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# Huang-Tu Occupation Study: A study of occupational therapy theory written in Chinese for use in China

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## Introduction

- In China, the quality and development of occupational therapy has been affected by
  - the misinterpretation of occupational therapy
  - barriers in linguistic and cultural translations of OT concepts
- Culturally appropriate OT theories are urgently needed.



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# Objective

- To develop a culturally relevant occupational therapy theory written in Chinese for use in China.



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# Recontextualization approach

1. Deconstructed the meaning of English terminology and concepts
2. Made sense of them within Chinese culture
3. Reconstructed the concepts in traditional Chinese thinking using Chinese language

# E.g., to recontextualize the terminology “occupation”

(1) deconstructed the meaning of “occupation”



- Reviewed the history and original concepts of OT
- Reflected on the practice experiences in Canada, Hong Kong and China

# E.g., to recontextualize the term “occupation”

(1) deconstruct the meaning of  
“occupation”



(2) made sense of the term  
“occupation” in Chinese



- 事, pronounced as *shi*
- Oracle Bone Script (甲骨文), 1200 BC
- A hand (bottom) is holding a hunting tool (top)
- The character symbolizes hunting and extends to mean “doing things.”

# E.g., to recontextualize the term “occupation”

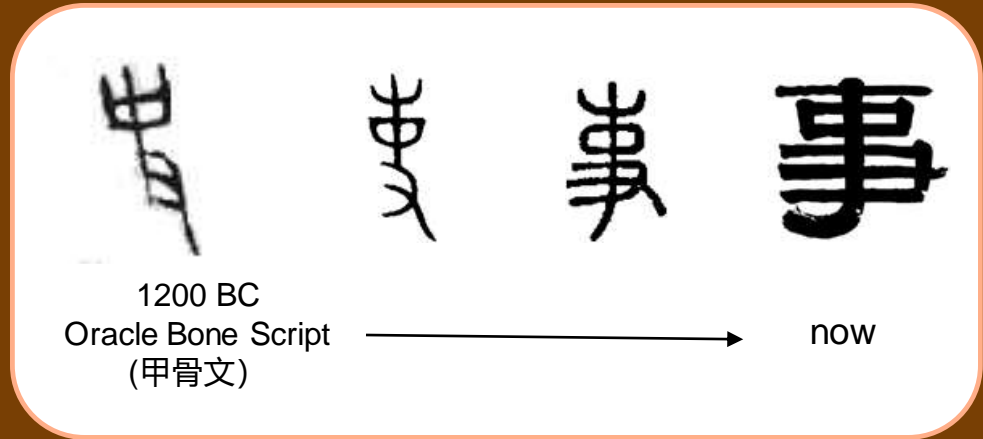
(1) deconstruct the meaning of “occupation”



(2) make sense of the term “occupation” in Chinese



(3) Reconstructed the meaning of “occupation” in traditional Chinese culture



- The character 事 (*shi*) nowadays has extended to mean “doing all kinds of things in life”.

# The concept “事” embedded in everyday use

| Everyday use | Meaning   |
|--------------|---|
| 事情           | Happenings, matters, activities                 |
| 本事           | The ability or skill to do something well       |
| 事务           | Work or daily activities one is responsible for |
| 无所事事         | Do nothing, have nothing to do                  |
| 事在人为         | Things can be done if one has the will to do so |
| 事父母          | Take care of one's parents                      |





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# Huang-Tu Occupation Study (OS)

- Huang (黃) means “yellow”
- Tu (土) means “land”

Chinese civilization was established along the Yellow River. The land along the river is the *yellow land*. Huang-Tu symbolizes the root of Chinese culture.



Core concepts

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Benevolence  
Everyday living  
Occupation

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## 3 core concepts of Huang-Tu OS

### 1. Benevolence (仁心)

- The origin of occupational therapy is benevolence. OT helps those who are less fortunate.

### 2. Everyday living (生活)

- The source of occupational therapy comes from everyday living. OT aims to improve everyday life.

