

EVOLUTION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE: A LIFE HISTORY OF JODY LARSON, OTR/L

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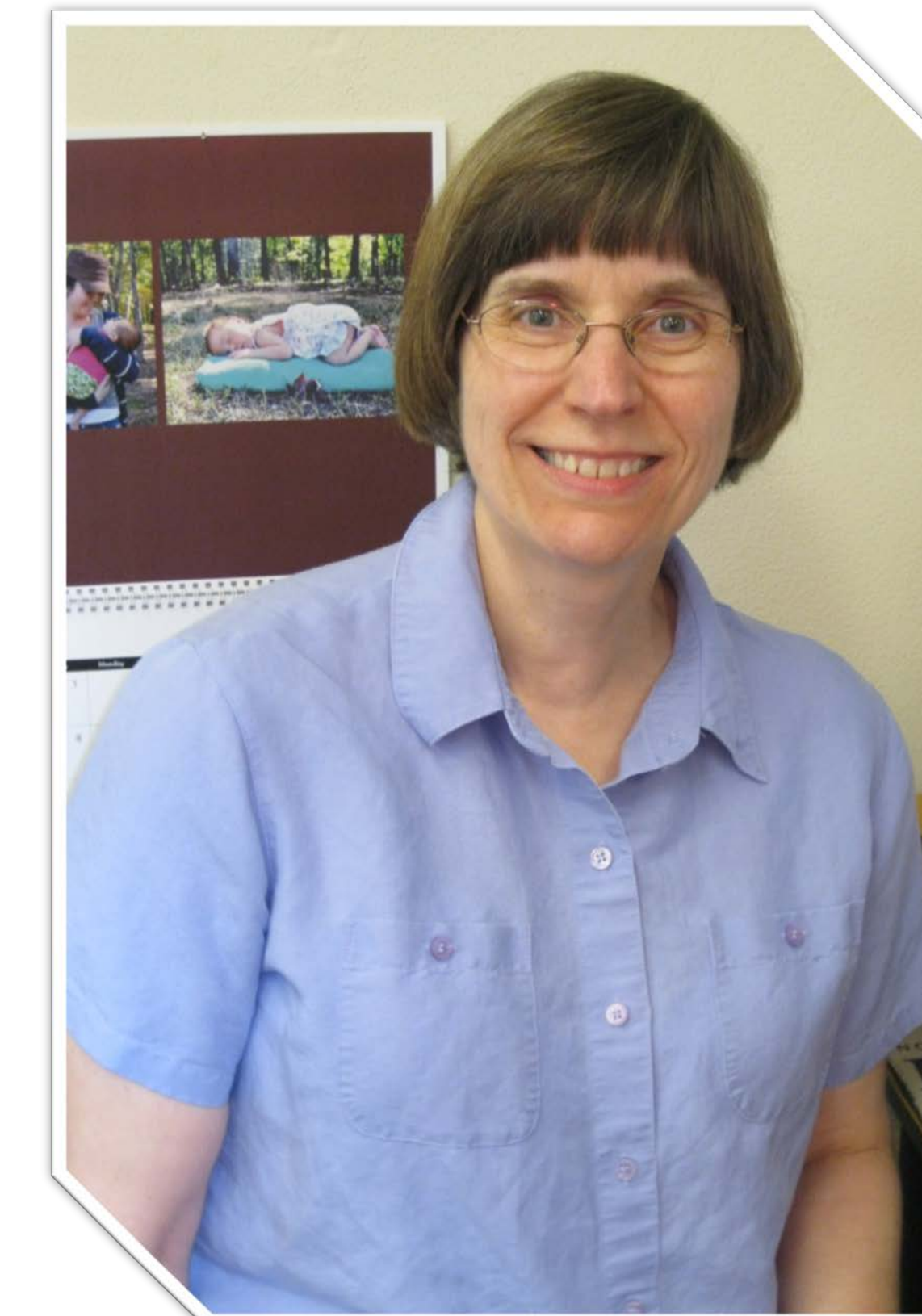
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the life history of occupational therapists (OT) and occupational therapy assistants (OTA) who were instrumental in developing occupational therapy practice in North Dakota or Wyoming. This is a continuation of the life history project at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS) started in 2017 as a repository of key individual's lifetime contributions to the benefit of current and future occupational therapy practice and practitioners in the region.



"...that was my niche [mental health practice], and the other thing that was very important to me was student education."

"That's what I miss most about my career...working one on one with students on their fieldwork, and later in the classroom."



DATA ANALYSIS

The occupation-based model guiding this study was the Kawa Model, which metaphors a river to one's life flow complete with turning points, contexts, obstacles, and personal resources which allowed researchers to examine Jody's chronological life experiences and code data from this perspective (Turpin & Iwana, 2011).

Emerging Categories & Themes

Challenges in Practice

- Challenges arose when clients and supervisors lacked recognition and support of Jody's professional interests and abilities that were rooted in a client-centered, occupation-based approach.
- She overcame personal and professional obstacles related to physical limitations related to spina bifida by her perseverance, proactive choices and capitalization on her strengths.

