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Janice Finley

Emily Utech

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Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of Beth Cada EdD., OTR/L, FAOTA

Emily Utech and Janice Finley

University of North Dakota

Abstract

The purpose of this life history study was to gain an understanding and provide current and future generations of occupational therapists a view of the evolutionary history from its inception to current practice through the life history story of Beth Cada, EdD., OTR/L, FAOTA within the profession of occupational therapy. The occupational therapy students completed one 2-hour online interview using a semi-structured interview to learn about her personal and professional goals, education, leadership skills, and her role at a national level. Data was analyzed through coding of the transcribed interview. Four categories emerged from the interview process: professional roles, occupational therapy services, Dr. Cada's client factors, and perceptions of occupational therapy practice. The results of this study found that Dr. Cada is a timeless advocate for all involved within the field of occupational therapy, including consumers, practitioners, and students. She is continuously active through leadership roles while mentoring others and providing occupational therapy practice to clients.

Introduction

The life history of Dr. Cada was one of nine life history interviews which are a part of a larger project of *Life Histories of Individuals Who Have Been Influential in Developing Occupational Therapy at the National Level and Beyond*. The purpose of the project is to obtain information about the history and evolution of occupational therapy practice. 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. The life history of Dr. Cada is a case study that examined her life as a national leader, occupational therapy practitioner, educator, and state representative. Throughout the study, the Kawa model was used to symbolize a river about the individual and their personal life history (Turpin & Iwama, 2011). The interview took place

via Zoom. The researchers were in a small study room reserved at the Casper College Library and Dr. Cada was in her home.

Timeline Literature Review

Many different legislation acts throughout the past years have influenced the practice of occupational therapy. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was established with the purpose of many changes for the rights of individuals with disabilities. An “individual with a disability” includes a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially inhibits one or more major life activities, has a history of such impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2019). This legislative act impacted occupational therapy professionals as they work directly with individuals with disabilities (AOTA, 2019). Occupational therapists should advocate for legislative acts that protect their clients to enhance their occupational performance. In addition, in 1998, the AOTA adopted their vision statement. It stated “AOTA advances occupational therapy as the pre-eminent profession in promoting the health, productivity, and quality of life of individuals and society through the therapeutic application of occupation” (AOTA, 2019). A vision statement is important to guide AOTA and the occupational therapy profession. The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) established a post-baccalaureate entry for occupational therapy (AOTA, 2019). The transition impacted occupational therapists’ to provide more educated therapists, higher level of competencies, and increased evidenced-based practice. Currently, there is a discussion about transition to a doctorate-level profession as well.

These legislative acts helped shape Dr. Cada’s values and beliefs into the impactful national leader she is today. This includes her values and beliefs of advocating for herself as a professional, for her clients, and their families she works with, as well as the importance of the

direct impact she has to enhance one's quality of life through occupation-based interventions. Lastly, Dr. Cada's strong ability to follow the AOTA vision statement has enhanced and shaped her strong values, beliefs, and morals as she has progressed as an occupational therapist, owner of a clinic, and a national leader over time.

All in all, national leaders play a huge role in the profession of occupational therapy. According to Dillon (2001), a key component of being a leader is to serve the needs of others and putting their needs before their own in order to be truly effective. Occupational therapists serve to meet the needs of their clients in order to provide the best care. Being an occupational therapist leader requires the ability to provide evidence-based practice, and advocacy for their clients. Dr. Cada has shown leadership qualities through her position as an educator, practitioner, and state representative.

Theory

This research was guided by the Kawa Model. The Kawa Model uses the symbol of a river to understand a person's life history. The central concepts of the Kawa Model include harmony, balance, and well-being (Turpin & Iwana, 2011). Harmony is defined as the state of being, life flow. Balance is used as a guide for when the individual and the community co-exist. The well-being of the individual includes the state when all elements coexist in harmony within the context of all elements (Turpin & Iwana, 2011).

