toole

Cover design: Meadon Creative
Cover Images: © iStockphoto.com

Edited by
GAIL E. WHITEFORD
CLARE HOCKING
Occupational Science
Contents

Dedication vii
About the Editors ix
Contributors xi
Preface xv

Part I: Introduction

1 Introduction to critical perspectives in occupational science
   Clare Hocking and Gail E. Whiteford 3

2 What would Paulo Freire think of occupational science?
   Lilian Magalhães 8

Part II: Understanding occupation

3 Transactionalism: Occupational science and the pragmatic attitude
   Malcolm P. Cutchin and Virginia A. Dickie 23

4 Understanding the discursive development of occupation:
   Historico-political perspectives
   Sarah Kantartzis and Matthew Molineux 38

5 Occupations through the looking glass: Reflecting on
   occupational scientists’ ontological assumptions
   Clare Hocking 54
Part III: Ways of knowing occupation

6 Knowledge paradigms in occupational science: Pluralistic perspectives
Elizabeth Anne Kinsella

7 Occupation and ideology
Ben Sellar

8 Governing through occupation: Shaping expectations and possibilities
Debbie Laliberte Rudman

9 When occupation goes ‘wrong’: A critical reflection on risk discourses and their relevance in shaping occupation
Silke Dennhardt and Debbie Laliberte Rudman

Part IV: Ways of doing in occupational science

10 The case for multiple research methodologies
Valerie A. Wright-St Clair

11 Occupational choice: The significance of socio-economic and political factors
Roshan Galvaan

12 The International Society for Occupational Science: A critique of its role in facilitating the development of occupational science through international networks and intercultural dialogue
Alison Wicks

Part V: Visioning a way forward

13 Occupation, inclusion and participation
Gail E. Whiteford and Robert B. Pereira

Index
We would like to dedicate this book to two leaders who have influenced, guided and mentored us over the years: Professor Ann Wilcock and Professor Elizabeth Townsend. Their scholarship set in train a new consciousness, of global issues such as occupational deprivation and occupational justice, amongst others. By introducing these concepts to the international occupational science community, Ann and Liz have been fundamental to its forward development. Both were prepared to show true leadership – even when it was personally and professionally challenging – and for this we are grateful. Our vision, hopefully realized at least in part through this book, is that there are emerging leaders who will progress their work and entrench its relevance in new places and in multiple contexts.

Gail E. Whiteford and Clare Hocking
About the Editors

Gail E. Whiteford, PhD
Pro Vice Chancellor (Social Inclusion) Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Professor Gail Whiteford currently holds the position of Pro Vice Chancellor (Social Inclusion) at Macquarie University, the first position of its type established in Australia. In this position she was invited by the Australian Social Inclusion Unit to speak at the inaugural social inclusion conference in Australia. Gail was a doctoral student of Ann Wilcock and highly influenced by her work, which she extended into her exploration of occupational deprivation and other forms of social exclusion. Gail has been on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Occupational Science* since 1993 and has numerous publications on occupational science.

Clare Hocking, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Occupational Science and Therapy, Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Best known for her longstanding editorship of the *Journal of Occupational Science*, Clare encountered occupational science as a postgraduate student in Dr Ann Wilcock’s papers at the University of South Australia. Inspired by Wilcock’s vision, she went on to develop postgraduate papers on occupational science at AUT University in the 1990s. Clare’s research has focused on the relationship between the objects people have and use, and their identity, and the cross-cultural meanings of food-related occupations for older women in Thailand, New Zealand and Kentucky, USA. Clare has been an invited keynote speaker and visiting scholar in Australia, Japan, North America and the United Kingdom, and has served as a critical voice in occupational therapy and occupational science over the last 20 years. In this text, Clare’s gaze falls on the limited scope of occupational science research.
Malcolm P. Cutchin, PhD
Professor of Occupational Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC, USA and University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

Malcolm’s PhD doctorate is in geography. He conducts research at the intersection of social gerontology, occupational therapy and health geography. For almost 20 years, his scholarship has explored the potential of pragmatism for inquiry in those fields.

Silke Dennhardt, MSc
Doctoral candidate, Doctoral Program in Occupational Science, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, Elborn College, The University of Western Ontario, London, ON, Canada

Silke’s experiences of transitioning to a foreign culture raised her awareness of macro-level contexts of occupation and led her to question many of her beliefs. Taking a critical stance, her research focuses on how ‘risk’ as a particular thinking style, shapes people’s occupations and their possibilities to engage in occupation.

