



**Wilma L. West Library Resource Notes**

**The Importance and Role of Occupation to Children and Adolescents**

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During the past week, I noticed an article in the *Washington Post* about the symbolism or stories in children's art, particularly in regard to the current climate of fear. A friend who is a child psychologist shared with me a story of one of his young clients making a dinosaur of clay during a session. The boy brought a cave for the dinosaur to his next session and asked my friend if he thought that all of us were also going to be extinct. I asked another friend, the principal of an elementary school, how her children were responding to the Pentagon incident and to the Anthrax scare in the Washington metropolitan area. She said: "Well, you know, they do well if their routine schedule of school, soccer practice and games, or music lessons continue."

This Resource Note addresses the Occupation of Children, and particularly play.

Bowen-Irish, T. (1999). IN THE CLINIC: Finding purposeful activity through the lost and found. *OT Practice*, 4(7), 47-48.

ABSTRACT: One of the most valuable rewards was the delivery of lost items. It was a moment where one child was actually performing a good deed for another child within his or her community.

Bracegirdle, H. (1992). The use of play in occupational therapy: Normal play development. *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 55(4), 141-142.

ABSTRACT: Unless a therapist has a good grasp of the sequence of normal play development, he/she is unable either to assess a child's current developmental level accurately or to suggest play activities which are appropriate for the child. The study of play is complex and only two of the main categories of play can be discussed here, each from babyhood to school age. It is not only children with impairments who are disadvantaged developmentally and a brief mention of social class related differences in play behavior is made. The article also looks critically at the quality of play research in its comparison of old and new developmental inventories

Burke, J.P. (1998). Play: The life role of the infant and young child. In: Case-Smith, J. (Ed.). *Pediatric occupational therapy and early intervention*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Boston, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann (pp. 189-205).

Kao, C.C. & Kellegrew, D.H. (2000). Self-concept, achievement and occupation in gifted Taiwanese adolescents. *Occupational Therapy International*, 7(2), 121-133.

**ABSTRACT:** The education of gifted adolescents that underachieve is a significant problem that impacts on the child's educational opportunities and possible career trajectory. Many researchers propose that a child's self-concept is predictive of academic achievement. Using an occupational science paradigm, this study examined the notion that an adolescent's self concept and academic achievement are also related to the types and time expended in occupation. Eighteen gifted achieving and underachieving Taiwanese junior high school students completed the Multidimensional Self-concept Scale and a time diary for one week in the summer. The results indicated that self-concept, achievement and time expended in academic occupations are positively related. Furthermore, there are differences between these two groups of students in the time expended in academic and social activities. The study has cross-cultural implications regarding the time use of young Taiwanese teens.

Coster, W. (1998). Occupation-centered assessment of children. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 52(5), 337-344.

**ABSTRACT:** The past 5 years have seen increasing calls to reexamine our assessment and intervention practices to ensure that they reflect the profession's basic focus on occupation. Although a number of noteworthy efforts in this direction have been presented for adult practice areas, implementation of occupation-centered assessment in pediatrics has been hampered by the lack of a consistent framework to guide this process. This article will present an adaptation of the functional assessment model proposed by Trombly (1993) designed to better reflect the unique needs and situations of children. It is a multilevel model that examines the patterns of a child's occupations in a particular environment as well as the performance of important tasks and activities that are part of these occupations. It is proposed that this model can serve as an organizing framework for an occupation-centered assessment process by helping to identify the critical questions that need to be addressed at each level of analysis and the kinds of measures that might be used to obtain relevant information. The newly completed School Function Assessment will be used to illustrate application of the framework to examine occupational performance of children in elementary school.

Florey, L.L. (1999). Transformations in a summer camp: The role of occupations. *Mental Health Special Interest Section Quarterly*, 22(3), 2-4.

Gartland, T. & Gossack, B. (1997 Oct). The meaning of family rituals for occupational therapy. *The Journal of Occupational Therapy Students*, 3-7.