### 3. Occupation (做事)

- The root of occupational therapy is occupation. OT leads to harmony, moderation and a peace of mind.



Core concepts

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Benevolence  
Everyday living  
Occupation

Core skills

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Sensing  
Connecting  
Engaging

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## 3 core skills of Huang-Tu OS

1. Sensing (看懂)
  - To make sense of the person, occupation, things, environment, and interconnectedness among them.
2. Connecting (互信)
  - To build mutual trust based on respect, appreciation, active listening, and sincerity.
3. Engaging (做事情)
  - To do well in everyday activities. This will help a person gain confidence in doing and living.

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# Field study

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Selected samples with variations in

- practice approaches
- education backgrounds in OT
- geographic regions

| City      | No. of therapist | No. of client | No. of organization |
|-----------|------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Chengdu   | 10               | 18            | 5                   |
| Guangzhou | 10               | 12            | 4                   |
| Shiyang   | 7                | 7             | 1                   |
| Lanzhou   | 20               | 12            | 3                   |
| Beijing   | 17               | 10            | 10                  |
| Total     | 64               | 59            | 23                  |



## Chengdu and Guangzhou: Reflecting on the meaning and use of Huang-Tu OS with therapists

### Workshops

- Learned Huang-Tu OS
- Reflected on the relationship between OT concepts and traditional Chinese culture

### Post-workshop client interviews

- Interviewed clients to understand their daily occupations.
- Observed when they performed daily activities.



# Post-workshop reflection

- I have gained a deep understanding of my own culture. This is most useful to me.
- Now it is no longer a problem for me to explain OT thinking in my own language.

MOT graduate with 2 yrs of OT experience

- I feel that I have the most powerful tool to practice as an OT now.
- The Huang-Tu OS has impressed me so much. It has effectively captured the authentic OT thinking.
- Benevolence is the origin of OT and the root of Chinese culture. This has been the aspiration of OT in China since it was introduced to our country.

MOT graduate with 7 years of OT experience

# Post-workshop reflection

I have learned a lot from the workshop.

- Now, I speak in a more organized way.
- My life has become more optimistic and positive.
- I know how to show my care in a better way to my patients.
- I would engage my patients in doing things that are helpful to them, not just doing body movements.
- I feel that OT is a great profession because OT can help people. OT has also taught me how to live my life.

3 yrs OT practice experience



## Beijing, Lanzhou and Shiyang: Applying Huang-Tu OS in practice

### Learning and application

- Attended workshops
- Being observed during usual practice
- Received 1:1 onsite supervision

### Evaluation and reflection

- Follow-up questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Case studies



