2017

Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of Kelly Taubert, M.S. OTR/L

Amber Fernandez
University of North Dakota

Hannah Fiser
University of North Dakota

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.und.edu/ot-oral-histories-papers

Part of the Occupational Therapy Commons

Recommended Citation
https://commons.und.edu/ot-oral-histories-papers/11

This Student Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Occupational Therapy Oral Histories at UND Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral History Student Papers by an authorized administrator of UND Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact zeinebyousif@library.und.edu.
Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of Kelly Taubert, M.S. OTR/L

Amber Fernandez, OTS and Hannah Fiser, OTS

University of North Dakota
Abstract

The purpose of this 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. A semi-structured audio-recorded interview was guided by an interview schedule prepared by the project directors; the questions on the interview schedule were designed to be used with all the individuals interviewed as part of the larger project. The researchers were allowed to modify or add interview questions as needed for each specific interview. The interview transcript was synthesized into codes, patterns/themes, and categories. The predominant categories that emerged from data analysis were education, external factors, career, and professional relationships. According to Kelly, occupational therapy is a meaningful and challenging career that has developed over time. Additionally, her experiences within the profession have been impacted by external factors, professional relationships, educational opportunities, and career setting.
**Introduction**

This life history is one of twenty-nine 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 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 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 with a view of history and how occupational therapy practice has evolved from its inception to current practice in North Dakota and Wyoming.

The life history project outlined within this report was conducted with the participant Kelly Taubert. Kelly is a retired occupational therapist located in Casper, Wyoming. Kelly has been influential in developing and teaching at the Occupational Therapy Assistant program at Casper College. She also taught at the University of North Dakota’s Occupational Therapy satellite campus, located in Casper, Wyoming. Kelly worked at the Child Development Center (CDC) and consulted for several facilities around Wyoming.

This interview took place in a secluded area of the Goldstein Foundation Library on the Casper College campus. The portion of the library in which recording took place was the silent study area.

**Description of Participant**

Based on Kelly’s curriculum vitae, she received her bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy in June of 1976 from the University of Puget Sound. Kelly began working for the Child Development Center of Natrona County in 1983. During this time, she was responsible for the
assessment and treatment of infants, toddlers, and young children in the preschool and home settings. Additionally, Kelly provided staff with ongoing in-service trainings. Kelly went on to receive her Master of Occupational Therapy from Colorado State University in August of 2000.

Kelly also served on the steering committee for the Casper College Occupational Therapy Assistant program. During this time, Casper College (CC) reached out to the University of North Dakota (UND) to implement a satellite four-year occupational therapy program in Casper. The University agreed and the UND occupational therapy program began prior to the CC occupational therapy assistant program. Kelly began teaching at the UND program while continuing to develop the coursework for the CC program. After the CC program was accredited, Kelly spent approximately four years teaching as an adjunct faculty member.

Additionally, Kelly spent approximately ten years as a consultant. She consulted for the Wyoming Medical Center, the Wyoming School for the Deaf, St. Joseph’s Children’s Treatment and Correction Center, Goshen County Nursing Home, and Niobrara County Nursing Home.

Kelly was involved with several professional organizations. From 1996-1999, Kelly was a member of the American Occupational Therapy Association, the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Association, and the sponsor of the Casper College Occupational Therapy Club. From 1990-1993, she served on the Advisory Committee for the Natrona County Public Health Department. In 1996, Kelly was on the Professional Advisory Committee for the OTA program at Casper College. Kelly also served on the first Statewide Early Intervention Council from 1987-1989.

Kelly has since retired, but she continues to provide her services to the Child Development Center as needed.
Literature Review

In accordance with the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Practice Act of 2016, occupational therapy is defined as “the therapeutic use of occupations, including everyday life activities with individuals, groups, populations or organizations to support participation, performance and function in roles and situation in home, school, workplace, community and other settings” (p. 1). According to the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Act of 2013, five Wyoming residents, appointed by the governor, compose a board of occupational therapy. Three of which, must be practitioners of occupational therapy or teaching occupational therapy for a minimum of five years. The board establishes rules and regulations of practice and addresses practice violations (Wyoming Occupational Therapy Practice Act, 2013, pp. 7-8).