**ABSTRACT:** Family rituals and traditions provide a solid foundation for family members' values and beliefs and a base for meeting the developmental needs of a family as it grows and changes. Human occupation and family rituals share a relationship because both bring meaning and purpose to people's lives. This relationship was examined by asking one family with two adolescent children open-ended and closed-ended questions about family rituals and their importance to family members. All family members believed that family rituals and traditions provide them with a sense of security, adaptability, and shared learning. These results illustrate the relationship between human occupation and family rituals. Family rituals are meaningful activities and an important component of human occupation and should assume a greater role in interactions between occupational therapy practitioners and clients.

Henry A.D. & Coster W.J. (1997). Competency beliefs and occupational role behavior among adolescents: explication of the personal causation construct. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 51(4), 267-76.

**ABSTRACT:** According to the Model of Human Occupation (MHO), beliefs regarding competency can influence whether a person's occupational role behavior is adaptive or maladaptive. Such beliefs are considered to be part of a person's sense of "personal causation." This article reviews some of the theoretical underpinnings of the personal causation construct. Issues addressed are the distinction between competency beliefs and locus of control (another aspect of personal causation according to the MOHO); the domain-specific nature of competency beliefs; and, in particular, the evidence for a relationship between competency beliefs and actual behavior. The article focuses on competency beliefs and their relationship to three domains of occupational behavior that have relevance for adolescents: academic ability, social competence, and physical competence. Implications for clinical practice with adolescents with psychiatric disorders are addressed.

Howard, L. (1996). A comparison of leisure-time activities between able-bodied children and children with physical disabilities. *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 59(12), 570-574.

**ABSTRACT:** This article reports on a survey of able-bodied and physically disabled children to investigate their out-of-school activities. It outlines the importance of play and leisure time in the child's development before considering the findings from a questionnaire given to 6-11 year olds. The results mirror those elsewhere in the literature, mostly from the USA, that children with physical disabilities have a less rich play experience than able-bodied children, spending more time in the company of adults, watching television more and generally having less variety in their lives. The significance of the findings for occupational therapy is discussed and areas for future research are suggested.

Kellegrew, D.H. (1998) Creating opportunities for occupation: An intervention to promote the self-care independence of young children with special needs. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 52(6), 457-465.

**ABSTRACT: OBJECTIVE.** The relationship between opportunities for occupation and the skill performance of young children with special needs was explored, using a multiple baseline across subjects design. **METHOD.** Three caregivers self-monitored the frequency with which they were able to create opportunities for their child to practice emerging self-dressing or self-feeding skills. **RESULTS.** Two caregivers quickly promoted self-care independence in their child by restructuring daily routines to provide more opportunities for the child to independently engage in the targeted occupation. One caregiver was unable to use the intervention techniques effectively. **CONCLUSION.** Opportunity for occupation can influence the child's skill performance and can be used as a treatment modality by some families.

Knox, S.H. (1997). Play and play styles of preschool children. Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California. (Dissertation)

**ABSTRACT:** This study investigated the play behavior and play styles of preschool children. Six children, three boys and three girls, from the ages of 3.7 to 5.4 years were studied in order to identify individual play styles and address how the physical and social environments affected play style. Play style was defined as the preferences, attitudes, approaches, and social reciprocity that the child brings to a play situation. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, including extended videotaped observations and interviews, fourteen characteristics of play style were identified and were divided into four elements: 1. Preferences refer to the choices that a child makes in regard to settings, toys, types of play, roles assumed