Roles in Education

- She advocated for OT in each of her professional roles (including occupational therapist, fieldwork supervisor, and professor) and her passion was helping students.
- She believed in the importance in teaching about role delineation of OT and OTA to students.
- Jody was instrumental in advocating, planning, implementing, and developing student programs in North Dakota.

Identity as an OT

- She valued being a lifelong learner and continuing her education in OT to stay pertinent in the field.
- Her passion for OT in mental health extended to multiple professional roles.
- Jody approached her career development with practicality and proactivity.
- She established and taught the value of a work-life balance.

Evolving Profession

- Development and dissemination of theoretical principles were key to the advancement of occupational therapy practice.
- She was affected by the research-driven transition of OT away from crafts-based interventions
- Deinstitutionalization played a large role in reducing populations in state hospitals during her practice.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANT

Jody Larson graduated from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, MN with a B.A. in Occupational Therapy in 1982 and began her entry-level practice at the ND State Hospital in Jamestown in 1983, where she had previously completed a fieldwork experience. As a practicing *occupational therapist*, she devoted 33 years at this mental health setting until her retirement from the hospital in 2016.

- She began her role as a *fieldwork educator* in her second year at the ND State Hospital and eventually added other teaching roles focused in mental health to her career including:
 - *Instructor* at the University of Mary (2004-2005)
 - *Adjunct Faculty* at the North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) (2010-2017)
 - *Guest lecturer* on Cognitive Disability Theory at the University of Mary (2004 to 2017).
- Returned to the University Mary in Bismarck, ND to complete her M.S. in Occupational Therapy in 2003.
- Served as member of the Roster of Accreditation (RAE) to provide the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education with necessary information on accreditation decisions for OT and OTA educational programs
- Recipient of Outstanding OT Fieldwork Educator awards at UND and the University of Mary as nominated by students and co-authored an article for OT Practice: "Reflective Writing in Level II Fieldwork: A Tool to Promote Clinical Reasoning" (2011). Also designed student fieldwork programs.
- Awarded Jamestown Community Outstanding Handicapped Citizen in 1986
- Since retirement, Jody remains active in volunteer involvement in her community and mentorship roles for OT

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was completed by the authors to define the cultural events that influenced the profession during Jody Larson's practice. Described below are impactful legislative and professional events.

- In 1963, the Community Health Act was passed starting the deinstitutionalization movement which greatly impacted mental health services (Peters, 2011). Jody speaks to the effect deinstitutionalization had on the decrease of hospital beds in the state hospital setting and the impact this had on society and support for individuals diagnosed with mental health disorders.
- In 1983, when Jody entered the profession, a bachelor's degree was required to practice as an entry-level OT. In 2007, a postbaccalaureate degree was then required for entry-level practice (AOTA, 2018).
- ND State Board of Occupational Therapy was founded in 1983 to oversee licensure of OTs and OTAs (Archives - State Agencies - Board of Occupational Therapy Practice, n.d.).
- In 1980s, occupational therapy brings focus to scholarship and research to promote integration of theoretical principles (Hinojosa, Kramer, and Brasic Royeen, 2017). Models of practice developed by Claudia Allen, Janette K. Schkade, and Sally Schultz. Jody uses these models in her practice and as a fieldwork educator when she becomes familiar with the models during her Master's work.
- In the 1990s, occupation was recognized and reestablished as a key concept to occupational therapy (Hinojosa, Kramer, Brasic Royeen, 2017).
- Development of Occupational Therapy Practice Framework in 2002 (AOTA, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The authors of this qualitative research study used a life history approach to examine Jody's life through immersion in data collection and analysis.

- Participant was assigned from a list developed by the course instructors through purposive sampling
- No specific gatekeeper issues- initial contact and recruitment was by course instructors. Informed consent given by participant
- Video interview was conducted using Skype at the SMHS building at UND in Grand Forks, ND in a small room and lasted about 95 minutes
- Digital audio recorder and Skype call recorder program were used to audio-record interview
- Semi-structured interview was guided by an interview schedule prepared by the course instructors; 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.
- Participant also provided personal pictures and curriculum vitae to researchers.
- Interview was transcribed verbatim by researchers who then analyzed the data to form codes from which categories, themes, and assertions emerged.

CONCLUSION

Final Assertion: Jody Larson overcame personal and professional obstacles to be passionate and proactive in her professional roles as an occupational therapist, fieldwork supervisor, and professor to treat clients and teach others about the meaning and value of evidence-based, client-centered occupational therapy.

- This is evident through her dedication and recognition as a fieldwork educator and adjunct professor. Her continued commitment as a mentor affirms her passion and desire to share her knowledge of OT.
- Jody Larson entered the field of occupational therapy in mental health during a challenging and controversial national transition in mental health services.
- She rose to the challenge to provide client-centered, occupation-based practice to engage and promote health and well-being in her clients.
- Occupational therapy as a profession has continuously adapted and transitioned to use theoretical principles and evidence-based practice to support and grow the profession.
- As occupational therapy evolved, Jody Larson pursued further education in the field and incorporated the knowledge of theoretical principles and research to improve her practice and programs in occupational therapy and education.