

# M O H O

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**The article presents a current overview of the theory and application of the Model of Human Occupation.**

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During the 1960's and 70's Reilly led development of the occupational behaviour tradition that aimed to recapture the field's focus on occupation as the media and method of the field (Reilly, 1969; Reilly, 1962, p.2). The occupational behaviour tradition was pivotal in returning occupational therapy's paradigm to a focus on occupation (Kielhofner, 1997). Hence, the occupation-focused theory and practice of the field today stems directly from it.

The model of human occupation (MOHO) grew out of this occupational behaviour tradition. Originally, three students of Reilly concerned with how the concepts of occupational behaviour could be more directly applied in practice, set out to articulate a conceptual model of practice. Consistent with the occupational behaviour tradition, one goal of the model was to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of occupation in human life and its role in health and illness. But the main emphasis of the model was to synthesise many of the themes of occupational behaviour into a framework suitable to guide practice. In contrast to the occupational behaviour tradition, MOHO sought to be a tool of everyday practitioners. During the time the model was first developed and prepared for publication, its three original authors were working as practitioners. To this day, one of the central features of this model

is the extent to which practitioners shape how its theory is articulated and applied.

The basic outline of the model was originally expressed in an unpublished masters thesis (Kielhofner, 1975). The model was first published five years later after refining the concepts and experimenting with them in practice (Kielhofner, 1980a, 1980b; Kielhofner & Burke, 1980; Kielhofner, Burke, & Heard, 1980). In 1985 the book, *A Model of Human Occupation: Theory and Application*, introduced an expanded theory and a wide range of clinical applications (Kielhofner, 1985). A revision of the model was completed in 1995 with the publication of the second edition of this book. The third edition is the authoritative and most current understanding of this theory and its application and should be considered the primary reference on the model (Kielhofner 2002). For therapists who wish to apply MOHO this text is a necessary resource.

Other published literature provides additional, rich sources of theoretical discourse, discussions of programmatic applications, cases examples, and research findings. The literature on this model is extensive and worldwide. Over 235 articles and chapters discussing theoretical, applied, or research aspects of the model have been published in the English language. A current bibliography of literature on the model can be found on a website: <http://www.uic.edu/hsc/acad/cahp/OT/MOHOC>

The Model of Human Occupation Clearinghouse, maintained at the university of Illinois at Chicago, distributes a wide range of materials, including assessment manuals, case videotapes and other monographs detailing application of the model. Information on the Clearinghouse can also found on the website.

MOHO is now being developed through Centres for Outcomes Research and Education (CORE). USA CORE is based at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the UKCORE is based in London South Bank University. These centres support practitioners to be involved in development of theory and its application within the realities of everyday practice. These «practice scholarship» partnerships have been developed between academics and practice sites to deliver occupation focused, theory driven, evidence-based practice.



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## A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCEPTS WITHIN MOHO

A conceptual model of practice proposes theory to address certain phenomena with which the model is concerned (Kielhofner, 1997). The model of human occupation provides theory aimed at explaining aspects of healthy occupation and problems that arise in association with life transitions including illness and disability. Its concepts address:

- 1 the motivation for occupation,
- 1 the routine patterning of occupational behaviour,
- 1 the nature of skilled performance, and
- 1 the influence of environment on occupation.

The following will address the main conceptual ideas in MOHO, namely:

- 1 How occupation is organised,
- 2 Components of the person,
- 3 Environment,
- 4 Occupational Performance.

### How occupation is organized

MOHO asserts that what a person does in work, leisure and self-care is a function of motivational factors, life patterns, performance capacity and environmental influences. Since MOHO includes such a wide range of concerns in its theoretical arguments it must relate these diverse elements together. The model has consistently drawn upon contemporary systems theory to consider how the many factors that contribute to occupation are organized together. The model's systems view of the human being has traditionally emphasized two main points.