Kelly Taubert is a licensed occupational therapist. She received her bachelor’s degree in 1976 from the University of Puget Sound. According to the University of Puget Sound (2017), their occupational therapy program has a graduation rate of 99% with a National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) pass rate of 100%. The NBCOT (2017) serves the public interest by advancing client care and professional practice through evidence based certification standards and the validation of knowledge essential for effective practice in occupational therapy. In 2012, the University was awarded a certificate for accreditation for a period of ten years (University of Puget Sound, 2017). Kelly went on to receive her Master of Occupational Therapy from Colorado State University (CSU). According to the College of Health and Human Sciences (2015), CSU’s occupational therapy program has a graduation rate of 100%, with a NBCOT pass rate of 100%.

After graduation, Kelly took a position at the Child Development Center in Casper, WY. The CDC works with infants to children of the age of five years and their families in the Natrona
County area to provide therapeutic services (Child Development Center of Natrona County, 2017). According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997, the law ensured all children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive free and appropriate public education. Additionally, the law ensured the rights of the children and their parents were protected (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 1997). Kelly served on the first statewide early intervention council. The Wyoming Early Intervention Education Program’s mission was to ensure services are provided to eligible children birth through five years of age with developmental delays and disabilities in accordance to the IDEA and Wyoming State laws (Wyoming Department of Health, 2017).

In 1996, Kelly served on the Professional Advisory Committee for the OTA program at Casper College. The Casper College OTA Program was accredited by the American Occupational Therapy Association in 1997 after a three-step process, which took two years, was completed. Kelly became involved in the program development in 1996 (Casper College, 2017).

At the same time the Casper College OTA Program was being constructed, the University of North Dakota implemented an occupational therapy program satellite campus at Casper College. The UND satellite OT program at Casper College was established in 1993 (University of North Dakota, 2011). It was created to address the shortage of professional therapists and student needs in the state of Wyoming (University of North Dakota, 2011).

Kelly has spent her career working in Wyoming. According to Kohler & Mayberry (1993), occupational therapists who practice in Wyoming experience difficulties due to the rural setting. These difficulties include the need for continuing education, recruitment, and retention (Kohler & Mayberry, 1993). Kelly also identified the rural Wyoming setting as a challenge to her career.
Theory

The Kawa Model was utilized throughout this study. According to Teoh and Iwama (2015), the Kawa Model is a tool used to represent a person’s life journey. Kawa translates to river, in Japanese. The model uses a river as a metaphor to illustrate the life journey of an individual. According to this model, one’s life journey is like a river, beginning at the highlands and traveling down to the ocean. Dependent on the surroundings, the flow of the river will vary. In some spots, it may be a trickle of water, while in others it may be a rushing current. This is similar to the life flow. Dependent on the context, life may flow or it may become stagnant. Occupational therapists aim to enable, assist, restore and maximize their client’s life flow. To illustrate the life journey as a river, there are five constructs. The river flow represents life flow and priorities. The river banks represent the environment or context, including the social and physical aspects. Rocks represent obstacles and challenges. Driftwood represents influencing factors. And spaces represent the opportunities for enhancing the river flow (Teoh and Iwama, 2015).

The Kawa model is an appropriate method in guiding this research study as the purpose is to understand the history and evolution of occupational therapy in Wyoming and North Dakota through learning about the life histories of influential individuals. The Kawa model allows the researchers to learn and understand each interviewee’s life journey, including their priorities, context, challenges, and influencing factors. Rather than a physical representation, the Kawa model is evident throughout the interview schedule. Questions in the interview schedule specifically address each construct in the Kawa model. By the end of the interview, researchers will have a detailed description of each life history participant’s life journey, including their priorities, context, challenges, and influencing factors.
Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research design using a life history approach. According to Hagemaster (1992), a life history is a method of qualitative research that allows the researcher to understand an individual’s current attitude and behaviors and how they may have been influenced by initial decisions made at another and in another place. This allowed the focus to be on the participant’s involvement in the evolution of occupational therapy practice. The participant interviewed was selected from a participant’s list compiled through purposive sampling by the project directors. A semi-structured interview was guided by an interview schedule prepared by the project directors; the questions on the interview schedule were designed to be used with all the individuals interviewed as part of the larger project. The researchers were allowed to modify or add interview questions as needed for each specific interview. The Kawa Model, described above, was used to guide question development. The interview was conducted face to face in a study room located in the Goldstein Foundation Library on the Casper College campus. There were no gatekeeper issues as the project directors made initial contact with the participants. Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview. Approximately, two hours were spent gathering data. The participant provided the researchers with her curriculum vitae, pictures of tools used in practice, newspaper articles regarding her practice, and photos of herself. To ensure trustworthiness of the study, researchers kept a reflexive journal to eliminate any potential bias. Additionally, researcher memos were added to the transcription of the interview to track thoughts, assumptions, and biases. The researchers contacted Kelly through text messaging to clarify the spelling of names. During this time, Kelly asked the researchers to include additional information to her interview responses. This data was added to the interview transcription. The data was analyzed by both researchers.
Data Analysis & Findings

