

Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of

Karen Jacobs EdD, OTR/L, CPE, FAOTA

Katelyn Jennings, MOTS & Abby Wendel, MOTS

Introduction

Purpose

- This life history is one of 30 life history interviews which are part of a larger project, *Histories of Individuals Who Have Been Influential in Developing Occupational Therapy (OT) at the National Level and Beyond*.
- The purpose of study is 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 through the life history stories of occupational therapists who have held leadership roles at the national level and beyond. It is anticipated that the life history process will be a powerful way to gather this information.

Description of Participant

Karen Jacobs is an accomplished occupational therapist. She has worked in areas such as ergonomics, the school system, and has been teaching at the collegiate level for over 30 years. Her achievements include writing books, chapters, articles, publishing children's books, giving presentations on a variety of topics, and continuously conducting research. Some of the notable employment positions that she has held include AOTA Vice President, AOTA President, clinical professor, Editor-in-Chief of *WORK: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment, & Rehabilitation*, and Associate Dean of digital learning and innovation of the College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at Boston University. She has had a great influence in OT such as developing the School Backpack Awareness day and being apart of many other state and national organizations. In addition to her extensive amount of experience in OT she also involves herself in the community in order to give back to society.



Timeline Literature Review

- In 1979, AOTA created uniform terminology for occupational therapy and established research of the effectiveness of evidence-based practice (AOTA, 2017).
- In 1993, the AOTA standards of Ethics Commission published the "Core Values of Occupational Therapy" (AOTA, 2017).
- In 1996, the American Occupational Therapy Certification Board (AOTCB) became the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) (AOTA, 2017).
- In 1998, AOTA adopted the vision statement, "AOTA advances occupational therapy as the preeminent profession in promoting the health, productivity, and quality of life of individuals and society through the therapeutic application of occupation" (AOTA, 2017).
- In 1999, NBCOT and AOTA were in a legal dispute over NBCOT trademarking of OTR and COTA ends.

Methodology

- This was a qualitative study using a life history approach.
- The participant was selected from a participant list compiled through purposive sampling by the project directors.
- No specific gatekeeper issues as initial contact was made by course instructors.
- Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview and the project was approved by the UND Institutional Review Board and because of the study design the formal IRB process was waived.
- The 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 student researchers were allowed to modify or add interview questions as needed for each specific interview.
- Data was gathered through a Zoom interview that lasted one hour, the participants Curriculum Vitae was provided before the interview and was used, as well as her blog and other published work
- The interview was audio recorded and then later transcribed.

Data Analysis

- A one-hour interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and coded with 25 codes.
- The 25 codes collapsed into 4 categories and from those categories 11 themes emerged and the 11 themes then collapsed into 1 assertion statement.
- When separating the information into codes, categories, and themes, the researchers used the Kawa Model as a guide. The researchers looked for major challenges and accomplishments throughout the participant's career as well as major events and obstacles in other aspects of her life (Teoh & Iwama, 2015).
- The researchers used multiple sources for data collect including the interview, the participant's CV, and the participant's blog.
- Triangulation involved member checking to verify that the information included in the transcription was an accurate reflection of her history.
- Throughout the data analysis process the researchers established trustworthiness by reflecting and documenting their experiences and biases about the study in order to increase reliability and validity.

Findings and Discussion

Career Path

- Karen Jacobs believes that lifelong learning and education are necessary for improvement in any health care profession.
- Karen understand that to be an effective occupational therapist and provide clients with the best care she needs to develop strong partnerships with others.
- A fundamental belief of Dr. Jacobs is that knowledge is power and occupational therapy needs inspiring leaders to enhance the field and provide future opportunities.

Personal and Professional Growth

- Dr. Jacobs is convinced that exposure to opportunities plays a role and influences individuals passions, goals, and their skill development.
- Karen Jacobs is ambitious in advocating, researching, and setting goals for herself by sharing information about occupational therapy.
- Karen has confidence in continuously improving yourself and working towards goals even after hardships is the only way to learn, grow, and achieve.

Findings and Discussion Cont.

Lifestyle

- Karen's family and relationship dynamics impacted the decisions she made in her life.
- Dr. Jacobs understands that completely immersing into an environment or culture impacts her decision making and the relationships that she builds.
- Giving back to the community is important to Karen Jacobs, it has helped her to develop strong relationships and has created many opportunities.

Impact of Evolution of Practice

- Dr. Jacobs is certain that being involved at state and national levels can provide opportunities and influence an individual's career choices.
- Karen Jacobs accepts that changes in policies, organizations, and the world will impact professionals and influence their lives in different aspects.

Conclusion

Final Assertion: Dr. Jacob's lifestyle, career path, evolution of practice, and her ability to grow personally and professionally have influenced her passion to make a difference and provide opportunities in occupational therapy.

Conclusion: The interview with Karen Jacobs provided a rich understanding of her life and career within occupational therapy. The researchers gained a sense of Karen's motivation and passion for occupational therapy. She also shared her challenges that lead to her accomplishments and contributions at local, state, and national levels to the profession of occupational therapy. "Well, occupational therapy has been a career of a lifetime for me. I think the great part of occupational therapy is that if you set your mind to it and persevere. Any goal you set for yourself, you can achieve and it's extremely rewarding to be in this profession".

References

- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2019). AOTA's national school backpack awareness day: September 16, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/Backpack-Safety-Awareness-Day.aspx>
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2017). Events from 1970-1999. American Occupational Therapy Association Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.otcentennial.org/events/events-by-decades>
- Teoh, J. Y., & Iwama, M. K. (2015). *The Kawa model made easy: A guide to applying the Kawa model in occupational therapy practice* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from www.kawamodel.com