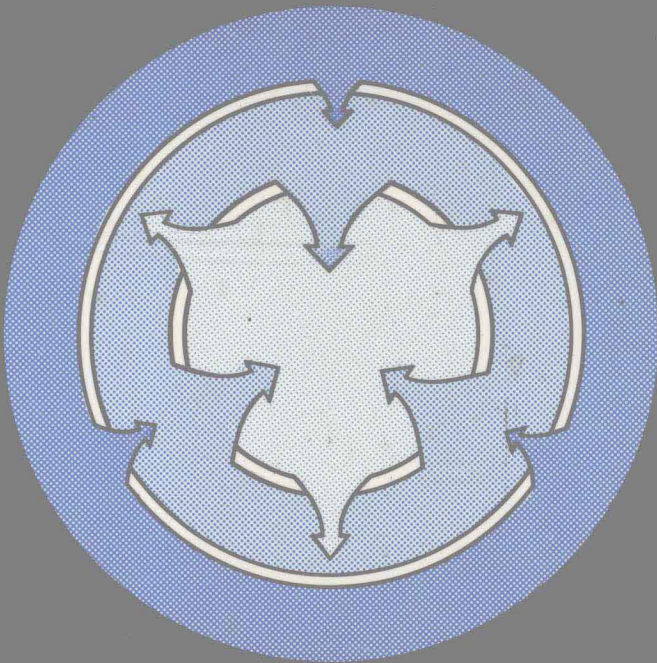


Conceptual Foundations of
***Occupational
Therapy***



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Conceptual Foundations of ***OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY***

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*To GARY CROATT and GERALD W. SHAROTT
and all those who have faded
from our midst too soon*

PREFACE

Throughout writing this book, I was constantly reminded of my own personal journey in occupational therapy. Twenty years ago I first entered an occupational therapy clinic as an aide fulfilling the alternative service obligation of a conscientious objector. What originally promised to be a two-year detour from a career in clinical psychology turned out to be an introduction to what would be my life work. I was drawn to the combination of helping and practical action in occupational therapy, which seemed so much more cogent than the predominantly talk-oriented approaches in psychology. At the end of a year I enrolled in an occupational therapy program with the support of a supervisor who allowed a flexible work schedule to accommodate my classes.

The educational program was my first big disappointment in occupational therapy. Almost all I had seen in the clinics impressed me but, in the classroom I found (along with my classmates) a disconcerting lack of coherence. It was not so much that the specific facts and concepts offered in classes were not useful enough, in and of themselves. Rather, it seemed that while I was beginning to understand human anatomy, how the unconscious worked, and the intricacies of neuromuscular physiology and while I had acquired a number of practical skills, something more basic was missing. Simply put, it seemed that I was not really learning about occupational therapy. It seemed that all the important knowledge in the curriculum came from other fields. The occupational therapy content was elusive at best. There was only the vague hope offered by several professors that everything would "come together" in clinical internships. I often wondered why the best was saved for last.

My misgivings were reinforced when I attended the American Occupational Therapy Association annual conference, where several presentations focused on the problem of *identity* in occupational therapy. It seemed as though members of the field shared a collective *identity crisis*. We all were or were becoming occupational therapists, but no one seemed altogether sure of what that meant. At that same conference, I was encouraged by some presentations in which therapists proposed ways to explain occupational therapy on its own terms, instead of resorting to the theoretical constructs of other disciplines. This effort was particularly notable in the work of Dr. Mary Reilly and her students and colleagues at the University of Southern California (USC). The experience had an impact on me. I dropped out of my occupational therapy program at the end of the first year and began again at USC. There I

had the opportunity to participate in the exciting enterprise of developing a more comprehensive conceptualization of the nature of occupational therapy.