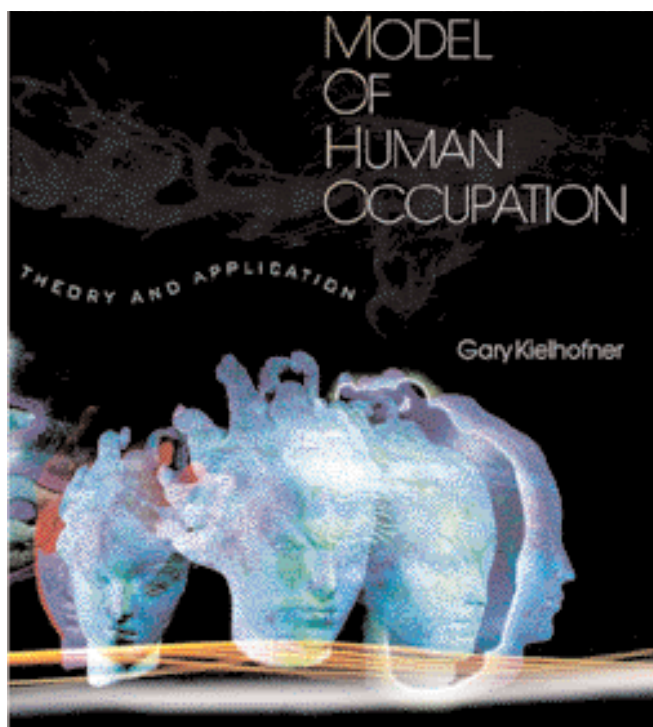
The first point is that participation in occupation is dynamic and context-dependent. That is a person's inner characteristics interact with the environment to create a network of conditions that influence how one is motivated, what one does, and how one performs.

The second point is that occupation is essential to self-organisation. That is, by doing things people shape who they are. Consistent with this principle, the model views therapy as a process in which people are supported to do occupations in order to shape their abilities, self-concepts, and identities.

### Components of the person

To explain how occupational is chosen, patterned, and performed, MOHO conceptualises the human as composed of three elements: a) volition, b) habituation, and c) performance capacity. Volition refers to the process by which persons are motivated toward and choose what they do. Habituation refers to a process whereby doing is organized into patterns and routines. Performance capacity refers both to the underlying objective mental and physical abilities and the lived experience that shapes performance. Each of these three components of the person is discussed in more detail below.

*Volition:* Decisions about what to do shape the content of our unfolding hours, days, and weeks. While some aspects of each day will be part of a routine there are throughout



*Gary Kielhofner has written several books about the Model of Human Occupation.*

each day opportunities to decide of what to do next, when to terminate an activity and go on to another. These kinds of everyday decisions are referred to as activity choices. Individuals also make larger choices concerning occupations that will become an extended or permanent part of their lives. This kind of decision is called an occupational choice. These choices are a function of volition. Volitional thoughts and feelings pertain to:

- 1) how effective one is in acting on the world,
- 2) what one holds as important, and
- 3) what one finds enjoyable and satisfying.

These three areas are referred to as personal causation, values and interests, respectively. Each is discussed below.

- 1) *Personal Causation:* Personal causation are the thoughts and feelings about how effective we are in using our capacities and how compliant or resistant life is to our efforts. Personal causation is reflected in our awareness of present and potential abilities and our sense of how able we are to bring about what we want. Our unique personal causation influences how we anticipate, choose, experience, and interpret what we do.
- 2) *Values:* Choices for occupations are also influenced by our values. Values are composed of beliefs and commitments that define what is good, right, and important. They influence our view of what is worth doing and what is the proper way to act (Bruner, 1990). Thus, values specify for an individual what is worth doing, how one ought to perform, and what goals or aspirations deserve one's commitment.
- 3) *Interests:* Interests are generated from the experience of pleasure and satisfaction in engaging in occupations. (Matsutsuyu, 1969). Therefore, the development of

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interests depends on available opportunities to engage in occupations. Being interested in an occupation means that one feels an attraction based on anticipation of a positive experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes flow, a form of ultimate enjoyment in occupations that occurs when a person's capacities are optimally challenged.

**Summary:** We have seen that volitional is a pattern of thoughts and feelings concerning what occupations we engage in. These volitional thoughts and feelings are imbedded in a cycle of anticipation, choice, experience while doing, and subsequent interpretation. Our volition predisposes us to attend to the world and anticipate possibilities for action in particular ways.

