

Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of

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Introduction

- This life history one of 29 life history interviews which are a part of a larger project, *Life Histories of Individuals Who Have Been Influential in Developing Occupational Therapy (OT) in North Dakota and Wyoming*. The purpose of this project is to gather information about the history and evolution of OT practice in North Dakota and Wyoming through life histories of individuals who have been influential in developing OT in these two states. It is anticipated that the life history process will be a powerful way to gather this information. This study is intended to provide current and future generations of OTs a view of the history and how OT practice has evolved from its inception to current practice in North Dakota and Wyoming.

Description of Participant

- Catherine Bailey is an OT at heart. She is passionate about the profession and has used OT as an avenue to help people throughout her career. Catherine graduated in 1997 from Western Michigan University. Catherine has been practicing OT since 1978 in the state of Wyoming. She went back to school to earn her master's degree and graduated from the University of North Dakota in 2011. Throughout her career she has worked in several different settings and has impacted a wide variety of people. Her early career was spent in home health, the school system, and hospital settings. Eventually, she became an adjunct professor for the University of North Dakota and has taught on and off since 1999. She has also been an adjunct professor at Casper College for the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program. Throughout her career she has held several supervisory positions and has presented admiral qualities while assisting clients in various settings. Each day she woke up thinking about what she could do for the client and how she could impact their life for the better.

Literature Review

- The 1970s was dominated by the Watergate Scandal and the Vietnam War. President Nixon was impeached in 1974 and the Vietnam War ended in 1975 (Rosenberg, 2017). Catherine recalls working with many Vietnam veterans when working at the VA Hospital early on in her career.
- Catherine began practicing in 1978. That same year, the Roster of Honor was established by AOTA. The Roster of honor recognized OT's who made a significant contribution to professional development and continuing education of AOTA members (The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., 2017). This set the stage for practitioners to stay up to date and deliver best practice.
- 1991, the first doctorate in occupational science was offered in Southern California (American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., 2017). Currently, there are 17 OT doctorate level programs that are accredited. Catherine hopes that in transitioning from a master's to a doctorate, practitioners will become more skilled in specific areas and become highly recommended in an area of practice that interests them.

Methodology

Study Design: A qualitative research design using a life history approach which allowed the focus to be on the participants involvement in the evolution of OT practice. Life histories are a type of biography used to depict a person's life and their understanding of their experiences. The Kawa Model was used to guide this life history process.

Participant Selection: The initial contact with the participant was made by course instructors. No specific gatekeeper issues were identified. The interviewee was selected from a participant list compiled through a purposive sampling by course instructors. Informed consent was obtained prior to the face to face interview.

Data Collection: Data was collected through phone, face to face interview and artifacts. The semi-structured interview was guided by an interview schedule prepared by the course instructors; the questions of the interview schedule were designed to be used with all individuals interviewed as part of the larger project. The researchers made modifications to interview questions to capture the interviewee's story. The interview took place on Casper College Campus in Aley Hall and it lasted approximately one hour. The interview was audio and visually recorded. Additional data was collected via a Curriculum Vitae provided by Catherine.

Findings

Data Analysis: The researchers transcribed the data from the one-hour semi-structured interview with Catherine verbatim. Once the data was transcribed, the researchers began the coding process. Three categories were generated, Education, Profession, and Personal Characteristics. From there the following themes were emerged:

Education:

1. Throughout Catherine's educational career there were numerous political events that impacted her personally and professionally.
2. Catherine made an effort to attend continuing education. She believed that continuing education was an avenue for keeping up to date with practice and the latest findings within occupational therapy practice.
3. Catherine hopes that with the transition to a doctorate degree, practitioners will become more skilled in specific areas of practice.

Profession:

1. Catherine feels that working collaboratively with other healthcare professionals is valuable.
"And that was one of the most meaningful times working with other disciplines too."
2. Catherine believes that to develop rapport you cannot put walls up between the therapist and the person. Activity analysis is a central part to practice in order to discover activities that patient actually wants to do.
3. Catherine identified several barriers that exist within rural practice areas. She described expenses, resources, and accessibility as barriers that impact practice when working in a rural area.

Personal Characteristics:

1. Catherine viewed occupational therapy as an avenue to helping others. She was extremely passionate about the profession and has an altruistic attitude towards care.
"I did a lot of thinking about what am I going to do tomorrow, what am I going to do today?"
2. Catherine approached practice utilizing a therapeutic use of self that was reflected within her relationships with patients and other healthcare professionals.
"So, everybody called me Waco, so I was saying to him, "Say Waco is beautiful" and all of a sudden this real odd voice came out of him and he goes, "Waco is stupid" and it just brought the house down, it was like his first sentence"

Conclusion

Assertion: Catherine feels that occupational therapy becomes a lifestyle in which education, life-long learning, and multidisciplinary client-centered practice are keys to success. Occupational therapy is easily integrated into all aspects of life.

- This life history gave insight into how OT practice in North Dakota and Wyoming has developed over time. As Catherine began to pursue her OT career she experienced various political events that had a lasting impact on her practice. Catherine is passionate about the field and has used OT as an avenue to help others all throughout her career. Catherine considers herself to be a life-long learner and has taken numerous continuing education credits. She hopes that as the field advances, OTs will have more opportunity to specialize in specific practice areas. Catherine values working with others and has enjoyed her time practicing in the state of Wyoming.

References

- Rosenberg, J (2017). *Vietnam, Watergate, Iran and the 1970s*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/1970s-timeline-1779954>
- The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. (2017). *Decades: OT's important events*. Retrieved from: <http://www.otcentennial.org/events/events-by-decades>