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Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of Suzanne Peloquin, PhD, OTR,

FAOTA

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Abstract

Objective: This life history of Dr. Suzanne Peloquin is one of 30 life history interviews, which are part of a larger project. 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.

Method: A two-hour, semi-structured interview was conducted via Zoom video conferencing technology. The interview was video and audio recorded and later transcribed. The transcription was analyzed and coded for the development of themes.

Results: The categories and themes that emerged represent the impact that Dr. Peloquin has had throughout her career in occupational therapy. The impact she has had on the profession is because of her work in mental health, viewing leadership through multiple lenses, incorporating teaching throughout her work, and upholding the core values of occupational therapy.

Conclusion: Dr. Peloquin has shown that leadership can be getting behind your passions and pushing them forward instead of standing in front of the crowd. She has been an influential leader in the field of occupational therapy, both in the classroom and in her published works. Her passion for mental health and occupational therapy as an art and a science has led to the development of an ethos model described in her Eleonor Clarke Slagle Lecture.

Introduction

This life history of Dr. Suzanne Peloquin 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.

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.

The interview with Dr. Suzanne Peloquin was approximately 2 hours and was conducted via Zoom video conferencing technology. A curriculum vitae (CV) was also provided to the student researchers by Dr. Suzanne Peloquin to help the students develop an understanding of the multiple roles she has held and the extensive professional work she has accomplished throughout her life.

Literature Review

A life history interview serves to provide an in-depth understanding of an individual and the experiences that have shaped their life (Wicks & Whiteford, 2006). The data gathered through a life history research method address a multitude of factors, which range from personal, social, economic, and historical, that have had an influence on that person's unique life experiences (Wicks & Whiteford, 2006).

In 1970, several states passed mandated laws that required children with disabilities be included in public education (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). Massachusetts passed Chapter 766 that ensured the right of children with disabilities to be educated. The mandate marked the beginning of Dr. Suzanne Peloquin's career in occupational therapy (Peloquin, 2006). The

variation of these laws from state to state resulted in extremely differing attempts to provide education to students with disabilities (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998). This resulted in federal involvement and, eventually the development and passing of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which served as the start of special education in the United States (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998).

As the scope of occupational therapy practice began to expand in the late 1970s and 80s into school and community-based settings (Marshall, Meyers & Pierce, 2017), there became a need for the profession to state what practitioners do and the role of occupational therapists (AOTA, 1993). A committee was established, and a number of documents were reviewed in order to create the Core Values and Attitudes of Occupational Therapy Practice (AOTA, 1993). These core values are altruism, equality, freedom, justice, dignity, truth, and prudence (AOTA, 1993).

The Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture, “Embracing our Ethos, Reclaiming our Heart,” was delivered by Suzanne Peloquin in 2005. In this lecture, Dr. Suzanne Peloquin shared her development of the occupational therapy ethos, which is defined as the all-encompassing character and beliefs that guide a profession. The ethos endures through major changes and shifts in the profession across time (Peloquin, 2005).

The following year the American Occupational Therapy Association developed the Centennial Vision to guide the profession toward the future (AOTA, 2018). The Centennial Vision was that occupational therapy would be a widely recognized and globally connected, science-driven and evidence-based profession (AOTA, 2018).

The development ethos inspired Dr. Peloquin to re-evaluate the occupational therapy core values in 2007. In “A Reconsideration of Occupational Therapy’s Core Values (2007), Dr.

Peloquin proposed five new values that she recognized through the process of creating the ethos. These values were not originally listed in the *Occupational Therapy's Core Values and Attitudes* document, but they were character traits that have held true through the existence of occupational therapy as a profession (Peloquin, 2007). These five values were courage, imagination, resilience, integrity, and mindfulness (Peloquin, 2007). These additional values tied into Dr. Peloquin's belief that the profession's ethos and Centennial Vision are complementary to each other by supporting occupational therapy as an art and a science (Peloquin, 2007).