The symbol of the river is used to represent different elements such as water, riversidewall, rocks, driftwood, and the space between the obstructions. The water represents Dr. Cada's life flow and energy. The river sidewall are the contexts and settings that surround Dr. Cada. Rocks occur when Dr. Cada perceives a life circumstance to be problematic. Dr. Cada's driftwood includes her personal attributes, resources, and assets (Turpin & Iwana, 2011). The

river symbol can be used in many different aspects of her life history. It can help guide the life history study process to determine underlying client factors, performance patterns, and occupational performance that represents Dr. Cada's life.

Description of the Participant

Dr. Cada was born and raised in the state of Illinois where she lived with her parents. She attended Colorado State University and received her B.S. in Occupational Therapy in 1974. She then moved back to Illinois to become a Registered Occupational Therapist. In 1980, Dr. Cada and two physical therapists opened up a pediatric rehabilitation service center to help children and their families within the community.

From 1974 to present she has been a member of both the American Occupational Therapy Association and the Illinois Occupational Therapy Association. She also served the state as the Licensure Chairperson for the Illinois Occupational Therapy Association from 1981 to 1983. From 1989 to 1992, Dr. Cada was an Executive Board Member of the American Occupational Therapy Association and from 1993 to 1997 was the President of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy.

Dr. Cada continues to live in Illinois with her husband and family. She defines her family as a strong social support by pushing her to achieve her goals. Currently, Dr. Cada continues to practice at her pediatric rehabilitation center that focuses on kids, their families, and the community. At the end of 2019, Dr. Cada plans to close her practice after 45 years. Currently, Dr. Cada is the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs of Governors State University. She is responsible for four academic colleges, graduate studies, university library, office of institutional research, and many other events. Through these positions and many more, Dr. Cada

has been a strong advocate for occupational therapy and has sought out opportunities for professional growth and development.

Methodology

Study Design

Research was conducted using a life history study design to gain a better understanding of the life experiences of Dr. Cada within the profession of occupational therapy. The purpose of the life history study is to gain an understanding to provide current and future generations of occupational therapists and provide a view of the evolutionary history through her life history stories within the profession of occupational therapy. The interview was conducted through the use of a semi-structured interview incorporating clarifying questions as needed. The data was analyzed through the coding of the transcribed interview. Four categories emerged from the interview process.

Participant selection

The life history study was conducted using purposive sampling provided by the course instructors in order to find occupational therapists who have held leadership roles at the national level. The occupational therapy students obtained Dr. Cada's email and phone number through the use of course instructors. Both occupational therapy students emailed Dr. Cada and set up a time to complete the online interview through Zoom. Dr. Cada signed a consent form to participate and consented to all the terms of the study.

Data Collection

The data was collected in an online interview in a reserved study room at the Casper College Library. The online interview was conducted through a web-based video conferencing application called Zoom. Due to internet complications, the interview was conducted through

audio only. The interview included semi-structured questions to address her personal and professional goals, education, leadership skills, and her role at a national level. The interview was approximately two hours long. The interview was recorded and later transcribed. Data was also collected from the participant's curriculum vitae.

Trustworthiness

The occupational therapy students established trustworthiness throughout the study process. Each occupational therapy student provided multiple reflexive journals throughout the different steps of the research study. The topics of the reflexive journals included questions and thoughts about the interview process, transcription, data analysis, and etc. The reflexive journals allowed the occupational therapy students to understand their preconceived judgements regarding specific topics. The data from the interview was transcribed verbatim by the occupational therapy students. Triangulation was utilized as data was collected through review of existing literature, internet search, review of her curriculum vita, and interviews.

Data Analysis

When completing the data analysis process, the occupational therapy students analyzed the transcript from the interview in an attempt to identify codes. Possible codes that were analyzed included broad concepts or ideas that were used throughout the interview. Throughout the data analysis process, the occupational therapy students developed twenty codes. The transcription was coded with specific quotes illustrating the code and potential meaning. Following the coding of the transcription, four categories emerged. A visual data display of the codes, categories, and themes is located in the appendix.