in play, and playmates. 2. Attitudes refer to the mood or affect the child exhibits, the consistency or variability of moods and humor. 3. Approach is the manner in which the child approaches play activity. It includes direction, or what outwardly appears to incite or motivate a child to action, focus, or involvement in activity, and spontaneity in play. 4. Social reciprocity refers to the amount of social interaction and "give and take" involved in play. It includes whether the child is oriented towards the self or others, the child's responsivity in social encounters, and flexibility or adaptability. A microanalysis of each child's play style was conducted and the six children were described in terms of play style elements and characteristics. Play style was discussed in terms of how children orchestrate or plan their play activities throughout the day. The environments within which the children's play was observed included a day care center that all of the children attended, individual homes, kindergarten classes, summer day camps, and community settings. An interactive model of play was developed with focus on the child, the environment, and the play episode. The reciprocal interaction between the child, through his or her play style, and the environment, with its affordances, can be observed through the play episode. Implications for occupational science, application to occupational therapy, and implications for child development were discussed

Law, M. & Dunn, W. (1993). Perspectives on understanding and changing the environments of children. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics*, 13(3), 1-17.

**ABSTRACT:** Children with disabilities encounter environmental constraints that limit their active participation in the daily life of our communities. As a result, their daily activity patterns are less varied and more socially isolated than peers without disabilities are. Factors, such as restricted physical environments, normative classification of children and the power of health disciplines are cited as contributing to the creation of these disabling environments. Dissatisfaction with the ability of health care to change these factors has led to changes in the recognition of disability rights, the need for consumer participation in life planning and the importance of social policy. One could argue that these modifications, while meaningful, have not successfully solved the problems of disabling environments that limit activity. In this paper we explore the use of a broader social and political framework to alter the limited participation of children with disabilities. In this model, we consider disability primarily as a problem in the relationship between the individual and the environment. The principles of a socio-political planning model for disability include the importance of people's values, integration of household and work, improved community accessibility, pluralistic views, effective citizen participation and participatory research.

Mancini, M.C., Coster, W.J., Trombly, C.A. & Heeren, T.C. (2000). Predicting elementary school participation in children with disabilities. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 81(3), 339-347.

**ABSTRACT: OBJECTIVE:** To identify predictors of participation in school activities from two sets of functional variables using classification and regression tree analysis. **DESIGN:** Relational study. **PARTICIPANTS:** A nationwide sample of 341 children with various disabling conditions, including physical and cognitive/behavioral types of impairment and various severity levels. Children attended public elementary school in 40 states in the United States. **MAIN OUTCOME MEASURE:** Overall participation in elementary school, combining children's participation in six different environments (transportation, transitions, classroom, cafeteria, bathroom, and playground), as measured by the newly developed School Function Assessment. The children were dichotomized into full (n=117) and limited (n=224) participation categories. **RESULTS:** Two classification trees were developed identifying a small set of

predictors from variables measuring performance of functional tasks and discrete activities. Final predictive models included physical and cognitive-behavioral variables, suggested important interactions among predictors, and identified meaningful cut-off points that classified the sample into the outcome categories with about 85% accuracy. **CONCLUSIONS:** Limited participation was predicted by information about children's physical capabilities. Full participation was predicted by a combination of physical and cognitive-behavioral variables. Findings underscore the relative utility of functional performance compared with impairment information to predict the outcome, and suggest pathways of influence to consider in future research and intervention efforts.

Parham, L.D. & Fazio, L. S. (Eds.). (1997). Play in occupational therapy for children. St. Louis, MO: Mosby, Inc.

Pollock, N., Stewart, D., Law, M. Sahagian-Whalen, S., Harvey, S. & Toal, C. (1997). The meaning of play for young people with physical disabilities. *The Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 64(1), 25-31.

**ABSTRACT:** As a primary area of occupation, play is central to the lives of children. Emerging views of play reflect the complexity of the area, and focus on the relationship between the person and the environment during play. This paper reports the results of a qualitative study of twenty adolescents with and without physical disabilities. The participants were interviewed about their perceptions and personal experiences of play. Through a textual analysis of the data, significant themes related to the nature of play, environmental barriers and supports, and personal influences on play were identified. Clinical implications are discussed in relation to these themes.