Virginia A. Dickie, PhD, OT/L, FAOTA
Associate Professor and Director, Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

Virginia’s scholarly focus is to build knowledge of occupation in its full complexity. Her ethnographic enquiries into craft production and marketing, and contemporary quilt-making have forced her to see occupation as transactional; involving individuals and groups, technology, materials, place, time, history, culture, politics and more.
Roshan Galvaan, PhD
Senior Lecturer, Division of Occupational Therapy, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

Roshan’s doctoral thesis investigated a construct fundamental to occupational justice, that is, occupational choice, finding that the nature of occupational choice is contextually situated and population-based. Her continued research explores occupation-based discourses that support the vision of achieving occupational justice for all.

Sarah Kantartzis, MSc
PhD student at Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, West Yorkshire, UK. Research Associate at the Centre for Research into Disability and Society, Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Sarah has lived in Greece for 30 years, working as an occupational therapist both in practice and higher education. She is currently undertaking research to explore the nature of occupation and the daily life of adults in a small Greek town.

Elizabeth Anne Kinsella, PhD
Associate Professor, School of Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Education & Women’s Studies and Feminist Research, University of Western Ontario, London, ON, Canada; and Adjunct Associate Professor, Research Institute for Professional Practice Learning and Education, Faculty of Education, Charles Sturt University, NSW, Australia

Anne researches processes of reflection, critical reflection and reflexivity in everyday and professional life. Her scholarly interests include the philosophical foundations of social research, epistemologies of practice, professional knowledge, ethics, human occupation, creative arts, end-of-life occupation and occupational identity.

Debbie Laliberte Rudman, PhD
Associate Professor and Faculty Scholar, School of Occupational Therapy and Field Chair, Occupational Science, Graduate Program in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, The University of Western Ontario, London, ON, Canada

Debbie was introduced to critical social theory as a doctoral student in Public Health Sciences at the University of Toronto. Her work attends to the power relations through which possibilities for occupation are shaped and negotiated, with particular foci on issues related to exclusion, inequity and injustice.

Lilian Magalhães, PhD
Assistant Professor of the School of Occupational Therapy, University of Western Ontario, London, ON, Canada

Lilian is an occupational therapist who was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She holds a PhD in Public Health from the University of Campinas, Sao Paulo. While in Brazil, in the 1980s, Dr Magalhães studied and worked with participatory and art-based approaches under the supervision of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal.
Matthew Molineux, PhD
Director of Allied Health, Clinical Education and Training Queensland, Queensland Health, Brisbane Australia and Adjunct Research Fellow, School of Occupational Therapy and Social Work, Curtin University, Perth, Australia

Matthew is an occupational therapist and occupational scientist who has worked as a clinician and academic in Australia and the UK.

Robert B. Pereira, BOccThy (Hons)
PhD Candidate, Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, and Senior Occupational Therapist, Disability Service, Campus Wellbeing Division, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Robert is interested in the relationship between social inclusion policy and the experience of living with multiple disadvantages. His clinical and research interests include social inclusion, health promotion, chronic disease management, policy analysis, narrative inquiry and occupational justice.

Ben Sellar, BOccThy (Hons)
PhD Candidate, Centre for Research into Social Inclusion, Macquarie University, Sydney, and Lecturer, Occupational Therapy Program, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

Ben worked as an occupational therapist in therapeutic and community development roles with children who have experienced domestic violence, and now teaches community development and occupational science. His current research focuses on justice, subjectivity, politics, science and critical methodologies.

Alison Wicks, PhD
University of Wollongong, Nowra, NSW, Australia

Alison is the Founding Director of the Australasian Occupational Science Centre and Senior Lecturer in Occupational Science at the Shoalhaven Campus of the University of Wollongong. She is a Board member of the International Society for Occupational Science and President of the Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists.

Valerie A. Wright-St Clair, PhD
Senior Lecturer, School of Rehabilitation and Occupation Studies, and Co-Director of the Active Ageing Research Cluster, Person Centred Research Centre, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

Valerie’s research spans gerontology, occupational science, cross-cultural research and interpretive phenomenology. Her focus is in how elders’ participation in everyday activities influences longevity, health and wellness; elders’ integration and participation within communities, and understanding the meaning of what people do.
Schooled by Ann Wilcock to appreciate the power of occupation to promote health and well-being, we have been passionate supporters of the development of occupational science for almost two decades. This book is an expression of that passion. It is offered as a critical reflection, in appreciation of what occupational science might become and the influence it might have on the future of human and ecological health.