Theory

This life history project used the Kawa Model to guide the interview process and data analysis. The Kawa Model is specific to occupational therapy practice and can help practitioners better understand and analyze an individual's life journey. The model uses the metaphor of a river to illustrate that the flow of the water is made up of the life experiences the individual has had (Teoh & Iwama, 2015). Other concepts incorporated within this model are the riverbanks, which represent the environment and contexts in which the life experiences have occurred. Rocks are representative of any obstacles or challenges that occurred. Driftwood symbolizes important factors that have had an influence over the life experiences of the individual, and finally, open spaces exhibit opportunities for new experiences and continuation of "life flow" (Teoh & Iwama, 2015).

The Kawa Model was appropriate for use within this life history project because it helped identify challenges and influencing factors that played a significant role throughout the unique experiences that have occurred throughout Dr. Suzanne Peloquin's life journey. Additionally, the model is viewed from a collectivist perspective, meaning the individual is viewed as part of broader picture (Teoh & Iwama, 2015). The purpose of this life history project is to view the

history of occupational therapy through the unique life stories of some of the most influential occupational therapists. Each participant's life story will add to the overarching history of occupational therapy, which is why the Kawa Model was most appropriate for this project.

Description of Participant

Information about Dr. Suzanne Peloquin was gathered from her Curriculum Vitae and through the interview that was conducted. Dr. Suzanne Peloquin began her professional career as a teacher at Sisters of St. Anne Western Massachusetts in 1964. She continued working as a teacher at different schools over the next several years before she developed an interest in occupational therapy. Dr. Peloquin believed that becoming an occupational therapist would help her to become a better teacher. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a certificate in occupational therapy in 1978.

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin continued her schooling because she had a drive and desire for wanting to learn more. In 1984 she earned her master's degree in counseling and guidance from the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies Institute and then went on to earn her Ph.D. in medical humanities in 1991 from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences University of Texas Medical Branch. Throughout each of her programs, she based her learning and research projects on occupational therapy. This is what led to her many published articles into OT Practice and American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT).

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin is widely known for her many articles she has published on topics such as therapeutic use of self, OT core values, and OT as an art and a science. Additionally, she has held a variety of positions at the University of Texas Medical Branch, within the state and national level. A few of these positions include; member of the Historical Foundations Committee, Education/Research Liaison to the Education Special Interest Section of AOTA,

member of Academic Development Committee of the American Occupational Therapy Foundation, and a member of the Research Committee for the Texas Occupational Therapy Foundation.

It was through these positions, her hard work and passion for OT that Dr. Peloquin had the opportunity to give an Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture at the AOTA National Convention. This lecture emphasized reclaiming the heart of occupational therapy and developing the professions ethos. In 2017 Dr. Peloquin was named one of the 100 Influential People of Occupational Therapy's History based on all of the work she has done for the profession.

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin has experience in multiple areas of practice, such as mental health, physical dysfunction and teaching as she has done for many years and has been a staple throughout her career. Dr. Peloquin is currently partially retired. She is an assistant professor at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston and is working part-time at the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center, where she has established great things such as creating a meditation garden for the women who live there.

Methodology

This was a qualitative research study with a life history approach used to gain an understanding of the participant's unique experiences and their contribution to the evolution of occupational therapy. Dr. Suzanne Peloquin was selected from a participant list compiled through purposive sampling method by the project directors. Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview, and the project was reviewed by the UND Institutional Review Board (IRB). Due to the design of the study, the formal IRB process was waived.

The data for this study was collected via a semi-structured interview, which was guided by an interview schedule that had been prepared by the research directors. The questions in the

interview schedule were designed to be used with all the life history project participants that were interviewed as part of the larger project. The student researchers were allowed to modify or add interview questions as needed for each specific interview. The interview took place in a private study lounge at the UND School of Medicine and Health Science via Zoom video conferencing technology. The interview lasted 2 hours and was video and audio recorded. Prior to the interview, the student researchers gathered background data via the participant's CV and through a literature review of 2 articles written by the participant. A total of 4 hours was spent on the data collection process.