# Evaluation questionnaires

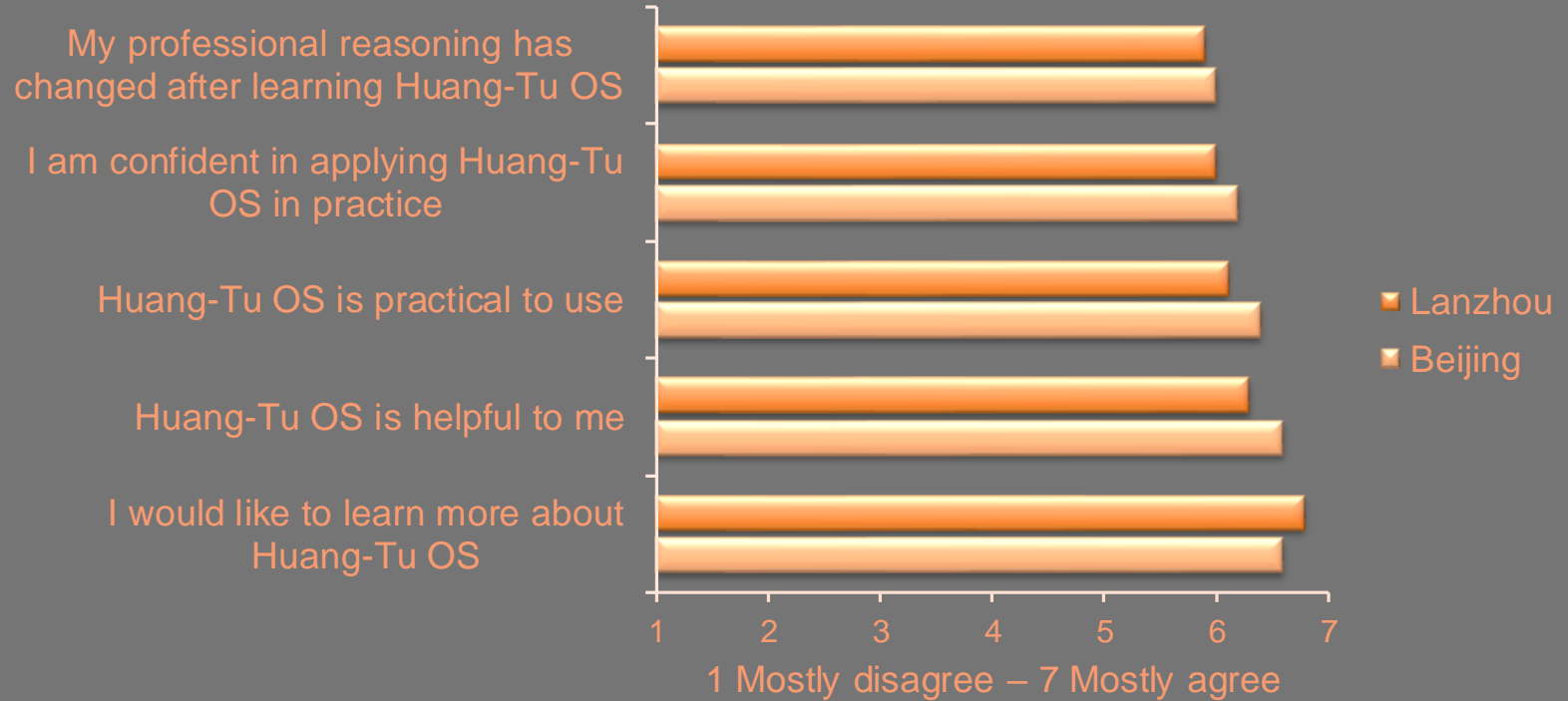
“I have changed. Now I do better with sensing.  
...When I understand my patients well and build mutual trust with them, treatment outcomes become better.”

1 yr of experience

“I am inspired by the Huang-Tu OS..... It has given me a direction to pull my many years of experience together.”

30+ yrs of experience

# Workshop evaluation results



## Case studies a few months later

A client has lost his confidence in life. He was reluctant to participate in treatment and did not say much. After I have learned Huang-Tu OS, I would like to understand him better by applying what I have learned....He told me in tears, "I cannot do anything. I am only a dead body waiting to die." ....

...gaining trust and designing activities to improve his ability to do daily occupations....

He has regained the confidence in doing. I have witnessed how he has transformed in life!

Thanks to Huang-Tu OS. I have learned how to help people to live a meaningful life.

OT from Shiyang, 3 yrs of experience



Core concepts

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Benevolence  
Everyday living  
Occupation

Core skills

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Sensing  
Connecting  
Engaging

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# Conclusion

- Most participants felt that Huang-Tu OS is a culturally relevant OT theory.
- Huang-Tu OS is considered practical to use in a variety of hospital settings located in different geographic regions in China.
- Limitation: The study has not included community and mental health practice.



Core concepts

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Benevolence  
Everyday living  
Occupation

Core skills

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Sensing  
Connecting  
Engaging

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# Discussion

- An OT theory written in Chinese for use in China has opened new doors for OTs in China, providing more ways to discuss, educate and study professional reasoning in China.
- Huang-Tu OS has brought perspectives on occupation and OT from beyond a western perspective. Making sense of OT practice in the context of traditional Chinese culture is a new area of research. What we have done so far is just the beginning.

# Acknowledgements

- All hospitals, therapists, clients and family members who participated in the study.
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Thank you!

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