When completing the data analysis process, the researchers initially scanned through the transcript and attempted to identify codes. They identified possible codes as words or phrases which were repeatedly used or emphasized within the interview. Through this process, the researchers identified the following 25 codes. The codes were reviewed by a project director and researchers were told they should compile approximately twenty different codes, which might be incorporated into categories later on or they may become categories unto themselves. The researchers were encouraged to cut apart a hard copy of the transcripted interview and organize these pieces by concept.

Taking the information they had received, the researchers altered the method of coding in order to complete the data analysis process as recommended by the project director. The researchers cut apart a hard copy of the transcript and labeled each segment according to the overall concept or concepts addressed within that section of the document. This method enabled the researchers to develop codes based off of frequently repeated ideas rather than frequently used words. This process was implemented until the entire transcript was divided and organized into codes. A total of nineteen codes were developed including: challenges, politics, demographics, licensure, development of profession, benefits of occupational therapy, professional development, personal life and family, continuing education, schooling, modalities, interdisciplinary/COTA collaborations, advice to students, work experience, rapport, shifts in degree, boards and committees, rural/Wyoming, and teaching.

Following the coding process, the researchers developed a set of categories. An attempt was made to place each of the codes into a maximum of four categories, which included education, career, professional relationships, and external factors. After further analysis of the
codes and categories, two to three theme statements emerged for each category. Each theme statement was crafted to accurately depict Kelly's own perspectives as she had reported during the interview.

In order to ensure that the codes, categories, and themes accurately and most objectively described Kelly’s perspectives as portrayed within the interview, the researchers collaborated with one another and a project director before finalizing each step. Additionally, the interview transcription was referenced continually to ensure that the data analysis accurately represented verbatim quotes from Kelly herself. Findings from the data analysis, including a final assertion statement, were documented on a visual data display (See Appendix).

Category One: Education

Kelly noted various aspects of education, which have had an impact on her professional life since the beginning of her experience within the field of occupational therapy. Among these factors include continuing education, modality training, professors, and other learning experiences. In addition, Kelly’s personal strengths were also recognized to render education and professional growth beyond the classroom. Cumulatively, these aspects of education combined to afford Kelly an excellent education both prior to and following her becoming a licensed occupational therapist.

Continuing education, modality training, and great teachers in graduate school were associated with quality education. Kelly shared that she was very pleased with her education both at the University of Puget Sound and Colorado State University. According to Kelly, she learned under the tutelage of several excellent professors. As she reflected on the impact of her educators, Kelly recognized they contributed to her own success as a teacher. Kelly also noted modality classes were a significant and enjoyable part of her education as during occupational
therapy school. While she had the opportunity to participate in such courses during her time as a student, Kelly noted that more recently occupational therapy assistant programs tend to incorporate these courses more than occupational therapy programs. Kelly also recognized that continuing education experiences were a valuable aspect of professional growth. She said, “I’m always looking for courses. Every year, I still do. [I look for courses] where I can learn something new.”

**Personal strengths and learning experiences contribute to professional development beyond the classroom.** Kelly noted not all professional growth occurred as a result of formal education. Much valuable tutelage came in the form of personal experience and the use of personal skill sets. For instance, Kelly shared that the experience of becoming a mother bettered her as a pediatric occupational therapist. She said:

> And then, professionally and personally, when I became a mother, I became a much better therapist... until you have your own children and you realize how little time you have, especially if you have more than one, to fit all this in. That’s when the paradigm shift occurs that you try to build it into their daily routine. So you know, you are going to do these stretches during diaper changes or why don’t you do this toothbrushing thing before bed, or when they eat you know, to desensitize their mouth.