Primeau, L.A., Clark, F., & Pierce, D. (1989). Occupational therapy alone has looked upon occupation: Future applications of Occupational Science to pediatric occupational therapy. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care*, 6(4), 19-32.

**ABSTRACT:** Occupational therapy has been an invisible profession, largely because the public has had difficulty grasping the concept of occupation. The emergence of occupational science has the potential of improving this situation. Occupational science is firmly rooted in the founding ideas of occupational therapy. In the future, the nature of human occupation will be illuminated by the development of a basic theory of occupational science. Occupational science, through research and theory development, will guide the practice of occupational therapy. Applications of occupational science to the practice of pediatric occupational therapy are presented. Ultimately, occupational science will prepare pediatric occupational therapists to better meet the needs of parents and their children.

Primeau, L.A. & Ferguson, J. M. (1999). Occupational frame of reference. In: Kramer, P. & Hinojosa, J. (Eds.). Frames of reference for pediatric occupational therapy. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Philadelphia, PA; Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. (pp. 469-516.).

Reilly, M. (Ed.) (1974). Play as exploratory learning: Studies of curiosity behavior. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Rodger, S. & Ziviani, J. (1999) Play-based occupational. *International Journal of Disability, Development & Education*, 46(3), 337-365.

Abstract: This paper provides an overview of how occupational therapists view play; illustrates how occupational therapists' view of play has evolved, generating a shift in focus for intervention; introduces a model of play as occupation to illustrate how children's ability to play may be influenced by developmental disabilities; outlines occupational therapy assessment and treatment using play as the basis for intervention; and, finally, identifies aspects of best practice. The term developmental disabilities refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders. Because it is not within the scope of this paper to provide detailed discussion of play-based occupational therapy intervention for all the children who comprise this group, the authors have chosen to illustrate various points made with examples of different types of children with various types of disability.

Saunders, I., Sayer, M. & Goodale, A. (1999). The relationship between playfulness and coping in preschool children: A pilot study. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 53(2), 221-226.

Abstract: Effective play and coping skills may be important determinants of children's adaptive behavior. In this study, the relationship between playfulness and coping skills in young children is explored. The play behaviors of 19 randomly selected preschool children (aged 36-63 months) were rated by researchers using The Test of Playfulness. The children's coping skills were rated by their teachers with the Coping Inventory. A positive, significant correlation was found between children's level of playfulness and their coping skills. Overall, girls were rated as more playful than boys and scored higher in coping skills. Younger children (36-47 months of age) were rated as better players and copers than older children (47-57 months of age). This pilot study supports occupational therapy intervention in children's play environments and playful

Scaletti, R. (1995). Children's occupation the beginning of the work personality *New Zealand Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 46(2), 10-14.

ABSTRACT: It is hypothesized that children's biological needs and drives, and recognition and encouragement of these by parents, families, and teachers, determine the course of their development and ultimately the nature of their work personality. Children's occupations, or the roles they occupy over time in relation to significant others in their lives, are dynamic and change in response to the innate occupational needs of the individual, and influences of family and culture. Play, the universal role of children is seen as a precursor to, and major determinant of, the work personality. The manner in which play influences the development of children's occupations and the work personality is discussed within the context of differing theoretical opinions.

Segal, R. & Frank, G. (1998). The extraordinary construction of ordinary experience: Scheduling daily life in families with children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 5(3), 141-147.

