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## Exploration of Aerial Arts as an Occupation

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# Exploration of Aerial Arts as an Occupation

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## BACKGROUND

Aerial arts is a performance art with acrobatic and dance principles that includes a variety of apparatuses, such as silks, hammock, and lyra. There is a growing interest in aerial arts as an alternative fitness program, a recreation activity, and it is also used in OT interventions (Maglio & McKinstry, 2008). Occupational science, the academic discipline of studying the complexity of human engagement in an occupation, emerged to enhance occupational therapy as it informs practice (Yerxa, 1990). It has the potential to address the following: reasons why people engage in an occupation, how it is organized, its relation to health and well-being, and possible consequences of not engaging in the occupation (Clark et al., 1991; Yerxa 1990).

## PROBLEM

There is minimal literature on aerial arts, however there are more literature on social circus, a related topic to aerial arts (Lafortune & Bouchard, 2010).

## PURPOSE

Using an occupational science approach, specifically with the application of the Doing, Being, Becoming, and Belonging framework and the Model of Human Occupation framework, can generate in-depth knowledge and meaning of the occupation. Having more understanding of the occupation with this approach may benefit occupational therapy interventions and support the profession in health promotion (Hocking, 2009; Hocking & Wright-St. Clair, 2011).

## References

Special thanks to  
Aerial Theory  
Fitness



## METHODS

### IRB Approval

- Ethical considerations for photo-elicitation

### Recruitment

- The studio owner distributed the flyer to active students via email.
- Interested participants contacted either doctoral student or the owner and received consent form.
- Total of seven participants completed the interview.

### Interviews

- Duration of 45-60 minutes
- Modified version the Occupational Performance History Interview (OPHI-II)

### Photo-elicitation

- Prompt: *What is motivating about aerial arts?*
- Share up to two photographs

### Observations

- Context from Occupational Therapy Practice Framework
- Six to eight observations per week

### Reflective Journal

- Written weekly to promote self-awareness.
- Purpose is to diminish subjectivity and personal influence on the process and findings to develop the credibility of the project (Holmes 2020; Krefting, 1991).

## FINDINGS CONTINUED

**Doing:** Quality time was achieved through:

- Established temporal patterns to meet personal and role responsibilities.
- Shifting the mindset in various times prior and during engagement to promote attentiveness.

**Being:** Being summarized the emotional shifts throughout a participant's aerial journey that prefaced the construction of value and meaning of the occupation.

- Inspiration promoted volition and participants were constantly exposed to different forms of inspiration.
- Flow meant having fun and being carefree.
- Concrete value was developed when participants observed increased strength and endurance due to being patient and consistent.

**Belonging:** As an occupation performed in a group setting, it enabled social bonds.

- The positive occupational experiences created symbolic meaning to participants' life stories, and they desired to replicate positive occupational experiences.
- Increased social participation demonstrated in group gatherings.
- Opportunities to create new relationships and to maintain occupational engagement when relocated.

**Becoming:**

- A sense of mastery and increased self-esteem in different human capacities entailed the self-rewarding value of the occupation.
- The aerial community enabled opportunities for participants to experience their potential selves and enhanced participant's view of themselves.
- Negative becoming was observed when occupational disruption occurred due to COVID-19 pandemic.

## FINDINGS

DOING	BEING	BECOMING	BELONGING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization of Time around Aerial Classes</li> <li>Shifting Mindset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspiration</li> <li>Concepts of Flow</li> <li>Patience and Consistency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pathways to Becoming</li> <li>Aerial Community Enhancing Becoming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home</li> <li>Extending Belonging Outside the Studio</li> </ul>

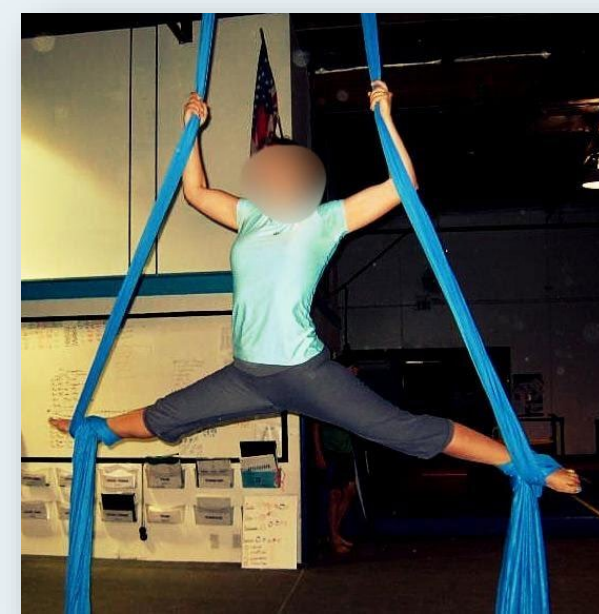


Figure 1. Participant's second day of aerial class.



Figure 2. Participant's dancing with silks.



Figure 3. Participant's performance picture.



Figure 4. Participant's picture of Saturday's at the park.

## FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- Lack of historical context
- Input from aerial students of different backgrounds including gender
- Exploration on the impacts of COVID-19