Findings/Results

From the twenty codes, there were four categories that emerged. These categories included: professional roles, occupational service process, Beth's client factors and the perceptions of occupational therapy.

Category: Professional Roles

The first category presented was Dr. Cada's professional roles throughout her lifespan. Family-centered practice, work, education, and leadership codes were all reflective upon Dr. Cada's professional roles. Dr. Cada held a professional role in family-centered practice and her work as she and her partners founded their pediatric rehabilitation service center. Dr. Cada's professional role in education included her involvement in founding the Occupational Therapy Program at Governors State University and becoming the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. The leadership code also included any other roles that she held in as a professional. There were three themes that involved from the category of professional roles.

The first theme involved being centered around empowering others to engage throughout the community. Dr. Cada stated "there's always a possibility to do something. So just go for it. I think that like I said, the effort that you put into putting yourself out there for these opportunities pay you back multiple times." Dr. Cada upheld many leadership and professional roles to better the field of occupational therapy for future students and professionals, as well as pushed her students and peer faculty members to always pursue opportunities.

The second theme included Dr. Cada's ability to advocate for others and using her leadership skills to empower students and others within the community. She reported that "I've learned a lot about how to advocate for the profession, how to advocate for families, how to advocate for myself. I've also come to learn to recognize that you have to keep yourself open to

the possibilities.” Dr. Cada remains a strong advocate for herself, her clients, and the profession by supporting the needs of individuals and their families within her community.

The third theme includes Dr. Cada’s ability to embrace the professional role of being an educator in order to give back to others in the occupational therapy community. Dr. Cada stated “well, my perspective is community based practice is where OT has a huge role and I’m a big, you know, I’m a big proponent of that.” Dr. Cada is always open and searching for an opportunity to improve the field of occupational therapy for the benefit of others.

Category: Occupational Therapy Service Process

The occupational therapy service process was the second category. It included the codes of activity analysis, frames of references, multidisciplinary collaboration, occupational therapy/occupational therapy assistant collaboration, client care and occupation. Each one of these codes describe the occupational therapy service process. The activity analysis and frame of reference impacts the occupational therapy service process as they influence the selection of interventions. The collaboration with multidisciplinary and occupational therapy/occupational therapy assistant influences the occupational therapy service process in order to be educated on current best care practice to create client-centered practice. Client care and occupation are also important in the occupational therapy service process in selecting and choosing interventions based upon meaningful occupations specific to the client. Next, there are two themes incorporating occupational therapy service process category.

The first theme comprises Dr. Cada as a strong believer in the importance of being intentional in developing guidelines and treatment preferences in order to meet the needs of her clients. She reported “I think they've (frames of references and models) been hugely important because it gives you a way to view and understand the kind of care that you're going to be

providing.” Dr. Cada incorporates evidence-based research in all areas of the occupational therapy process including evaluations, interventions, and frames of references.

The second theme involves Dr. Cada developing her practice over the past 45 years, she strives to advance her learning and involvement in all aspects of occupational therapy health education. Dr. Cada shared “so it was unusual, it was unusual for people to continuously practice. I have to say that some of the day I got out of school even with my own raising my own family I have practiced throughout all the 45 years.” Dr. Cada’s commitment to working within the occupational profession has created a continuous learning cycle to promote her learning and educating others.

Category: Beth’s Client Factors

Dr Cada’s client factors are a category as they give specific insight to her personal life and experiences. The codes included were influential people, family, occupational therapy interest, knowledge gained through occupational therapy, and first-hand experience. Her family is an important client factor because her family is a strong social support for her. Influential people in Dr Cada’s life are also client factors as they are used for motivation and guidance in the occupational therapy profession. Occupational therapy interested is a client factor because it explains how Dr. Cada became interested in the profession. The knowledge gained through occupation is a client factor because she has gained knowledge about herself, and about others as well. Lastly, her first-and experience is a client factor as those experiences are specific to her life, and the relationships with her clients and students. In addition, there are three themes that involve Dr Cada’s client factors.