**Habituation:** Habituation subsystem organizes occupational behaviour into the recurrent patterns of behaviour that make up much of our daily routines. These patterns integrate us into the rhythms and customs of our physical, social, and temporal worlds. Moreover, they allow us to efficiently and automatically do what we regularly do. Habituated patterns of action are governed by: 1) habits and 2) roles. Together, they weave the patterns with which we typically traverse our days, weeks, and seasons, our homes, neighborhoods, and cities, and our families, work organizations, and communities.

- 1) **Habits.** Habits involve learned ways of doing occupations that unfold automatically. Through repeated experience a person acquires a kind way appreciating and behaving in familiar environments. Dewey (1922) recognized that habits operate in cooperation with context: «Habits are ways of using and incorporating the environment in which the latter has its say as surely as the former» (p. 15). This means that a habit regulates behavior not by a strict instructions for behaviour, but by providing a manner of dealing with environmental contingencies.
- 2) **Roles.** People see themselves as students, workers, parents, and recognize that they should behave in certain ways to enact these roles. Through interaction with others, one internalises an identity, an outlook, and a way of behaving that belongs to the role. Once internalised, this role serves as a kind of framework for looking out on the world and for acting. Thus when one is engaging in an occupation within a given role, it may be reflected in how the person dresses, the demeanour of the person, the content of one's actions and so on (Sarbin & Scheibe, 1983).

**Summary:** Habituation regulates the patterned, familiar, and routine features of what we do. It involves an appreciative process through which we more or less automatically recognize features and situations in the environment and construct routine that collaborates with those aspects of the environment. Habituation always involves transaction between the habit and/or roles we have internalised and the unfolding events and external context.