Trustworthiness was established for this study through 3 main processes. First, data triangulation was used between the two student researchers. Second, the research directors reviewed and analyzed the interview transcriptions, and lastly, both student researchers used reflexive journaling throughout the entire study to track any biases and assumptions that resulted throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

A two-hour interview was conducted with Dr. Suzanne Peloquin and audio recorded. This interview was then transcribed verbatim. Upon completion of the transcription, initial memos were performed to begin to identify common themes throughout the interview. Next, 26 individual codes were developed based upon topics and phrases that were frequently stated by Dr. Suzanne Peloquin throughout the interview. These codes are listed on the Visual Data Display found within the Appendix. Four categories emerged from the codes, and two to three themes were developed within each category. The emergence of themes led to the creation of a final assertion statement. The data analysis process was guided by the Kawa Model to identify

significant experiences throughout Dr. Suzanne Peloquin's life journey and to identify any challenges and influences that have been prominent in those experiences.

Findings/Results

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin has been an influential leader within the occupational therapy profession through the passion she has and work that she has completed in her lifetime. Through the data analysis, four categories emerged, and two to three themes were developed within each category. These categories include leadership experience, mental health, professionalism and values.

Leadership Experience

Theme One: Dr. Peloquin believes that leadership can be viewed through multiple lenses.

The first category developed around all of the leadership experiences that Dr. Suzanne Peloquin has held throughout her professional career. Dr. Peloquin has held positions at the University of Texas, at the state and national level. She believes that leadership can be viewed through multiple lenses because there are different forms of leadership. Dr. Peloquin discussed that a leader can also be more behind the scenes and stated, "find something that's missing or find something that you are incredibly passionate about, something that you say, I love that. I want to do that. I want to be that, and then instead of getting up in front, unless you want to be that kind of leader...figure out how to get behind it and push it."

Theme Two: Throughout her career, Dr. Peloquin experienced different failures which she learned and grew from.

Throughout her career, Dr. Suzanne Peloquin experienced different failures which she learned and grew from. Within one year of receiving her Certificate in Occupational Therapy, she took on the leadership role of becoming the director of an occupational therapy department.

There were no other occupational therapists working at this setting, and it was her job to expand the department. Other workers were not loyal to Dr. Peloquin, and clients were not supportive of the diverse employees she was hiring. Dr. Peloquin has stated that this was one of her biggest failures but views it as a great learning experience. She believes that she isolated herself because there were not many other occupational therapists during that time and working with them would have been beneficial right out of school.

Theme Three: Dr. Peloquin believes that motivation can play a big role in leadership because your ideas may not always be supported.

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin believes that motivation can play a major role in leadership because your ideas may not always be supported. Much of Dr. Peloquin's work was based on topics that had little previous information, such as therapeutic use of self and developing the professions ethos. She stated, "I very often felt though, like a voice crying out in the desert. You know, I was the only one that was speaking to these things." Although she felt that no one was listening or reading her work, she continued to write and publish because she was passionate about the topics and thought it should be shared.

Mental Health

Theme One: Dr. Peloquin expressed the value of arts and crafts for all individuals, especially for those struggling with mental health.

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin has done extensive work within the mental health setting. In particular, she has worked closely with women at the Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ADA) Recovery Center, where she has held therapy groups on healthy coping skills and life skills in hopes to integrate the women back into roles they would be familiar within the community. One project that Dr. Peloquin established was creating a meditation garden at the ADA as a reflection area

for women to go or would be the location for groups to take place. She discovered that the use of a meditation garden can be very beneficial for self-reflection for women experiencing mental health issues.

Theme Two: Dr. Peloquin found that the use of a meditation garden can be very beneficial for self-reflection for women experiencing mental health issues.