The first theme includes Dr. Cada’s ability to demonstrate a strong work ethic that has enhanced her ability to be insightful and facilitate change in people’s lives. Dr. Cada stated “first

of all it has been really truly an opportunity to meet some incredible and work with some incredible people that I probably would have never run into in a work-life if I hadn't been involved in the professional organizations.” Through the many positions upheld at the practitioner and national level, Dr. Cada has met influential professionals that have helped shape her own practice.

The second theme involves Dr. Cada’s recognition of the contributions of her clients in enhancing her knowledge and experiences, thus being able to provide on-going quality care of clients. Dr. Cada reported “I can't even believe it myself but you know the skills and the knowledge that I've gained and the you know, the relationships and the networks that I've gained through my leadership work have just been, I think I've received a lot more than I've given.” Through Dr. Cada’s opportunities and experiences, this has enhanced her learning to push her to be the best professional she can be.

The last theme was described as Dr. Cada recognizes the contributions of mentors in her learning and development of her career choice to become an educator. It is evidenced by Dr. Cada stating “I've had the opportunity to work with a number of people who we know and their textbooks, the Winnie Dunn’s of the world, the Janice Berg's, the Gary keilhoffner’s. Yeah, I mean all of these people I've had the opportunity not only to work with, but to get to know. And they're incredible.” Dr. Cada has had the opportunity to meet influential people within the occupational therapy profession. These people have influenced the development of the importance of her practice.

Category: Perceptions of Occupational Therapy Practice

The last category presented was the perceptions of occupational therapy practice. The

codes included were AOTA: Illinois representative, legislation, credentials, evolution of occupational therapy, and masters to doctorate transition. The evolution of occupational therapy and the transition from masters to doctorate process influence and shape the occupational therapy practice. Dr. Cada's position as the Illinois representative for AOTA impacted her perceptions of occupational therapy practice because she was able to advocate for the needs of occupational therapy in her state. Legislation and credentials play a role in the occupational therapy practice as they guide practice and delivery of services to clients. Lastly, the perceptions of occupational therapy practice categories included three different themes.

The first theme was that Dr. Cada is proud of the legislation that has shaped and positioned occupational therapy practice for the future. This theme was evidenced by Dr. Cada stating "the legislation and how OT's and practice and school would be different than the practice that we knew in the hospital." It is important to be aware of legislation and the impact it plays upon service delivery in different settings.

The second theme includes the value of Dr. Cada giving back to others in the occupational therapy profession and community. She explained "we've had the benefit of working back and forth with families and the therapist and see the children and their school setting and their preschool setting when children are going back and forth to the hospital because they have fairly fragile medical conditions. And I am a true believer that having therapy available to families in the community makes a tremendous difference." Within Dr. Cada's practice, she has worked with families in the community in order to make a positive impact for all involved.

The last theme was described to be Dr. Cada's involvement at the national-level has both enhanced her own skills, but also provided an avenue to help others. Dr. Cada shared "I've been

involved with the state organizations since I started working in Chicago, which is 1974. And you know, I did different roles in our state association and I became the representative for Illinois to the AOTA. And through that time. I would go around the state and we would talk to people about important issues and OT and very stimulating and very interesting and during that time we were trying to get licensure in Illinois.” Throughout her practice, Dr. Cada has been an advocate and educator at a national-level to enhance all those involved in the occupational therapy profession.

