



Kathy Dolan Life History, MPA, OTR/L

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Introduction

- This life history is 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 the project is to gather information about the history and evolution of occupational therapy (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 occupational therapists a view of the history and how occupational therapy practice has evolved from its inception to current practice in North Dakota and Wyoming.

Literature Review

- 1960's-1970's:
 - Occupational therapists were transitioning from treating epidemic type illnesses into chronic conditions due to antibiotics and new medical advances
 - De-institutionalization was occurring due to new trends in psychotropic medications and poor institution conditions which led to the start of community mental health (Christiansen & Haertl, 2014)
 - Medicare, Medicaid, and reimbursement emerged
 - Vietnam War: Surgical advancements led to the need for hand therapy (Yakobina, Yakobina & Harrison-Weaver, 2008)
 - Education for All Handicapped Children Act: The start of integrating inter-professional teamwork into children with disabilities education which led towards needing occupational therapists in the school district (Coleman, 1988)
 - Doctor A. Jean Ayres developed the Sensory Integration theory (Posthuma, 1983)
- 1980's:
 - Child Development Centers (CDC) were created to prepare children for success in schools (CDC, n.d.)
- 1990's:
 - The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed (Kalscheur, 1991)

Description of Kathy Dolan

- Education
 - Graduated from St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota with a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy in 1969
 - Graduated from the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming with a Masters in Public Administration in May of 1997
- Career
 - Director of occupational therapy at a large regional hospital, 1970-1977
 - Occupational therapist for a state training school, skilled nursing facility, and child development services in Riverton, Wyoming, 1977-1978
 - Occupational therapist for skilled nursing facility and public school district in Denver, Colorado, 1978-1979
 - Occupational therapist for Child Development Center of Natrona County in Casper, Wyoming from July of 1989 to March of 2010
 - Occupational therapy program professional level coordinator for the University of North Dakota-Casper College site from August 1994-1996
 - Adjunct faculty for the University of North Dakota Occupational Therapy program at the Casper College site for OT 429-Occupational Therapy with the School Aged Child, from January 1994- 2017
- Awards
 - The Fieldwork Educator's Award in 2000 from the Casper College Occupational Therapy Assistant program

Methodology

- **Research Design:** A qualitative study using a life history approach was used
- **Participants and Contexts:** 29 participants were recruited by the course instructors through purposive sampling and assigned each study group
- **Data Collection and Procedure:** Data was collected through a semi-structured interview using open-ended questions, and observation. Interviews were audio and video recorded and transcribed verbatim
- **Data Analysis:** Data was analyzed through a coding process to identify categories, themes, and assertions. Codes were chosen based on their prevalence in the interview and the KAWA model guided the researchers in developing categories, themes, and assertions
- **Trustworthiness:** Reflexive journal entries were completed throughout the study to document researchers initial biases and thoughts. A set interview schedule created internal reliability among members and external reliability for replication. Direct quotes were used in order to establish credibility. Researchers utilized triangulation to check for accuracy throughout the coding process

Discussion and Conclusions

- Discussion
 - Kathy Dolan's practice evolved as occupational therapy grew as a profession
 - Key interventions and practices for occupational therapy changed over time, and Kathy was able to both contribute into the growth as well as utilize herself as a pioneer for the profession
 - Kathy had the opportunities to deeply impact occupational therapy as a profession as well as the occupational therapy program at the University of North Dakota
- Final Assertion
 - Kathy Dolan was a pioneer in in being involved, advocating, and developing occupational therapy on multiple levels and strongly believes in the adaptability of occupational therapists to meet client needs in all populations.
- Kawa Model: The Kawa Model was used to guide the researchers coding process and helped the researchers search for the meaning of Kathy Dolan's story
- Relevance of Project
 - By conducting this study, the researchers were able to add to the professional body of knowledge which will be useful for future practitioners to refer to when learning about how occupational therapy has grown in North Dakota and Wyoming

Data Analysis and Findings

- Categories
 - Making a difference
 - Theme #1: Kathy Dolan articulated that everything we do in the profession should benefit the client
 - Theme #2: She had the opportunities to create programs and treat diverse populations
 - Being a pioneer
 - Theme #1: Kathy had the opportunity to be a leader and a trail blazer
 - Theme #2: She was instrumental in developing the local, state, and national O.T. organizations
 - Adaptability
 - Theme #1: Kathy found O.T. to be both emotionally draining and rewarding
 - Theme #2: She found that different geographical locations affected treatment
- Assertions
 - 1.) Kathy Dolan was a pioneer in various population, she was an advocate at the local, state, and national level
 - 2.) She believes strongly in the adaptability and flexibility of the occupational therapy field and meeting client needs

References

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