The spirit of the book is critical. It brings together established and emerging voices in the discipline to offer diverse perspectives on the development of occupational science and the realities to which occupational scientists are attuned. Some of the critique we offer has been previously voiced – for example, the concentration of effort on understanding individual rather than collective experience and the western orientation of the research effort. In this volume, such concerns are given new depth and breadth through the author’s extended consideration. Other perspectives are newly voiced: the ideological positions taken up by occupational scientists, the way risk discourses shape engagement in occupation, and ways socio-economic and political realities shape the occupational choices of South African youths.

Critique is unfamiliar territory for many of us. Rather, our concern with the nature and potential of occupation is expressed in a spirit of exploration, an uncovering of new insights, the excitement of fresh understandings. We turn to our participants for confirmation of findings, and to each other for acknowledgement that our ideas are ground-breaking, rich, and insightful. That positive critique is invaluable. It energises researchers to continue in their work, and encourages new comers to seek opportunities to make their own contribution.

Criticism without challenge, however, supports complacency and limits potential for growth. It fails both scholars and researchers in neglecting opportunities to hone their ideas, uncover the assumptions limiting their insights, and recognise the boundaries to their vision. It creates a culture where no-one asks the hard questions: What is important to know? How can that knowledge be applied to secure an occupationally just future? In offering this critique, we trust that readers will join us in valuing the
opinions expressed and the arguments advanced. Constructive criticism can generate respect within a community committed to reaching forward to a better future. A community that encompasses honest attempts to express criticism and doubt, despite the discomfort, opens the door to seeing the bigger picture, and making a difference.

Our hope is that you will be challenged, informed and inspired by this book. We willingly acknowledge that many other perspectives might have been brought to bear, and that we have not represented all of the critical voices in the field. Rather, this is a work in progress, a point in time. We look forward to being part of the new conversations that the ideas expressed in this volume unleash. To close, we acknowledge those who willingly accepted our invitation to contribute to this collection by sharing a traditional Maori proverb:

Ui mai koe ki ahau he aha te mea nui o te ao, Māku e kī atu he tangata, he tangata, he tangata!
Ask me what is the greatest thing in the world, I will reply: It is people, it is people, it is people!

Gail E. Whiteford
Clare Hocking
2011
Introduction

Occupational Science: Society, Inclusion, Participation advances an emancipatory agenda in which we stress the power of occupation to address global population inequities. The agenda is informed by a suite of initiatives undertaken by local governments, non-government organizations and individual citizens working to improve the lives of vulnerable people. Such initiatives include, amongst others, those aimed at income creation for persons excluded from labour markets, developing safe environments following natural disasters, and reducing the impact of infectious diseases including AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria through community-based education programmes.

As occupational scientists, we have framed the ideas presented in this book relative to such global initiatives in explicitly occupational terms. Examples of populations with occupational needs include people excluded from education and work that would ensure their survival and provide the means to rise out of poverty, people participating in antisocial and self-destructive occupations, and those forced into degrading and
life-threatening occupations (e.g., slave labour, forced prostitution). Examples of phenomena cast in occupational terms include:

- Environmental degradation caused through patterns of occupational participation that are inappropriate to their specific context;
- The disruption of traditional occupations in discrete communities and the corollaries of this;
- The increasing burden of caregiving in communities at one end of the spectrum affected by population diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and at the other end because of increased life expectancy;
- The continued occupational deprivation experienced by populations affected by natural disasters and conflicts;
- The mobilization of oppressed and marginalized groups into civic action as a response to the exclusions and occupational injustices they have experienced.

Our hope, in assembling the collection of critical essays presented here, has been to stimulate the development of a more critical and reflexive science of occupation. Through the examination and illumination of the ontological biases and assumptions that currently limit our science, we challenge the reader to re-think what may be taken for granted in their own work. Such a reflexive stance enables the possibility of a more socially responsive discipline which in turn is able to make robust and relevant contributions to societal reform, inclusion and participation. To achieve this admittedly ambitious aim, we assembled a range of critical perspectives that would inspire, guide and inform knowledge development salient to an active engagement with pressing societal issues of an essentially occupational nature.

