CONCEPTUAL EVOLUTION OF OCCUPATIONAL ADAPTATION

Overview

The first section will explore prominent occupational therapy and occupational science literature on the construct of occupational adaptation and methods of assessment used to measure the construct. Chapter 1 emphasizes the conceptual evolution of the construct of occupational adaptation from the beginning of the occupational therapy profession to the present day. This chapter was originally published as Grajo, Boisselle, and DaLomba’s (2018) scoping study in the Open Journal of Occupational Therapy. The chapter introduces the purpose of this book through grounding definitions of adaptation and the themes prominent in literature. The chapter will set the groundwork for Chapter 2 through an introduction of various research methods that propose how occupational adaptation can be measured in practice, education, and research.

Chapter 2 expands upon the literature highlighted in Chapter 1, with a focus on the manner in which adaptation is assessed in occupational therapy literature. Adaptation as an outcome of occupational therapy intervention will be highlighted through historical literature, review of qualitative and quantitative assessments tools that have been created, and clinical and observational studies. Several themes such as relative mastery, occupational identity and competence, and adaptive capacity are introduced in both chapters and continue to develop throughout the book.
Defining the Construct of Occupational Adaptation

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Overview

In this chapter, we synthesize as an introductory chapter the results of a scoping study on the construct of occupational adaptation that we published as an original research article in the *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (Grajo, Boisselle, & Dalomba, 2018). The study highlighted four essential definitions of the construct of occupational adaptation based on an analysis of 74 articles published in peer-reviewed publications. Occupational adaptation is defined as:

1. A product of engagement in occupation,
2. A transaction with the environment,
3. A manner of responding to change and life transitions,
4. A process of forming a desired sense of self.

This chapter aims to provide an overview and synthesis, through a scoping study perspective, of the many expansions on the construct of occupational adaptation that you will read about throughout this text.
**Defining Adaptation**

Adaptation is a critical construct in occupational therapy and occupational science. Definitions of adaptation in occupational therapy and occupational science literature have been varied and at times ambiguous. Occupational therapists often witness a transformative and personal process that occurs within the client when faced with diversity and change. Adaptation in this context is frequently used to define the internal human process as referenced in seminal literature. Meyer (1922/1977) asserted that many diseases of the 20th century are a result of problems of adaptation and that meaningful work can serve as “sovereign help” in helping patients become more adaptive (p. 639). Kielhofner (1980) described adaptation as an acquisition of competence. It is also viewed as a response to time and physical change (Fine, 1991; King, 1978); a source of meaning and motivation (Fine, 1991; Schultz & Schkade, 1997); and dependent upon the demands of the environment (Kielhofner, 2008; Schkade & Schultz, 1992). Adaptation has also been described in the literature as a method of modifying activities or tasks, making changes to the environment, and identifying the need for assistive equipment (Schultz & Schkade, 1997). However, this definition largely involves external influences on human occupation and not an internal human process that occurs during occupational participation.

Adaptation as a biological, sociological, and anthropological process has been well defined in the literature. The focus of this chapter, however, is to explore adaptation as a transformative process, internal to the person while participating in occupation and as an outcome of participation in occupation. As such, we will use the term *occupational adaptation* in this study to represent the construct as it relates to occupational participation.
goal-directed action. Thus, action possibilities are formed at multiple levels within these widespread systems and are enhanced or inhibited at different levels of the process to generate a specific response. Occupational adaptation heavily relies on the individual’s ability to generate multiple action possibilities (adaptive response mechanisms; Schkade & Schultz, 1992) and the presence of healthy and accurate enhancing and inhibitory mechanisms for the final action selection. In the Occupational Adaptation (OA) model (Schkade & Schultz, 1992), this process is equivalent to specific adaptive response generation, evaluation, and integration processes.

Specific Brain Structures and Circuits

The *prefrontal cortex* is located in the anterior (front) of the brain and is part of the neocortex. Different areas in the prefrontal cortex differentially influence the action selection process. The prefrontal cortex is required for executive control of behavior (McGuire and Botvinick, 2010; Ridderinkhof, van Den Wildenberg, Segalowitz, & Carter, 2004) and for effective coping with stress (Amat et al., 2014; Sotres-Bayon & Quirk, 2010; Warden et al., 2012). Prefrontal dysfunction has been implicated in mood and anxiety disorders, which are typically associated with stressful life events (Etkin, Merhav, & Ordentlich, 2010; Mayberg et al., 1999; Milad & Quirk, 2012). Three main regions and related networks are distinguished for their differential contributions to action selection (Figure 4-1).

The *dorsolateral prefrontal* network involves the dorsolateral prefrontal regions (dorsal/upper region of the prefrontal lobe) that connect to sensory and motor association
Summary and Implications

- MOHO provides a framework to aid in understanding the clinical implications linked to occupational adaptation.
- The person factors as presented by MOHO (volition, habituation, and performance capacity) are involved in the development of occupational identity and occupational competence, leading to life participation and occupational adaptation.
- Participation and occupational adaptation are impacted by change, either positive or negative. Understanding the type of change that occurs (incremental, catastrophic, or transformational) can serve as a guide to attaining or meeting the occupational needs of clients.
- The assessments developed for use with MOHO allow clinicians to systematically examine the personal and environmental factors impacting occupational adaptation of their clients.
- Recent evidence has been generated to support the use of MOHO in clinical practice and specifically to address occupational adaptation as impacted by occupation identity and occupational competence.