(Co-)Occupation – A Fresh Perspective

Karline Doidge
Dr. Linda H. Wilson
WHY I’M NOT ATTENDING IN PERSON...
OVERVIEW

- What is ‘Co-occupation’?
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusion
Co-occupation...

- A concept original to occupational science (Pierce & Marshall, 2004)
- Based on theoretical understandings
- Largely been neglected in empirical research
- Arose in the mothering context (Pierce & Marshall, 2004)
- Refers to the interplay and interdependence of the occupations of two or more people (Pierce, 2009)
- Is often thought of as being human interaction only
DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF CO-OCCUPATION

Pierce (Pierce & Marshall, 2004) defined co-occupations as highly interactive occupations on a social continuum of occupation.
DIFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF CO-OCCUPATION

Zemke and Clark (1996): co-occupations are the most interactive of all social occupations that can be parallel (beside each other, not connected) shared (such as participating in the same occupation but not interacting)
Olson (2004) believes that co-occupations are co-created experiences; both participants bring their personal capacities to co-occupations.
Pickens and Pizur-Barnekow (2009) challenged Pierce’s concept: co-occupations occur when two or more people have specific levels of shared physicality, emotionality, and intentionality.
DOIDGE’S THEORY (2010/2011)

Honours research on dog-owner’s occupations that are related to their dog

Co-occupation

Together (shared time and space)

- Doing with
- Doing to

Alone (shared time and space not required)

- Doing for
- Doing because of
MOTHERS AND MOTHERING

- Mother defined as a woman who is the primary caregiver of their child (Francis-Connolly, 2004)
- Mothering can be defined as nourishing and looking after someone with love and affection (Primeau, 2004)
- Mothering often involves ‘enfolded occupation’, commonly referred to as multi-tasking (Bateson, 1996)
Mothering occupations:

- Have many purposes (Price & Stephenson, 2009):
  - Nurturing (physically, emotionally)
  - Supporting development
- Lasts a lifetime! (Francis-Connolly, 1998)
- This research was undertaken with a focus on mothering children aged 0-5 as this has been identified as the timeframe of most intensive mothering (Evans & Rodger, 2008)
RESEARCH QUESTION

‘Do the four co-occupations categories describe the mothering occupations of mothers of children aged 0-5 years?’
METHODOLOGY

- Pragmatist paradigm (Malone, 2001)
- Content analysis methodology – making inferences from text (Krippendorff, 2004)
- A priori assumption – mothering occupations can be described as ‘doing with’, ‘doing to’, ‘doing for’ and ‘doing because of’
RESEARCH POPULATION

- 10 Mothers of children aged 0-5
- Different key characteristics such as:
  - Single/married
  - Mum of many/one
  - Working/stay at home
  - Disabled child/non-disabled child
  - Homosexual/heterosexual
  - Older/younger
  - Adopted/birth mother
BLOGS AS A DATA SOURCE

- Blogs are a novel and rich data source when undertaking social research (Jones & Alony, 2008)
- “Fascinating archives of human thought” (Lewis, 2006, p.1)
- Free of researcher bias as blogs contain existing ‘monologues’ that are structured to the bloggers’ liking (Lascia, 2001)
LIMITATIONS OF BLOGS AS A DATA SOURCE

- Content and/or blogger personality may be fictitious (Jones & Alony, 2008)
- Biased sample due to computer access being a prerogative to be able to blog
- Content may be hard to analyze due to format/writing style/links to other websites
**MULTISTAGE RANDOM SAMPLING**

- First randomly selected a blog through a random number generator
- Randomly sampled 5% of posts if more than 100 posts total, 10% of posts if less than 100 posts total
EXAMPLE OF A BLOG
DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLED BLOGS

- 10 Blogs were sampled
- A total of 362 word.docx pages – median length 36.2 pages
- Largest sample 136 pages, including 257 photographs
- Smallest sample 3 pages
RESULTS

- The events vary in reported depth and complexity.
- Participants in the reported ‘doings’ may vary.
- Mother and child may be involved in the same event with same or with different occupational foci.
- Spatially, mother and child may or may not be in the same place.
- Four categories.
THE EVENTS VARY IN REPORTED DEPTH AND COMPLEXITY

“And I tossed the refuse in a trash bin” (Sweets, p. 14, l. 20)

Very detailed – micro description

“We just vegged all day long.” (Amanda, p.1, ll. 11, 12)

Short overview – macro description
EXAMPLE OF COMPOUNDS
PARTICIPANTS IN THE REPORTED ‘EVENTS’ MAY VARY

- Mother an observer of her child’s occupation:
  “H has had a ball tearing wrapping paper off many a gift.” (The Feminist Housewife, p. 3, l.2)

- Children not present but linked:
  “I got to laugh out loud today when I told my hairdresser that I wanted one of my children to learn how to do hair so I could get mine done every week.” (Kathy, p. 7, ll. 22-24)

- Mother and children present and active:
  “I couldn't just send them into the bathroom, I would have to take them in, stop them from squabbling as to who stands where (each now has their own step stools - that was the answer!)” (Mary, p. 2, ll. 17-21)
Mother and Child may be involved in the same activity with the same, or with different, foci.