Chapter authors were invited to address the underlying societal structures and the occupational injustices that prevent inclusion and participation, from the perspective of their own practice, research and scholarship. Our hope is that their ideas set new parameters and directions for the development of occupational science into the future. With this objective in mind, the book begins with Magalhães’ exposition on oppression and liberation in which she invokes the wisdom of her Brazilian mentor, Paulo Freire. Her reflection problematizes the very nature of occupational science, highlighting attendant tensions between an essential humanism and an at times positivist epistemology. Pointing to issues of language, science and power, Magalhães’ interrogates the risk of accepting the reductionist and individualistic perspective of biomedical science, rather than the emancipatory and collectivist agenda that Freire advanced. Set in a real-world context that acknowledges the personal costs of activism, her lively contribution reminds us of the necessity of theorizing social action in order to understand the purposes it ultimately serves.

Understanding occupation, the second section of the book, presents an ontological grounding for the ways occupational scientists might best conceptualize people’s engagement in occupation. Citing the predominance of an individualist perspective in occupational science research, even in studies that investigated group-based occupations, Cutchin and Dickie examine the limitations of a science that conceptualizes humans as individual agents responsive to their own needs and meanings. Informed by Dewey’s understanding of human experience as embedded in particular situations, they firmly place human endeavours within a transactional framework that supports
improvement in people’s lives by reconstructing established customs and institutions. In advocating Dewey’s pragmatist attitude, Cutchin and Dickie focus on three dimensions of action: habits – which restrict the participation of people living in restricted circumstances, context – which contains multiple possibilities for action, and creativity – which is required to inquire into and reconfigure habits that will enable the growth of individuals and communities for the common good. As Cutchin and Dickie emphasize, the process of engaging with the world is always a shared inquiry.

Furthering that work, Kantartzis and Molineux critique the genesis and development of occupational science. It is, they assert, predominantly anglophonic in its orientation, and thus informed by the religious, economic, political and educational ideas that have shaped the Western world. Invoking Foucault’s warning that the context from which knowledge emerges has important consequences for the possibilities it might envisage, they remind us that uncritiqued understandings generally represent and reinforce individualized experiences of reality. Consequently, the assumptions about the patterns, norms and meanings of daily occupations that are familiar to people in the English-speaking world do not align with other world views and cultural constructions. Such a disjunction, they suggest, limits the relevance and expansion of occupational science in the future. Illustrating their argument, Kantartzis and Molineux draw from an ethnographic study of daily life in a small Greek village. Their work reveals a flexible interweaving of familial, social and productive occupations inconceivable in post-industrialized settings in which work as a basis of identity construction and social location is more common.

Reflecting further on the limitations of Eurocentric perceptions of the nature of occupation, Hocking picks up and extends previous critiques of occupational science as being essentially individualistic in orientation, emphasizing individual experiences of everyday occupations rather than the ways they shape and are shaped by groups and communities. Occupational scientists’ narrow focus on socially sanctioned occupations and a feminized lens on occupations of significance are also critiqued as ontological perspectives that constrain the field’s contribution to critical scholarship and processes of social change.

Kinsella’s account of occupational scientists as an epistemic community opens the third section of the book, *Ways of knowing occupation*. Drawing on Kuhn’s assertion that scientists make judgements about the utility of theories based on shared epistemic values, Kinsella describes how theory choice, and thus knowledge development, in occupational science is determined by perceptions of the accuracy, simplicity, scope, fruitfulness and consistency of the theories it adopts and rejects. Since individuals might make different judgements, even in relation to the same criteria, it is the shared judgement of the community that effectively decides the field’s theoretical direction. These considerations are important, because such values influence the possibilities for and approaches taken to knowledge generation. On that basis, Kinsella urges the adoption of technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge paradigms and diverse criteria for knowledge claims in occupational science.

The implicit judgement behind this book is the necessity of a critical perspective on occupational science, which is the focus of Sellar’s discussion. Characterizing the field’s current critical stance as Marxian, he argues that theorists have pitted the natural occupational predispositions of humans against unjust societal practices and policies that alienate people from their needs. That is, occupational science has separated
‘natural laws’ (the biological needs and drives that underpin health) from human beliefs and values (which obscure what people need and give rise to injustices). Sellar argues that rather than merely extending that critique, occupational scientists should embrace understandings more suited to occupational science’s perspective on human existence. In so doing, they would be freed to consider what it really means to be critical and what critical practices make possible.

One critical perspective proposed by Laliberté Rudman explores how expectations and possibilities for occupation are shaped by social and political processes. To inform her argument, Laliberté Rudman draws on both critically informed life course perspectives and governmentality theory, which draw attention to complex contextual influences on the ways in which entrée into patterns of occupational participation are made easier for dominant groups whilst excluding or marginalizing others. In addressing the ways occupation is governed, her critical analysis points to cultural, political and structural causations. While acknowledgement of the importance of context is not new, most occupational science research continues to overlook the social processes and mechanisms through which occupational injustices are created and become entrenched as taken for granted practices. Laliberté Rudman maps out a critical approach intended to open up possibilities for dialogue and action towards human flourishing.