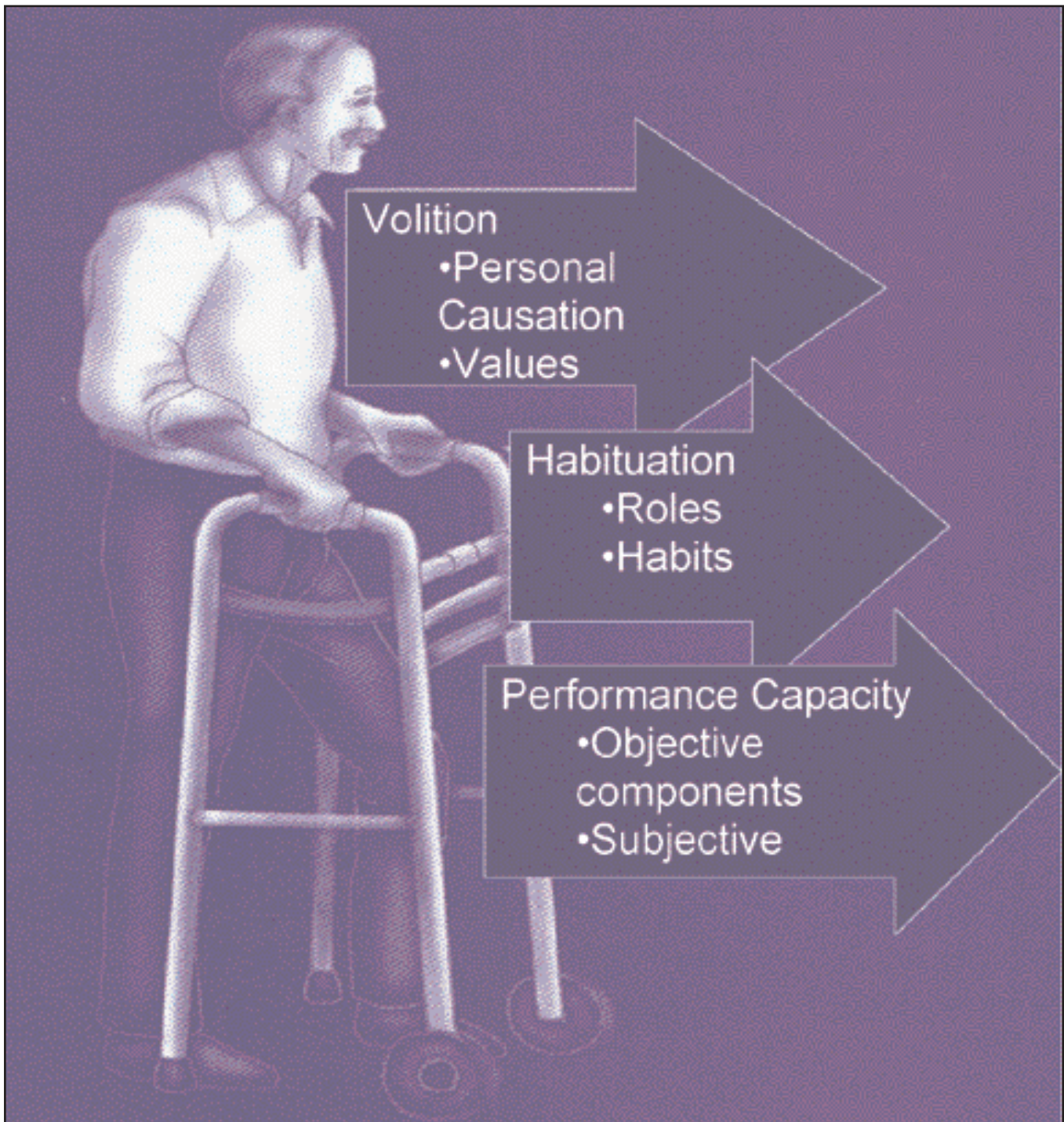


**Occupation is dynamic and context-dependent. A person's inner characteristics interact with the environment to create a network of conditions that influence how one is motivated, what one does, and how one performs.**

**Performance Capacity:** The capacity for performance is affected on the status of one's musculoskeletal, neurological, cardio-pulmonary and other bodily systems that are called upon when doing things. Performance also calls upon mental or cognitive abilities such as memory, and planning. A number of occupational therapy conceptual models seek to explain capacities that make possible occupational performance. These models provide detailed concepts for understanding some aspect of performance capacity. Because a variety of occupational therapy models already address performance capacity as represented in physical and mental performance components, the model of human occupation does not address this aspect of performance capacity. Consequently, Occupational therapists using the model of human occupation will also need to use other conceptual models for understanding and addressing performance capacity.

New theory within the model of human occupation (Kielhofner, Baz, Hutson & Tham, 2002) offers a different but complimentary way of addressing performance capacity. Other occupational therapy models address the problem of performance capacity from an objective point of view focusing on the physical and mental capacities as phenomena, which can be observed, measured, and modified. MOHO's new view of performance focuses on subjective experience and its role in how people perform. This approach builds upon phenomenological concepts from philosophy (Husserl, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This concept brings the concepts of mind and body together, demonstrating how they are dual aspects of the same thing. It also offers a way of going beyond current concepts of body and mind to understand how the body is mindful and the mind embodied. These concepts emphasize how the body has an





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intelligence of its own, especially as pertains to everyday performance. They also point out how the foundations of abstract mental process are found in bodily experience.

### **The environment**

We have just emphasized how volition, habituation and performance capacity are organised into a coherent whole. Just as these three components of the person are interrelated and interdependent, persons and their environments are also inseparable. As the discussions above illustrated

the environment always figures intimately in our motives, our habituated action and our performance.

Each environment potentially offers opportunities and resources, demands, and constraints. The physical environment consists of the natural and human-made spaces and the objects within them. Spaces can be the result of nature (e.g. a forest or a lake) or the result of human fabrication (e.g. a house, classroom or theatre). Similarly, objects may be those that occur naturally (e.g. trees and rocks) or those which have been made (e.g. books, cars, and computers).

What we do within spaces and with object depends, of course, on the characteristics of these elements of the physical world and how they impact upon us.

The social environment consists of groups of persons, and the occupational forms that persons belonging to those groups perform. Groups provide and assign roles to their members and they constitute social space in which those roles are acted out according to group ambience, norms, and climate. Thus groups allow and prescribing the kinds of things their members can do.

Occupational forms are rule bound sequences of action which are at oriented to a purpose, sustained in collective knowledge, culturally recognizable, and named. Said simply, occupational forms are the things that are available to do in any social context.

Any setting within which we perform is made up spaces, objects, occupational forms, and/or social groups. Typical settings that we engage in occupational forms are the home, neighbourhood, school or workplace.