In addition to creating the meditation garden, Dr. Suzanne Peloquin expressed the value of crafts for all individuals, especially for those struggling with mental health. Dr. Peloquin co-wrote a book that surrounding the importance of implementing crafts into practice and the importance it can have on clients. When speaking about crafts within practice, Dr. Peloquin stated, “It improves your concentration. It helps you push through pain. It improves your self-confidence; it helps you make choices; it allows you to problem-solve. It gives you a sense of being productive. Patients get that.” There are many benefits to the use of crafts and Dr. Peloquin believes that practitioners should not be embarrassed to use them with clients because it is so beneficial to their recovery.

Occupational Therapy

Theme One: Whether Dr. Peloquin was working as an educator or as an occupational therapist, teaching was always significant throughout her professional life.

Dr. Peloquin began her career as a teacher, which lead her to the profession of occupational therapy because she believed it would make her a better teacher. Dr. Peloquin viewed occupational therapy as an avenue to continue her teaching but in a different sense because she would be working with clients rather than a classroom full of students. After multiple years of working in practice, she returned to teaching when accepting a position as a

professor in the Occupational Therapy Department at the School of Health Profession University of Texas.

Theme Two: Dr. Peloquin is passionate about making a paradigm shift back to the roots of OT with a focus on occupation.

Much of Dr. Suzanne Peloquin's published work in the early 2000s addressed the paradigm shifts that have been present in the field of occupational therapy. Dr. Peloquin is passionate about making a paradigm shift back to the roots of occupational therapy with a focus on occupation. Over the years, she believes the profession has shifted away from the use of crafts and occupation-based treatment. Dr. Peloquin stated, "we were depersonalizing practice by using only business model. I was pushing for more integration. I don't even call it the healthcare system. I don't think much care happens there. I call them health systems." Dr. Peloquin hopes that the profession is making its way back to occupation-based treatment. She believes it is better for clients and ensures client-centered care.

Theme Three: Dr. Peloquin believed that reading published articles is a true form of continuing education.

Dr. Peloquin believed that reading published articles is a true form of continuing education that has the ability to increase professional development. "I happen to think that those of us who write and publish are offering continuing education. I think that has been a powerful, powerful venue for my leadership. I have reached people through that continuing education, and I think we always need to be learning." Dr. Peloquin has a drive for wanting to learn more that has been present throughout her life by connecting assignments in school back to occupational therapy. This has continued this today with all of her published works she has shared with the profession.

Values

Theme One: Dr. Peloquin believes that the therapeutic use of self is an essential part of the OT process.

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin believes core values of the profession are crucial for occupational therapists to follow, and therapeutic use of self is an essential part of the OT process. Dr. Peloquin discussed that throughout her schooling, she did not learn about the therapeutic use of self and interacting with clients. She views this as an area of importance for students to learn. She has created an elective course at the University of Texas Medical Branch that is focused on teaching students how to be therapeutic and how to incorporate this skill into practice.

Theme Two: Dr. Peloquin feels that our Ethos is essential in aligning the core values of OT with the character of our profession.

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin feels that our ethos is essential in aligning the core values of OT with the character of our profession. The ethos Dr. Peloquin had written was the basis of the Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture she had delivered in 2005. In regards the centennial vision that was released in 2006, Dr. Peloquin stated:

“I argue that you have to have the vision, but we need to remember our ethos when considered together the vision and the ethos yield a helpful perspective. Occupational therapy will thrive if we see it as widely recognized, powerful, and evidence-based. But only if we also see ourselves as pathfinders, which is in my ethos, who reach for hearts as well as hands. Occupational therapy will thrive if we see it as science-driven to meet occupational needs, but only if we know that we will co-create lives; if we are artists and scientists at once, only in tandem with its ethos and vision achieve its depth.”

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin developed the ethos because other professions such as nursing and medicine each had their own, and instead of borrowing their ideas, she created one that could be followed by occupational therapists.