As a result of this experience and my desire for a clearer conceptual articulation of occupational therapy, I begin writing immediately as a new therapist. In the beginning years I variously presented my ideas as constituting a conceptual framework, model, and paradigm. It would be nice to say that I was sure at the outset what these different terms meant, or, more to the point, that I had a clearly formulated idea about how knowledge is generated and organized in a profession. However, that was not the case. Rather, I have struggled throughout my professional life with the problem of how we might properly think about the range of knowledge within occupational therapy. I have also pondered related questions of which knowledge is relevant, irrelevant, and most important. A tendency to be opinionated on the topic has provided me with a wealth of good, critical feedback both in conversation and in the literature. Increasingly, I realize the debt I owe to those who cared enough about what I said to disagree with me.

This book represents my *current* thinking on the knowledge base of occupational therapy—my best attempt to decipher what exists and to speculate about what could and should be. In attempting to mirror the ideas and themes manifest in occupational therapy, I have, no doubt, interjected the perspective of my own grasp of these elements and a particular ideological position developed through a personal history of experiences in the field. In the end that will be both the strength and weakness of the arguments contained herein.

Because I like to recognize order in the world, there is an admitted tendency in this text to perceive a systematic structure in the knowledge base where others might legitimately disagree, recognizing a more disorderly reality. I believe, however, that the approach I have taken provides a valuable way of thinking about occupational therapy knowledge. It allows comparison of different ideas and concepts, and it recognizes that we use knowledge in different ways and for different purposes. Thus, I offer it as one of a number of ways to view occupational therapy knowledge—a way that I hope will prove useful for those entering into occupational therapy and for those in the field who wish to step back and take a new look at their profession.

Part of the purpose of this text is rhetorical—that is, to persuade the reader to a way of seeing occupational therapy. Nevertheless, the book will have best served the reader if it becomes a springboard for further serious thought about the field's knowledge and how it is used in practice and if it stimulates further dialogue and critical thought about the nature of occupational therapy and the nature of knowledge that defines and explains it. Finally, I look forward to critical feedback to help my own thoughts to continue to evolve.

GARY KIELHOFNER

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This volume has been in the making for some time. Along the way many people have influenced, collaborated with, supported, and criticized me. Without their efforts this volume could never have come to fruition.

I cannot write about occupational therapy without a debt of gratitude to Dr. Mary Reilly and her colleagues at the University of Southern California. The work they accomplished, well before my time there as a student, and Dr. Reilly's mentoring during my graduate studies irrevocably set the direction of my thinking. Also, Anne Mosey's contributions to the literature, her criticism of my work, and many hours of lively discussion have left their mark herein. The experience of analyzing the history of occupational therapy and working on the model of human occupation with Janice Burke still echoes through this volume. Roanne Barris and I together hashed out in rudimentary form some of the ideas about organization of knowledge represented herein.

My colleagues and students at the University of Illinois have discussed these ideas extensively with me, have piloted them in the classroom, and have provided feedback on portions of the manuscript. For those efforts, I am grateful to Anita Bundy, Anne Fisher, Cheryl Mattingly, Jaime Muñoz, Jeanne Rumbler, and Craig Velozo. Additionally, Clare Curtin, Kathi Baron, and Linda Matre have provided me with ongoing criticism, support, enthusiasm, and practical assistance throughout the last year. I could not have completed the volume without them. Finally, I am grateful to two classes of graduate students who used earlier drafts of the book as a "text" in my Theories of Occupational Therapy course and provided helpful discussion and criticism.

I shared a number of the chapters with appropriate experts early in writing the book. Much help and good feedback came from Betty Abreu, Claudia Allen, Birgitta Bernspång, Lena Borell, Elnora Gilfoyle, Ann Grady, Sharon Schwartzberg, and Catherine Trombly. Several of them also provided me with prepublication and unpublished manuscripts that allowed me to produce more current and complete representations of their work.

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Throughout the journey of preparing this manuscript Chris Schick, my secretary, has spent long hours typing and editing and telling jokes to pull me out of occasional writer's despair. While his jokes suffer some, his superb editorial and word-processing skills were indispensable to this book.

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