## Understanding dimensions of doing

We can also examine the doing itself and what consequence it has over time. First of all doing can be examined at three different levels: a) participation, b) performance of an occupational form, and c) skill.

- a) *Participation*: Participation refers to engagement in work, play, or activities of daily living that are part of one's sociocultural context and that are desired and/or necessary to one's well-being. Examples of occupational participation are, working in a full or part time job, engaging routinely in a hobby, maintaining one's home, attending school and participating in an club or other organization.
- b) *Occupational Performance*: Participation involves doing a variety of occupational forms. For example, a professor's work may include lecturing, writing, administering and scoring exams, creating courses, counselling students and so on. When we complete an occupational form, we perform. For example, when persons do such tasks as walking the dog, baking a chicken, vacuuming a rug, or balancing the check book they are performing those occupational forms.
- b) *Skills*: Within occupational performance we carry out discrete purposeful actions. Skills are goal-directed actions that a person uses while performing. (Fisher & Kielhofner, 1995; Fisher, 1999; Forsyth, Salamy, Simon, and Kielhofner, 1997) In contrast to performance capacity that refers to underlying ability, skill refers to the discrete functional actions. There are three types of skills: motor skills, process skills, and communication and interaction skills.

Whenever persons are participating in their occupational role, they complete a number of occupational forms and use a wide range of skills.

## Resources for practice

As noted in the beginning of this article, MOHO was initiated with the specific goal of developing resources to

guide and enhance practice. Today those resources are quite extensive and fall in the following categories. There are a range of assessments has been developed that operationalize concepts from the model, a large number of published case examples as well as videotapes illustrating application of the model in assessment, treatment planning and intervention exist, published papers and manuals describe the implementation of programs based on the model.

For the therapist working in almost any area of practice there will be a variety of these resources. In addition, inquiries may be made directly to a MOHO e-mail address (MOHOC@uic.edu) or practitioners may join a listserv which allows them to dialogue internationally with other practitioners as well as scholars who are working on testing and development of the model and its resources. Below is an outline of a) Assessments, b) Interventions, c) Case studies

- a) *Assessment*: Over the past 20 years, practitioners have collaborated in the development of a wide range of assessment tools. Most of these tools grew out of needs in specific settings and their development initiated by practitioners. There are 20 MOHO assessments currently available. Namely, The Occupational Circumstances Assessment Interview Rating Scale (OCAIRS), Assessment of communication and Interaction Skills (ACIS), Assessment of Motor and Process Skills (AMPS), School based AMPS, Assessment of Occupational Functioning (AOF), Interest Checklist, Pediatric Interest Profiles, National Institute of Health Activity Record, Occupational Questionnaire (OQ), Occupational Performance History Interview (OPHI-II), Role Checklist, Occupational Self Assessment (OSA), Volitional Questionnaire, Paediatric volitional Questionnaire, Worker Role Interview (WRI), Work Environment Impact Scale (WEIS), Occupational Psychosocial Assessment of Learning (OTPAL), School Setting Interview (SSI), Model of Human Occupational Screening Tool (MOHOST),
- b) *Interventions*: The most current edition of the MOHO text book (Kielhofner, 2002) includes detailed information to support theoretical driven intervention (chapter 18, Chapter 19 and section 2 master table). These resources provide a conceptual map to support clinical reasoning around the selection and creation of therapeutic situations for clients. In addition there are intervention manuals being developed. Recently there have been manuals developed to dovetail with some assessments. The Remotivation Process is an intervention manual that is used in connection with the Volitional Questionnaire. It supports interventions with clients who have very limited volitional abilities. Employments Options Intervention Manual is a work program that is used in conjunction with the Worker Role Interview and the Work Environment Impact Scale.
- c) *Case Studies*: The most recent text book (Kielhofner, 2002) has detailed five chapters of case studies to illustrate concepts in the book. These chapters include recrafting occupational narratives, applying MOHO to



clients who have cognitive impairment, facilitating participation through community based interventions, enabling clients to reconstruct their occupational lives in long term rehabilitation, and using MOHO to compliment other models of practice. Other case studies can be found at <http://www.uic.edu/hsc/acad/cahp/OT/MOHOC>.

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