1st photo: smiling at each other
2nd photo: focus on Nella
SAME ACTIVITY – DIFFERENT FOCI

“I was enjoying watching her eat it so much, I had tears in my eyes.” (Kelle, p. 102, ll. 4-5)

- Nella’s focus – eating strawberry
- Kelle’s focus – watching Nella eat the strawberry
SPATIALLY, MOTHER AND CHILD MAY OR MAY NOT BE IN THE SAME PLACE

“I’ve read online that you can’t spoil a baby before they’re six months old. I’ve also heard that, up to 3 months, a baby is in the “4th trimester” and needs to be held a LOT.” (Sweets, p.9, ll. 10,11)

- Mother and child are spatially much further apart and not interacting.
- Sweets is acquiring knowledge without the baby needing to be present in this occupation.
FOUR CATEGORIES

Doing together

Doing with
- Highly interactive
- Less interactive

Doing alongside

Letting do

Doing for

Doing because of

Doing to

Being done to
‘DOING FOR’

- “[...] she can't eat huge bites of things, you have to chop them in little pieces.” (Amanda, p. 2, l. 19)
- The child’s presence in the same time and space is not necessary but possible
- The mother is the actor and the child is the immediate recipient of the activity’s product
- ‘Doing for’ events are done to enable the child’s activity
‘DOING BECAUSE OF’

“I kept asking if she was okay, and they told me she was fine. (...) So, I asked why her nose was smooshed...why she looked funny. (...) I cried and cried while everyone smiled and took pictures of her, like nothing was wrong. I kept crying and asking, "Is there something you aren't telling me?" ...and they just kept smiling.” (Kelle, p.12, 13, ll.13-17, 1-8)

- The child’s presence in the same time and space is not necessary.
- The child (and the child’s activity) are the cause for the activity
‘Doi ng alon gside’

“The most amazing part of motherhood has been watching him watch his brand new world.” (Michelle, p. 23, ll. 2, 3)

1. Child as primary focus
The mother’s occupational focus is the child’s occupational focus
The mother is an observer rather than a participant in the child’s activity
‘DOING ALONGSIDE’

- “I found myself last week screaming talking very loud when the toddler as usual was “washing dishes” with me. She was wet and the floor was wet... I saw the look of utter amazement of her face when I lost my cool! “What’s the matter, Mom?” or, more specifically “WTF?” “What is the BIG deal?” (Karen, p. 19, ll. 12-17)

- 2. Karen’s and Mieka’s presence in a shared environment (the kitchen) with different occupational foci

- Karen attends to her child by frequently changing her focus and checking on her child out of safety concerns
‘Doing with’
‘Doing with’ - ‘Doing to’ and ‘Being done to’

“In the bathroom, the changing table was in the handicapped stall. I got Little Man situated, putting a disposable pad under him, and I pulled off his shorts (left his shoes on) and opened the diaper to one of the biggest poops I’ve seen!” (Sweets, p. 14, ll. 1-4)

“I had to pull away the dirty diaper, because he began kicking me and put his shoe IN some poop. Ack!” (Sweets, p.14, ll. 9, 10)
PROPOSED DEFINITION

Co-occupations have many components that vary, depending on the relationship between the occupations:

They may or may not occur in the same time and space.

Sometimes, the participants are present in each other’s activities, sometimes not.

Sometimes, the participants have a common goal in their co-occupation, sometimes not.

Sometimes, co-occupations are experienced as being positive, sometimes as negative, and sometimes as neutral.

In co-occupations, neither participant has sole control over the outcome of the co-occupation.
Conclusion

- Co-occupation is the interplay of the occupations of two or more people.
- Can be described as being either 'doing with', 'doing alongside', 'doing for', or 'doing because of'.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

- More work needs to be done to agree on a common language
- More research needs to be done to validate the four categories

Doidge, K. (2011). *What is the place of a dog in the occupational life of its owner?* (Bachelor of Occupational Therapy Honours), Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin.


REFERENCES II


REFERENCES III

QUESTIONS
FOUR CATEGORIES

- Doing together
  - Doing with
    - Highly interactive
    - Less interactive
  - Doing alongside
  - Letting do
- Doing alone
  - Doing for
  - Doing because of

Doing to

Being done to
PROPOSED DEFINITION

Co-occupations have many components that vary, depending on the relationship between the occupations:

They may or may not occur in the same time and space.

Sometimes, the participants are present in each other’s activities, sometimes not.

Sometimes, the participants have a common goal in their co-occupation, sometimes not.

Sometimes, co-occupations are experienced as being positive, sometimes as negative, and sometimes as neutral.

In co-occupations, neither participant has sole control over the outcome of the co-occupation.