ABSTRACT: Interest in the concept of occupation as a basic human phenomenon, and the establishment of the discipline of occupational science, are prompting a renewed appreciation among occupational therapists of the temporal dimension of patients' lives in and out of the clinic. Although most clinicians know that the orchestration of activities in daily life can support or hinder treatment, the organization of occupations into daily routines has not yet been studied extensively in occupational therapy or occupational science. The present study examines the adaptation of families raising children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in

terms of the extraordinary work they perform to construct daily schedules within the ordinary pattern of time use. Seventeen families with children with ADHD were interviewed about their daily schedules and routines. This paper focuses on parents' explanations of their family's afternoon (i.e. after-school) schedules, particularly how the parents scheduled times for homework, dinner, and free time. Parents' scheduling considerations included their children's abilities to concentrate, the children's other physiological and emotional needs, and parental work schedules. The cultural relevance of the afternoon schedule and its importance for designing occupational therapy intervention at the homes of children with special needs is discussed.

Spitzer, S.L. (2001). No words necessary: An ethnography of daily activities with young children who don't talk. Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California. (Dissertation)

**ABSTRACT:** Understanding and participating in the activities of young children, especially children with developmental disabilities, such as autism, can be difficult for adults. In this qualitative study, the guiding question was "How do young children with developmental disabilities create and convey meaning through their daily activities?" The participants were a total of 5 three- and four-year old children, with a diagnosis of autism, who did not consistently use language to communicate spontaneously. Participant-observation was used to collect the data in the home and other natural settings in which the child engaged in daily activities. Interviews with key adults in the child's daily life provided supplemental information. Analysis of fieldnotes and transcripts was focused on the children's occupations, that is, meaningful, directed activities that occupied their time. Unique patterns and preferences were identified and described for each child and his or her activities. The meaning, from the child's perspective, was interpreted with close attention to how a child did the activity and its relationship to the child's needs, desires, and abilities. Findings were related to the following conceptual topics: defining occupation, framing an occupation, the nature of changes within an occupation over time, temporal links to past occupations, occupational structure, self-direction, and reframing of required activities into more satisfying occupations. Although they shared a diagnosis, through their engagement in activities, the children were seen as unique individuals with their own particular interests and abilities. Categories of the children's activities with others were identified as being equipped (accepting materials from another), guided (accepting assistance from another), mentored (incorporating another's suggestion), and shared (maintaining reciprocal interaction). The participants used their bodies, sensory perception, objects, and scripted action instead of words to mediate and focus their interaction on an activity with shared meaning. There was an implicit agreement about the shared meaning of the activity--what they were doing, why, and how. Through these shared activities, the children seemed to be connecting and building relationships with other people. Suggestions were made for balancing person-centered and family-centered services for children with developmental disabilities.

Stagnitti, K. & Unsworth, C. (2000). The importance of pretend play in child development: An occupational therapy perspective. *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 63(3), 121-127.

**ABSTRACT:** Play is a complex behavior and is defined as being more internally than externally motivated, transcending reality as well as reflecting reality, controlled by the player, involving more attention to process than product, safe, usually fun, unpredictable, pleasurable and spontaneous and involving non-obligatory active engagement (Bundy 1997, Stewart et al. 1991). Pretend play, which occurs between the ages of 18 months and 6 years, reflects these qualities of play. Using the World Health Organization's classification of body functions and structures, activities and participation (ICIDH-2, WHO 1999), this paper outlines the skills that

are essential for pretend play ability and asserts that if there are any impairments in these skills the child experiences a reduced ability to pretend play. This leads to possible participation restrictions in the child's life, such as difficulties in fulfilling usual social roles. Cognitive, social and emotional skills are presented as having the biggest impact on pretend play development, while the motor and sensorimotor skills that enable the child to manipulate objects in the environment are presented as being of secondary importance. Two models are offered which illustrate the importance of pretend play to child development and the sequence of play development. The paper concludes by recommending that occupational therapists address and reduce the participation restrictions that some children experience in learning and social situations by enabling a child to increase activity in pretend play.

Some pertinent Web Sites:

<http://www.kidsource.com>

**The Nature of Children's Play By David Fernie**

**Learning Through Play**, and AOTA Fact Sheet

\*This site also has a section that a section with material on "Smallpox, Anthrax & Terrorism" directed at the parent, kid, and teen.