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*Occupational therapy students'
experiences and perceptions of culture
during fieldwork education*

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Introduction

- ◆ Social circumstances in South Africa provide a platform for occupational therapy students during fieldwork practice.

(Health professionals council of South Africa, 2009)

- ◆ Challenges: when other cultural practices and ways of life come into conflict with that of students.
- ◆ Can holistic intervention still be provided?
- ◆ Fieldwork practice is the most ideal method to educate and prepare.

(Buchanan H., Cloete L., 2006)

- ◆ Minimal literature within the South African context.
- ◆ Objectives: to explore the occupational therapy students' experiences of culture and to explore their perceptions of the barriers and enablers that culture presents.



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Models of cultural competence

- ◆ Defined as a perception of, compassion toward and a comprehension of the meaning of culture (Dillard et al., 1992)
- ◆ Respect for dissimilarities, continuous self-reflection of viewpoints, attentiveness towards differences, on-going growth in cultural knowledge and adaptation to services rendered (Park et al., 2005)
- ◆ Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity has six viewpoints: (i) **denial**, (ii) **defense reversal**, (iii) **minimization**, (iv) **acceptance**, (v) **adaptation** and (vi) **integration** (Bennett, M., 1993)
- ◆ Model of cultural competency has six stages: 1. **cultural awareness**, 2. **cultural preparedness**, 3. **cultural picture of the person**, 4. **cultural responsiveness**, 5. **cultural readiness** and 6. **cultural competence**. (Muñoz, J., 2007)



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Research Design

- ◆ Qualitative research methodological approach and exploratory descriptive design with undergraduate students
- ◆ Purposive sampling used to recruit five participants from first to fourth year
- ◆ Participants were from different racial, cultural and religious backgrounds
- ◆ Focus groups with each cohort of students
- ◆ Questions focused on participants understanding of culture, how they identified their own cultures and their perceptions of the role of culture in a professional context





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Process of “acculturation”

- ◆ Concepts of exposure, reflection and attitude assist in the “acculturation” process.
- ◆ “Acculturation” is a description of numerous and gradual processes required in response to cultural changes in our client-base and environment.
- ◆ The six stages of the model of cultural competency were used to highlight the enablers and barriers that students experienced:
- ◆ **Stage 1:** Cultural awareness – defined as an awareness of one’s own culture and being able to recognise differences within other cultures.
 - ◆ ***“Its your attitude that influences this entire thing. You need to know your clients culture, as well as your own...” (Participant A1, 1st year student)***





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Process of “acculturation”

- ◆ **Stage 2:** Cultural preparedness refers to ones feelings of preparedness to engage in cross cultural settings.
 - ◆ ***“You have to put aside your own personal feelings and treat the client, because at the end of the day it’s about them and not about you.”***
(Participant B5, 2nd year student)
- ◆ **Stage 3:** Cultural picture of the person refers to the ability to view a client through a cultural lens
 - ◆ ***“From an occupational therapy point of view you kind of need to tap into their culture; you need to understand what it is and who they are in terms of their culture.”*** ***(Participant A5, 1st year student)***





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Process of “acculturation”

- ◆ **Stage 4:** Cultural responsiveness requires therapists to implement interventions that are cultural specific without violating their own cultural values.
 - ◆ ***“Because basically it’s like when you are an OT you’re wearing a mask and your lifestyle has to merge with your practice and your personal life becoming one. In the beginning it felt like I have to put a mask over my personal life and my culture.” (Participant B2, 2nd year student)***
- ◆ **Stage 5:** Cultural readiness states that therapist have the potential to deliver cultural relevant practices
 - ◆ ***“I think you need to be flexible within your own culture as well, you need to compromise, but then at the time you need to be realistic.” (Participant D5, 4th year student)***



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Process of “acculturation”

- ◆ **Stage 6:** Cultural competence is described as “a process where have a clear appreciation of their own cultural identity and a deep understanding of cultural differences that enables them to respond effectively...”

(Darawsheh et al., 2015)

Conclusion

- ◆ **Exposure** to cross-cultural settings and experiences, **reflection** based on these experiences and a positive **attitude** facilitate “acculturation”
- ◆ Cultural competence is an on-going ride as opposed to a destination that is assisted by **exposure**, **reflection** and a **willingness to learn**.



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