Of course, there are also discourses which delimit human flourishing. Dennhardt, in a chapter written in partnership with Laliberté Rudman, introduces risk as such a discourse and explores it from an occupational perspective, a relatively new contribution to the occupational science literature. How occupational scientists frame risk and relate it to occupation will inform possible actions and solutions in relation to occupations deemed as high risk and with respect to at-risk populations. As Dennhardt and Laliberté argue, however, risk is connected to power, in that defining risk pre-empts the responses viewed as rational and possible. Risk, they argue, is alternately framed as an objective hazard that can be quantified, predicted and controlled by rational agents acting on expert advice, or as unanticipated, uncontrollable and socially constructed, albeit with real impacts on individuals and society. Given the pervasive nature and impacts of the risk discourse, and the hegemonic practice that often accompanies it, an occupational science research agenda in this area seems requisite.

Following on from these discussions of the nature of occupation and the perspectives from which it might be viewed, the fourth section of the book addresses more practical concerns; Ways of doing in occupational science. The first consideration in endeavouring to understand the complexity of vulnerable people’s occupations and occupational needs, and the occupational justice issues affecting people internationally, is the choice of research methodology. As Wright-St. Clair argues, how we might come to know occupation in its fullness and determining how human occupation ought to be measured are challenging questions. Underpinning those questions are considerations of the meaning of being a science, what counts as occupational science research, and whether the field is best served by unconstrained organic growth or more focused exploration of pressing social questions. Espousing the value of multiple research methodologies to address different kinds of research questions, Wright-St. Clair also points out that science encompasses the development and application of theory and identification of phenomena of interest.

One phenomenon of interest, in relation to equity of access and occupational justice, is the occupational choices people perceive as being open to them. Galvaan’s study,
which involved young adolescents in a marginalized community in Cape Town, South Africa, employed critical ethnographic methods of inquiry. Against the backdrop of forced relocation into racially segregated communities in the 1970s, that are now characterized by poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, violence, poor access to recreational opportunities and low educational attainment, Galvaan explored participants’ occupational choices over four years. In making sense of the ways the youths’ occupational patterns perpetuated historical injustices, she identified political and socio-economic influences that both constrained and enabled occupation, describing how choices were constructed in transaction with the environment. That is, the participants’ context was more than a backdrop to occupational choice; it was part of the choices they made, contingent on their experience of historically and politically determined patterns of occupation and style of housing, the subcultures they were part of, and others’ low educational expectations of them.

From this locally situated example of engaging in occupation the discussion moves to the international stage, with Wicks’ critique of the role the International Society of Occupational Science (ISOS) has played in fostering the development of the field. Bringing together the need for a coherent, widely adopted knowledge of human occupation and her vision of the ISOS’s potential role, Wicks envisages a respected, sustainable representative body that is well placed to influence policy, participation and practice. Evidencing movement towards that vision, Wicks documents a shift within occupational science, from primarily focusing on occupation’s role in health to the broader issues of occupational justice and advocacy. ISOS has been instrumental in bringing that re-visioning about, influencing the formulation and adoption of a Position Statement on Human Rights by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

Going forward, ISOS is setting the stage for the incorporation of international perspectives in the development of occupational science, through its valuing of inclusiveness, multidisciplinarity and diversity and leadership in bringing the occupational science community into dialogue.

The theme of dialogue is extended in the final chapter by Whiteford and Pereira in which they recommend that occupational science engage in a conceptual dialogue with other disciplines. The purpose of this, they suggest, would be to better understand the utility of core concepts and constructs which have developed in occupational science over time. In particular, they suggest that notions of inclusion and participation are particularly salient to such a process, pointing out the close nexus between framings developed within occupational science and elsewhere. At a time when social inclusion has become a driver in policy development internationally, this is a timely critique. In the chapter they also highlight how the ideals of justice and inclusion can be understood through the presentation and discussion of data from Pereira’s study of poverty and multiple disadvantage. Their conclusion is that occupational science, in particular constructions of occupational justice which foreground difference and diversity in capabilities, has a substantive contribution to make across the arenas of disability, health and welfare. This is, however, a contribution which has yet to be realized.