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Special Tribute to Dr. Bernadette Mineo

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Sponsor Profile: Bernadette Mineo, PhD, OTR/L



The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy (OJOT) is pleased to honor the late Dr. Bernadette Angela Mineo for the Fall 2020 issue. Bernadette was a treasured colleague, friend, and mentor to many, who died on July 27, 2020. Among the many family, friends, colleagues, and students who loved and cherished her, the following individuals have joined together to pay tribute to her by way of sponsoring the 2020 Fall issue of OJOT: Ruth Segal, Rachel Diamant, Tina Casoglos-Adamopoulos, Michelle Brown, Christina Griffin, Ariela Neuman, Marianne Mortera, and Karen Buckley.

Bernadette passed away in her sleep, 2 days before her 62nd birthday. She is preceded in death by her parents, Alberta (Tesser) Mineo and Joseph Mineo, and her beloved husband, Louis Filosa, of 30 years, who she stood beside as he lost his battle with cancer in February, 2020. She leaves behind her artistically gifted daughter, Samantha Filosa (see Figure 1); her sister, Thais Mineo-Bollmann; a niece, Ariana; and a nephew, Matthew.

Bernadette grew up in Brooklyn, New York, where she attended South Shore High School. After graduation, she was admitted to New York University's Occupational Therapy Program, where she was able to combine her love for both science and art. One significant mentor Bernadette spoke of was Dr. Paula Kramer, professor emeritus of occupational therapy at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. Dr. Kramer shared her memories of Bernadette with the following quote: "She was a brilliant student, smart, engaging, willing to learn and try new things. We kept in touch over the years, and I watched her grow and develop a variety of innovative interests as she worked on her doctorate. It was truly exciting to watch this former student of mine become an interesting and thoughtful peer" (P. Kramer, personal communication, August, 2020).

Figure 1

Sketch of Bernadette Mineo and Louis Filosa, by Samantha Filosa (2019), their beloved daughter.



While completing her degree in occupational therapy, Bernadette created a 28-min video documentary titled “Jenine” that received several awards and is included as part of the collection at the Donnell Film Library in the NYC Public Library. She went on to receive a Master’s degree in Media Studies from the New School for Social Research where she had the opportunity to combine her passion for art, culture, and education. She completed her dissertation, “Computer Conferencing and Online Education: Uncovering the Assumptions,” at New York University’s Department of Culture and Communication’s program in Media Ecology.

As a pediatric occupational therapist, Bernadette worked with young children with developmental and emotional issues and their families. She was able to weave in an academic path that included faculty appointments as adjunct instructor and adjunct associate professor at the NYU School of Education, followed by an appointment as academic fieldwork coordinator at Touro College, NY. In 2005, she became the chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy at AT Still University in Mesa, Arizona, earning the rank of full professor. In 2014, she stepped down as department chair and continued on as program director of the online post-professional occupational therapy programs. In addition to these appointments, Bernadette worked as a consultant for academic and community program development.

Throughout her career, Bernadette was instrumental in launching the careers of many students and served as a mentor to facilitate their professional development, as expressed by the following testimonials:

Bernadette helped me to professionally navigate teaching online and was the voice of reason as I learned to grade papers, create discussion board questions, and manage student issues. Bernadette set a high standard for doctoral students and required us to write and submit two articles for publication. My first article was headed in three directions. Bernadette told me to start from scratch, write for one hour, and then call her. At the end of the hour, it was apparent that her strategy worked, and I had identified what was important. Her questioning enabled me to set the direction for the article, and it was accepted for publication. Bernadette never told me what to do, but her questions allowed me to find my own way. (M. Brown, personal communication, September, 2020)

I had the extreme pleasure to meet Bernadette Mineo through both the AMOT and OTD distance learning graduate programs at AT Still University beginning in 2012. Bernadette has been a tremendous person of influence in my personal and professional life through her inspiring, creative, holistic, and mindfully present approach to teaching, mentoring, and being. The reach of her mentoring extended beyond the context of the learning environment, the boundaries of how we thought about OT, and the limits of our own self-perception, self-concept, and goals. Even after we graduated, Bernadette continued to meet with us, often on a monthly basis, offering us the opportunity to share our successes, doubts, and questions; checking in to make sure we were being true to ourselves and our goals; and always sharing experiences and resources she thought would help us on our journey. I can still sense her encouraging guidance and hope that I may honor her legacy by continuing to expand my leadership role as an occupational therapist in my professional life, assertively considering my options in the business realm, and sharing my experiences with the professional community through publication. (L. Boucher, personal communication, September, 2020)

I can't even express the sadness this gives me for all of the conversations I won't get to have with her. She was that little voice in my head that helped find answers. (S. Wilson, personal communication, September, 2020).

Bernadette touched so many lives and gave most of us the confidence to become who we were destined to be. A part of her will live on in the lives she influenced. (P. Nellis, personal communication, September, 2020).

Bernadette's passion for wellness, social justice, and philanthropic work, in conjunction with her belief in the potential of all humans, shaped and structured the way she approached education, her interests, and her activities. She was a mentor to all who knew her and she actively supported her students, her colleagues, and her friends in their personal and professional growth. Building on her skills and passion for mentoring, Bernadette was launching a program as a coach for individuals pursuing their doctoral degrees as well as her own private practice focusing on dissertation-coaching.

Bernadette was also an artist, favoring the visual arts through mixed media, painting, and printing. She was an active member of the Taoist Tai Chi Society and participated in many other academic and community organizations. As a result, she developed a wide network of friends and colleagues who will miss her creative and visionary spirit.

The OJOT team was fortunate to have Bernadette serve as a member of the editorial review board and to feature her in the Occupation and The Artist Section of the Winter 2019 issue. Her profile was titled "The Road to Resilience: Traveling the Path Less Followed to Realize What is Possible." Her featured art, [Paper Dolls](#), consists of 37 individual paper doll sculptures made from mixed media. Dr. Jennifer Fortuna, art editor of OJOT, interviewed Bernadette and noted that "engaging in a daily creative art practice has brought joy to Dr. Mineo's life. Art has empowered her to take risks, build resilience, and discover what is possible" (Fortuna, 2019).

Bernadette's legacy as an artist, educator, and clinician is equally complemented by the love she expressed for her family, friends, and colleagues. She will be greatly missed but memories of her will continue to be a gift to all who knew her.

If you would like to make a donation in Bernadette's memory, please consider the Tai Chi group that Bernadette belonged to in Portland, the Taoist Tai Chi Society (with other national and international locations). <https://www.taoisttaichi.org/giving/>

Written by: Rachel B. Diamant, PhD, OTRL, BCP, Ruth Segal, PhD, OTR, and Ben Atchison, PhD, OTRL, FAOTA

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Fortuna, J. (2019). The road to resilience: Traveling the path less followed to realize what is possible. *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.15453/2168-6408.1593>