The Power & the Glory?
Exploring how Occupational Therapists address the spirituality of children with physical disabilities

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• Overview of research study – rationale & process
• Summary of findings so far
• Brief overview of first 3 themes identified
• Detailed discussion regarding 4th theme – POWER and Occupational Therapy
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Why am I doing this?

• Exploring the history & values of the profession highlighted a gap in knowledge

• Spirituality is a debated issue within OT with no firm conclusions having been reached (Harrison, 2009; Morris, 2013).

• Adding to the evidence base regarding this area of OT practice
Methodological Framework for the PhD

• Iterative, inductive process; therefore I am using: -
  • Interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al, 2009)
  • Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006)
  • Heuristic Reflexivity (Moustakas, 2000)
How did I carry out the data collection

• involved 2 creative workshops (n = 9) plus individual interviews (n = 11) with both practitioners & academics to:

  • Determine their knowledge, thoughts, feelings & perceptions regarding the spirituality of children with physical disabilities in practice.

  • Explore how spirituality is addressed in practice with children with physical disabilities
What have I found out so far?

• Four key themes emerging:
  
  Positive & Negative POWER

  Identifying who we are

  Connecting with the individual

  Hopeful flourishing

(Data analysis ongoing)
Identifying who we are

• “the core, as I see it, it’s something that no-one can get to and no-one can see, so it’s all hidden” Fiona.

• “It’s kind of about the skin we’re in and what makes us tick” Stan

• “Its just who you are. In a nutshell” Catherine
Connecting with the individual.

• “I’d want the OT to connect with me” *Catherine*
• “It’s about taking that time, erm, and about developing that relationship with the child” *Sarah*.
• “I think spiritual moments can come from those close relationships when you respond to the subtleties & nuances of how people are” *Janette*
Hopeful flourishing

• “I want to be able to do x, y or z and everybody else is doing it, why can’t I?” *Emily*

• “Yeah, that they don’t necessarily need to be limited by their physical difficulties” *Sarah*

• “He’d just never been able to experience that, he can now” *Oscar*
Power

• “I think for children a lot of the activities are dictated to them” – *Emily*
• “I think the tradition of a checklist really takes you away from that” *Janette*.
• “We also are being scrutinised constantly about our throughput of work” *Oscar*.
• “We want to be on the support team not the instructor” *Katie*. 
What is power?

• In Discipline and Punish, Foucault argues that modern society is a “disciplinary society,” meaning that power in our time is largely exercised through disciplinary means in a variety of institutions (prisons, schools, hospitals, militaries, etc.)

• Power, for Russell, is one's ability to achieve goals. In particular, Russell has in mind social power, that is, power over people

• Duncan (2012) highlights how Marx believed that 'alienated labour' is a consequence of capitalism and that the difficulties people face are a result of social organisations rather than natural consequences.

• In Being & Power (1978), Heidegger was conscious of the notion of 'the dictatorship of the ‘they’"

• All relate to the imposition of occupations on children through power differences (Reed, Smythe & Hocking, 2013).
Power in the UK

- Power relationships in politics within the UK
- Effects of policy decisions on professional practice – resultant effects on service users
- OTs can act as social change agents (Brian et al, 2015; Scaffa & Reitz, 2013; Duncan, 2012).
- “the profession’s need to maintain credibility within other discourses inadvertently diminishes its capacity to act socially” (Corrigan, K., 2001; p.204).
- Links to the difficulties expressed re: addressing spirituality in practice.
In summary

• The analysis is constantly changing but is of value in developing early hypotheses about what spirituality is to OTs and how it is addressed in their practice.

• Issues regarding power are seen as having an important influence over the way OTs address spirituality in practice.

• The results of the analysis so far will inform the next phase of the study.
Thank You for listening

• If you have any questions, comments or feedback then please do catch up with me over the rest of the congress; or you can e-mail me on: Liz.harrison@cumbria.ac.uk
References


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• Morris, D. N. (2013). ‘Perceptions of Spirituality and Spiritual Care in Occupational Therapy Practice’. Occupational Therapy in Mental Health, 29(1) pp 60-77.