Assertion

Through the development of categories and themes, the final assertion statement was created. Dr. Peloquin has shown that leadership can be getting behind your passions and pushing them forward instead of standing in front of the crowd. She has been an influential leader in the field of occupational therapy, both in the classroom and in her published works. Her passion for mental health and occupational therapy as an art and a science has led to the development of an Ethos model described in her Slagle Lecture.

Discussion/Conclusions

Dr. Suzanne Peloquin has shown that leadership can be getting behind your passions and pushing them forward instead of standing in front of the crowd because there are many different forms of leadership. Dr. Peloquin has been an influential leader in the field of occupational therapy, both in the classroom and in her published works. Throughout her career, Dr. Peloquin held several leadership roles in both academia and at the national level of Occupational Therapy. Within these roles, she inspired others to see a new vision for the future of the profession and encouraged personal development. The Kawa model was appropriate for use with within this life history project because it helped identify challenges and influencing factors that played a significant role throughout the unique experiences that have occurred throughout Dr. Suzanne Peloquin's life journey.

Mental health has remained an important focus in Dr. Peloquin's work throughout the years. She currently works with women in an addiction house, where she has created a

meditation garden. The garden serves as a place for reflection and remediation for the women in the home. Arts and crafts have been a prominent piece of Dr. Peloquin's therapy process because they have the power to work on skill development while holding personal meaning. Dr. Suzanne Peloquin's passion for mental health and occupational therapy as an art and a science has led to the development of an ethos model described in her Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture. The development of the ethos has inspired Dr. Peloquin to reconsider the existing core values of occupational therapy, which led to her proposal for five additional ideals. The central focus of her work has been to incorporate these proposed values into the profession of occupational therapy. Those values that have held strong from the beginning of our profession's existence are courage, imagination, resilience, integrity, and mindfulness.

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Appendix

**Visual Data Display – Life History Interview with Suzanne Peloquin
Kelsey Knutson & Alex Grosser**

Leadership	Mental Health	Occupational Therapy	Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100 Influential people - Influential women - Leadership - Leadership style - Perceived failures - COTA - Slagle lecture - Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ADA House - Mental Health - Garden - Art - Crafts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Occupation - Teaching - Convent - Confluent Education - Occupational Therapy - Education/ learning - Models/FOR - OTD - Paradigm - Published articles /work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethos - Core Values - Therapeutic use of self
Themes			
<p>1. Dr. Peloquin believes that leadership can be viewed through multiple lenses.</p> <p>2. Throughout her career, Dr. Peloquin experienced different failures which she learned and grew from.</p> <p>3. Dr. Peloquin believes that motivation can play a big role in leadership because your ideas may not always be supported.</p>	<p>1. Dr. Peloquin expressed the value of arts and crafts for all individuals, especially for those struggling with mental health.</p> <p>2. Dr. Peloquin found that the use of a meditation garden can be very beneficial for self-reflection for women experiencing mental health issues.</p>	<p>1. Whether Dr. Peloquin was working as an educator or as an occupational therapist, teaching was always significant throughout her professional life.</p> <p>2. Dr. Peloquin is passionate about making a paradigm shift back to the roots of OT with a focus on occupation.</p> <p>3. Dr. Peloquin believed that reading published articles is a true form of continuing education.</p>	<p>1. Dr. Peloquin believes that the therapeutic use of self is an essential part of the OT process.</p> <p>2. Dr. Peloquin feels that our Ethos is essential in aligning the core values of OT with the character of our profession</p>
Assertion			
<p>Dr. Peloquin has shown that leadership can be getting behind your passions and pushing them forward instead of standing in front of the crowd. She has been an influential leader in the field of occupational therapy, both in the classroom and in her published works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Her passion for mental health and occupational therapy as an art and a science has led to the development of an Ethos model described in her Slagle Lecture. 			