Additionally, Kelly talked about several personal skill sets which have contributed to her professional success. Kelly noted that she is skilled in the areas of handling clients and thriving through change. When expounding upon the statement “I have really good hands,” Kelly shared, “I can feel. I can hold my hand on a child and I can really know where I can help them.” Kelly also shared that she loves change and she believes that this her best asset as a therapist. Kelly also stated that her playfulness and patience enable her to be an effective pediatric occupational therapist.
Category Two: Career

Kelly highlighted two aspects of her career throughout the interview: working as a therapist at the CDC and teaching as an instructor in the occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs. Kelly emphasized these experiences as she shared the benefits of her profession and challenges faced, as well as meaningful work and teaching experiences.

Kelly shared her satisfaction with working in the field of occupational therapy when saying, “It was the best profession. You had the most autonomy. You weren’t really put in a box. You could be really creative. And if you’re that type of person...it’s a very rewarding career.”

Kelly was eager to share meaningful experiences and opportunities she had been afforded while working as a clinician and professor in the field of occupational therapy over the past four decades.

Teaching was the most meaningful experience of her career. Though retired, she continues to seek opportunities to have an impact in student’s lives. Kelly shared she has felt especially fulfilled in her role as a teacher within the occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs. When asked about her perceptions of her personal accomplishments that impacted occupational therapy practice, she highlighted her teaching career, saying:

So I guess I contributed to all the students that I taught. That’s what I feel the most. I mean, I worked with families and I helped them, but an [actual] contribution to society and to the profession was through teaching.

On several occasions throughout the interview, Kelly’s passion for teaching was evident as she shared advice that she commonly gives to students. As she reflects on her own experience, Kelly encourages students to have an open mind about where they will go in their career. She also uplifts students as she recognizes that new therapists must be kind to themselves after graduation as they improve professionally over the first few years of practice.
Though challenging at times, Kelly found working at the CDC to be a very rewarding career. Although she expressed a special sense of pride in her contributions as a teacher, Kelly did not neglect to emphasize her love for working at the CDC. She stated, “I landed [at the CDC] and then I worked there for thirty-five years; I loved it. It was the love of my life, was working with kids.” Kelly shared that her career at the CDC was also challenging, however. She noted that therapist-client interactions took place in high- and low-end residential areas of the town. On one occasion, Kelly went to a family’s home to implement therapy only to discover the majority of the household was under the influence of methamphetamine. Kelly stated that it takes the right personality to handle such challenges.

Category Three: Professional Relationships

Professional relationships, both with fellow healthcare providers and clients, were cited by Kelly as an important aspect of success within the profession. Kelly expounded upon the value of inter- and intradisciplinary relationships, indicating that connectedness with others in the field of healthcare is very important. Kelly told several stories regarding the rapport-building process that occurred with clients and their families during her time at the CDC. This, too, was noted to be an important and meaningful component to therapy.

Inter- and intradisciplinary collaboration contributes to effective therapeutic services. Kelly expressed communication and collaboration with other healthcare providers is valuable on many levels. She shared the policy of the CDC has been to share information and responsibility between professions. This team approach is described by Kelly as “really important.” Kelly explained she finds interdisciplinary collaboration to be beneficial, when saying, “You definitely need feedback...and you need to share your ideas. And I really believe in
collaboration. Really believe in collaboration. And I believe in teaching each other and learning through each other.”

Kelly was especially emphatic about the value of collaboration between OTs and COTAs. When asked her opinion regarding partnership between OTs and COTAs, Kelly responded emphatically that it was the “best thing that ever happened!” Kelly spoke highly of COTAs throughout the interview and stated on one of these occasions, “I couldn’t function without COTAs. You know? ... I always had at least two COTAs working with me at the Child Development Center and they were really, really good.”

**Building of rapport with clients and their families results in meaningful and client centered treatment.** Though the word “rapport” was only utilized once during the interview, Kelly described various rapport-building experiences and their value on several occasions throughout the dialogue. For instance, Kelly shared her experience with a family who would not permit her to touch their child in order to implement therapeutic services. She detailed that, over the span of a year, she used a doll to demonstrate techniques, which the parents then duplicated on the child. In spite of this challenging dynamic, Kelly noted a friendship developed between herself and those parents. Kelly demonstrated a clear appreciation for such relationships as she shared her appreciation for the “helping profession” of OT. She noted value in the ability to build meaningful relationships with clients while implementing beneficial therapeutic services:

I just feel very blessed to uhm, have found a helping profession because there is nothing that makes you feel better, personally, than helping someone. And I got to go into people’s homes every week and work with their children, which is their prized possession and go through all the good times, the bad times, be invited to birthday parties, tupperware parties, you name it.

