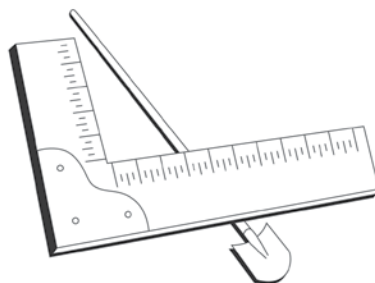


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## Occupational Science Research Describing Occupation

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### **DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH: THE INITIAL VISION OF OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE**

When occupational science began, the focus was on developing an understanding of occupation (Clark et al., 1991). That is, we initially targeted Level 1 factor-identifying, descriptive research on occupation (Dickoff, James, & Weidenbach, 1968). The science was conceptualized as basic and descriptive. The profession was expressing a widening realization that descriptive research on the core concept and primary modality of occupational therapy was extremely limited (Fidler, 1981; Rogers, 1984). Yerxa (1987, 1995) argued repeatedly that a true profession requires a unique body of knowledge that is not duplicated by any other profession. Thus, the founders of occupational science began with the notion that occupational therapy required an in-depth theoretical description of occupation itself. As Yerxa (1987) expressed it, an academic discipline that described occupation would help clients because, “we are often in the position of dealing with incapacity, trying

to reduce it although we don’t know nearly enough about *capacity*” (p. 416). Later, in occupational science’s debut article in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, the same focus on descriptive knowledge of occupation was expressed. “Occupational science is to occupational therapy what anatomy and physiology are to medicine” (Clark et al., 2001, p. 307). Because the science was viewed as largely descriptive, it began with qualitative methods.

### **PRECURSORS TO OCCUPATIONAL SCIENCE RESEARCH AT LEVEL 1**

#### **A Historical Interest in Craft Occupations**

Prior to the launch of occupational science in 1989, little research describing occupation had been done within occupational therapy. A search through occupational therapy’s archive, the Wilma West Library, produced very little research descriptive of occupation. In its earliest