Discussion/Conclusion

All in all, the literature review was used to establish key events throughout Dr. Cada’s timeline. It helped add pieces of history and reasoning for how history impacted her life history. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was established and impacted many changes for the rights of individuals with disabilities, and influenced the importance of advocating for occupational therapist’s clients. Dr. Cada has embraced this through her work ethic and continuously advocating for her clients in her practice and others through her national legislative work. In 1996, there was a legal dispute between NBCOT and AOTA over the NBCOT trademark of OTA and COTA. This dispute impacted the profession of occupational therapy by shaping the national organizations. Throughout her leadership, the organization was able to refocus the objectives and goals. In 1998, the American Occupational Therapy Association adopted the vision statement which was important to enhance guidance for the organization and implements of occupational therapy services (AOTA, 2019). In 1999, the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) established a post-baccalaureate entry for occupational therapists (AOTA, 2019). It allowed for the increase of evidence-based practice, higher competency levels, and education. Lastly, the component of a leader is essential to

occupational therapy practice. It is important that therapists are leaders for themselves, their clients, and other professionals as well.

The Kawa Model represents different parts within Dr. Cada's life, including her life flow, energy, context, setbacks, and accomplishments. The different aspects of the river are used to relate and tell a story of her personal and professional life history. As the occupational therapy students conducted the interview and data analysis process, the occupational therapy students identified the different aspects of Dr. Cada's river. As Dr. Cada's occupational practice evolved, the aspects within her river altered and changed to fit her life flow. These aspects of the river are influential to her personal and professional life. Dr. Cada's river strongly reflected her values, beliefs, and experiences throughout her life history.

The river has helped identify the key aspects of Dr. Cada's professional career to help influence future occupational therapy students and practitioners. The four categories that were derived from the twenty codes were all reflective of Dr. Cada's professional roles and life history. From the categories and themes, the occupational therapy students derived Dr. Cada's assertion statement: Dr. Cada is a timeless advocate for all involved within the field of occupational therapy, including consumers, practitioners, and students. She is continuously active through leadership roles while mentoring others and providing occupational therapy practice to clients. Dr. Cada is a national influential leader and practitioner that has made a difference within communities of children and their families, legislative processes, and the education of future practitioners. The gathering of information for the history and evolution of occupational therapy practice from an influential individual such as Dr. Cada, has influenced current and future generations of occupational therapists.

References

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Appendix

Professional Roles	OT Service Process	Beth's Client Factors	The Perceptions of OT Practice
↓	↓	↓	↓
Codes: Family-centered practice, work, education, and leadership	Codes: Activity analysis, frame of references, multidisciplinary collaboration, OT/OTA collaboration, client care, and occupation	Codes: Influential people, family, occupational therapy interest, knowledge gained through occupational therapy, and first-hand experience.	Codes: AOTA: Illinois representative, legislation, credentials, evolution of occupational therapy, and masters to doctorate transition.
Theme: Beth's professional roles have been centered around empowering others to engage throughout the community.	Theme: Beth is a strong believer in the importance of being intentional in developing guidelines and treatment preferences in order to meet the needs of her clients.	Theme: Beth demonstrates a strong work ethic that has enhanced her ability to be insightful and facilitate change in people's lives.	Theme: Beth is proud of the legislation that has shaped and positioned occupational therapy practice for the future.
Theme: Within her professional roles, Beth is an advocate for others and uses her leadership skills to empower students and others within the community.	Theme: As Beth has developed her practice over the past 45 years, she strives to advance her learning and involvement in all aspects of occupational therapy health education.	Theme: Beth recognizes the contributions of her clients in enhancing her knowledge and experiences, thus being able to provide on-going quality care of clients	Theme: Beth values giving back to others in the occupational therapy profession and community.
Theme: Beth has embraced the professional role of being an educator in order to give back to others in the occupational therapy community.		Theme: Beth recognizes the contributions of mentors in her learning, and development of her career choice to become an educator.	Theme: Beth's involvement at the national-level has both enhanced her own skills, but also provided an avenue to help others

Assertion Statement: Beth is a timeless advocate for all involved within the field of occupational therapy, including consumers, practitioners, and students. She is continuously active through leadership roles while mentoring others and providing occupational therapy practice to clients.