At one point within the interview, Kelly shared her best memories of being an OT were of the personal and heartfelt thanks she received from parents whose children she had helped.
Category Four: External Factors

Kelly shared several aspects of working in the field of OT, which have impacted her experiences as a clinician and educator. Some of the external factors include Kelly’s own personal life and family, living within the rural state of Wyoming, development of the profession over time, shifts in degrees, politics, licensure, and boards and committees.

The rural nature of Wyoming impacts access to resources and treatment. Having lived and worked in the state of Wyoming for most of her life, Kelly expressed that the rural nature of that physical environment has had an impact on aspects of her career. Kelly grew up in Wyoming and her husband also has strong family ties to the state, especially as the owner of his family’s business, Lou Taubert Outfitters.

Kelly reported that the rural nature of the state has brought challenges such as experiencing isolation as a therapist and lacking occupational therapists to fill positions, as well as having decreased accessibility to resources and increased distances for clients and Kelly, herself, to drive for services. Nevertheless, Kelly shared access to hippotherapy has been one asset to living in a more rural community which might be less accessible in an urban area. Overall, Kelly stated that “being rural really did affect my job a lot.”

From politics to nature of practice, occupational therapy is a constantly evolving profession. According to Kelly, changes within politics and OT itself have occurred consistently over the years. Kelly noted that global opportunities for OTs to practice in countries outside of the United States have increased. Additionally, medical advances and evidence-based practice have improved. Kelly also shared how the development of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) impacted her career: “And so, back around 1976 is when IDEA, I-D-E-A,
the individual education, disabilities education act became law. So, the early intervention centers were funded and they were just starting out in Wyoming.”

According to Kelly, much has changed in terms of how healthcare services are governed. As she stated, “Medicare, medicaid. That has changed a lot. And then, also, all the rules and regs from the government. That has really changed, too, on me. Reimbursement. Funding for early intervention programs or department of education for school districts.”

In terms of OT practice itself, this too was reported to have changed over time. Kelly shared models and theories of practice are “always evolving, as they should be.” During the interview, Kelly also expressed that advances in technology have impacted the profession. When reflecting on this modality of practice, Kelly said,

The computer and technology is really what’s changed our profession. My profession, any way. [In] pediatrics, we have a lot of all talkers and all our different kind of computerized adaptive equipment for kids. So that’s really made a difference.

**Differences in degree do not have an effect on quality of practice and is, therefore, unnecessary aside from competition in the healthcare field.** When asked to provide her perspective regarding the upcoming degree shift from a Master’s to a Doctorate for licensure in OT, Kelly shared that she believes that things have gotten out of hand. She shared the belief that this change is necessary to compete as a viable healthcare profession today. However, Kelly expressed the concern that this will not result in improved quality of therapists:

I think there’re some therapists with their bachelor’s degrees that are just unbelievably talented and good and getting that master’s didn’t make a difference. They were good before. The whole upper education system is very political and so, I think, we are going with the flow because we’re forced to. We have to to have our profession recognized, but did I think it was necessary? Not really. Do I think our doctoral students are going to be any better therapists than our master’s students? Probably not. I know quite a few people that have clinical doctorates that aren’t as good as people that have bachelor’s and master’s. So I think it’s, I think we have to do it to compete. I, I really do. Probably we are gonna be forced into it and we have to do it to compete.
Nevertheless, Kelly has been heavily involved over the years in the development of programs to fill these degree requirements both in the COTA program at Casper College and UND’s OT program on the Casper College campus. During the interview, Kelly shared that she served on the steering committee at Casper College where she assisted in the development of the COTA program, while simultaneously working as an instructor within UND’s satellite OT program.

**Assertion**

The cumulative findings of the interview were formulated into an assertion statement, which was developed as the final step of the data analysis process. The assertion statement represents each category that was created during the data analysis process. This assertion reads as follows: According to Kelly, occupational therapy is a meaningful and challenging career that has developed over time; additionally, her experiences within the profession are impacted by external factors, professional relationships, educational opportunities, and career setting.

**Discussion**

The Kawa Model was used as a framework to assess the data within this study. As discussed earlier, this model uses the symbolism of various aspects of a river to describe the flow of an individual’s life (Teoh and Iwama, 2015). Symbols incorporated into the model include rocks, the river walls and base, driftwood, and the spaces between these structures, which represent challenges, environment, values and personal resources, and satisfaction with life, respectively (Teoh and Iwama, 2015). Information gained from the interview with Kelly was organized and further evaluated using this model.

**Rocks**

Though Kelly expressed an overall positive perspective of her career, she did recognize a handful of challenges which impacted her ability to provide quality and effective care. Most
prominent was Kelly’s experience working as an occupational therapist in rural Wyoming. Both she and her clients would often be required to drive long distances to give or receive services. During her time as a practicing therapist, Kelly also noted that resources within the state were limited. Continuing education, especially, was harder to access. In spite of these challenges, however, Kelly noted that rural practice came with some positive opportunities that may not be as readily available within an urban area.

Kelly also shared some distress with shifts in degree requirements in the field of occupational therapy. She expressed the perspective that moving the profession to the doctorate and masters levels has not proven to render more competent and effective therapists. Kelly shared these degree shifts are necessary in order to compete with other healthcare professions, yet the increase in education should not be assumed to improve the overall quality of therapists.

**River Walls and Base**

Several environments and contexts have impacted Kelly throughout her career. Those most highly emphasized within the interview include physical, social, cultural, and virtual.

Physical environments include the state of Wyoming, the Child Development Center, the University of North Dakota at Casper College, and Casper College. Kelly has worked in Wyoming for the entirety of her occupational therapy career. As noted earlier, this rural environment has come with challenges. One of these challenges includes accessing continuing education. While working at the Child Development Center, Kelly was fortunate enough to be sent to Denver, once a month, to receive the experiences rural areas are lacking. Though this was time consuming, Kelly was thankful to her supervisor for providing the opportunities other therapists practicing in rural settings may not have had. Moreover, due to the rural setting of Casper, Kelly had to travel to smaller, neighboring cities to see patients who did not have
convenient access to occupational therapists. This included Alcova and Midwest (over 50 miles away). Even more concerning, were the availability of job positions at the time she graduated. Kelly identified taking the only job that was available at the time. Unfortunately, this job was a position in pediatrics, an area Kelly was not interested in at the time. Though, after working with children, Kelly realized she loved the pediatric population and continued to work for the Child Development Center, even after she retired. While the challenges of the rural setting were apparent, Kelly also identified some of the unique experiences she had, including hippotherapy. She recalled taking the children horseback riding and noted this would not have been possible in an urban setting.

Social environments include the persons involved with these physical environments. This includes family, students, coworkers, and clients. Kelly identified marrying her high school sweetheart. She has been married for forty years and has three daughters. Kelly is also the grandmother to two boys and one girl. In addition, Kelly taught at both the University of North Dakota’s occupational therapy program and the Casper College occupational therapy programs. During this time, Kelly spent time socializing with the students in her courses. In addition, she communicated with the staff in North Dakota and in Casper. Kelly also worked as a practitioner. Therefore, she had to effectively socialize with her coworkers at the Child Development Center, including varying disciplines. Kelly also worked directly with the children. Kelly created rapport with the children’s family and made sure to include them in therapy sessions.

A form of cultural environment, governmental policies and procedures as well as the field of occupational therapy itself have experienced several significant changes over the course of Kelly’s time in practice. One significant change Kelly identified was the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Kelly explained, this allowed early intervention centers to be funded,
including the Child Development Center. Another significant change has been the evolution of the occupational therapy program. According to Kelly, when she graduated occupational therapy was at the bachelor’s level. Now they offer a master’s level program, which Kelly also obtained. Moreover, there is discussion that by 2027, entry level practice will be at the doctoral level. Kelly expressed the belief that shifts in degree requirements, both Bachelor’s to Master’s and Master’s to Doctorate, were excessive as these changes do not ensure better therapists.

According to Kelly, virtual contexts have had a more recent and efficacious impact on the field of occupational therapy. Kelly recalled when she was in school, she and her peers were required to handwrite their reports. Kelly recognized the value of computerizing documents so reports were legible and mistakes were easily corrected. In addition, Kelly appreciates the increase in the health care technology, including the available adaptive equipment options.

Driftwood

During the interview, Kelly recognized a number of key values, personality traits, and personal resources, which have contributed to her life and practice over the years. Examples include her education at the University of Puget Sound and at Colorado State University, as well as Kelly’s own skills as a teacher and her ability to build rapport with clients.

Kelly’s education was cited as a quality experience, which was beneficial in preparing her for a career as a practitioner and professor. Kelly shared she learned under the tutelage of several excellent faculty members. She noted that she is proud of and confident in her own skills as a teacher as well. Kelly described handling skills as an important aspect of occupational therapy education and detailed the way in which she incorporated such learning experiences into the classroom, and vice versa. During the early years of the Bachelor’s program at Casper
College through UND, Kelly frequently led pediatrics courses at the CDC. This enabled her students to receive a quality, in vivo education.

Kelly noted that the practice of building rapport is a meaningful aspect of practicing as an occupational therapist. Throughout the interview, Kelly shared a variety of stories which illustrated successful building of rapport with clients and their families. As she elaborated on the unique approaches taken with each individual family and child, Kelly demonstrated the value she places upon rapport.

**Spaces Between**

Kelly described her experiences and practice within the field of occupational therapy as being very fulfilling and meaningful. As she put it, “I just feel very very blessed to have found a helping profession.” During the interview, Kelly was asked there were any aspects of her career she would like to have done differently, in hindsight. She laughed and noted her first years as a therapist. As she concluded an example of one such story, Kelly reflected on the question once more, “Some of those early [goals and interventions] when you’re first practicing. Sure; I would do those over. But, overall, no.” Throughout the interview, Kelly shared her career as a therapist and educator was very fulfilling. When asked if she could recall anything she wishes she might have accomplished in the field that she has not as of yet, Kelly laughed and said, “I really can’t think of anything so I must have had a good ride.”

**Conclusion**

Information gained from the interview with Kelly contributes to the overall understanding of the development of OT in the state of Wyoming over time. Through an evaluation of this influential therapist’s experiences, a general understanding may be gained regarding the evolution of the profession. As has been demonstrated through the results from this
qualitative study, OT has been and continues to be an ever-changing field. The profession itself is subject to influence from several sources. Ultimately, however, the joy of working as an occupational therapist has remained enduring through trials and withstood the test of time.
References


Wyoming Occupational Therapy Practice Act, Senate File NO. SF0042 (2016).

### Appendix

**Visual Data Display**

**Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of Kelly Taubert, M.S. OTR/L**  
Amber Fernandez, OTS & Hannah Fiser, OTS  
University of North Dakota

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modalities</td>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary/COTA</td>
<td>Personal Life/family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td>Benefits of OT</td>
<td>collaboration</td>
<td>Wyoming/rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td>Advice to students</td>
<td>Rapport</td>
<td>Development over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shifts in degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>Licensure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boards and committees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patterns/Themes</th>
<th>Patterns/Themes</th>
<th>Patterns/Themes</th>
<th>Patterns/Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education,</td>
<td>Teaching was the most</td>
<td>Inter- and</td>
<td>The ruralness of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modality training, and</td>
<td>meaningful experience of</td>
<td>intradisciplinary</td>
<td>Wyoming impacts access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great teachers in graduate</td>
<td>her career. Though retired,</td>
<td>collaboration contributes</td>
<td>to resources and treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school were associated</td>
<td>she continues to seek</td>
<td>to effective therapeutic</td>
<td>From politics to nature of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with quality education</td>
<td>opportunities to have an</td>
<td>services</td>
<td>practice, occupational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>impact in student’s lives.</td>
<td></td>
<td>therapy is a constantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal strengths and</td>
<td>Though challenging at</td>
<td>Building of rapport with</td>
<td>evolving profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning experiences</td>
<td>times, Kelly found</td>
<td>clients and their families</td>
<td>Differences in degree do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribute to professional</td>
<td>working at the CDC to be</td>
<td>results in meaningful and</td>
<td>not have an effect on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development beyond the</td>
<td>a very rewarding career.</td>
<td>client centered treatment.</td>
<td>quality of practice and is,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>therefore, unnecessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aside from competition in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the healthcare field.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Professional Relationships</td>
<td>External Factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assertion**

According to Kelly Taubert, occupational therapy is a meaningful and challenging career that has developed over time. Experiences within the profession are impacted by external factors, professional relationships, educational opportunities, and career setting.