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# Spirituality in the Occupational Therapy Community Fieldwork Process: A qualitative study in the South African context

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# Overview

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Findings and discussion
- Recommendations
- Conclusion



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# Introduction



- Spirituality resides in persons, is shaped by the environment and gives meaning to occupation (Duncan, 2011) and
- Community development brings social change, shapes relationships and collective empowerment (Murray, 2013)
- The connection between spirituality and community development seems to promote social justice that facilitates radical transformation of community structures (Chile & Simpson, 2010)
- Very little research about the importance of spirituality in communities in the South African context

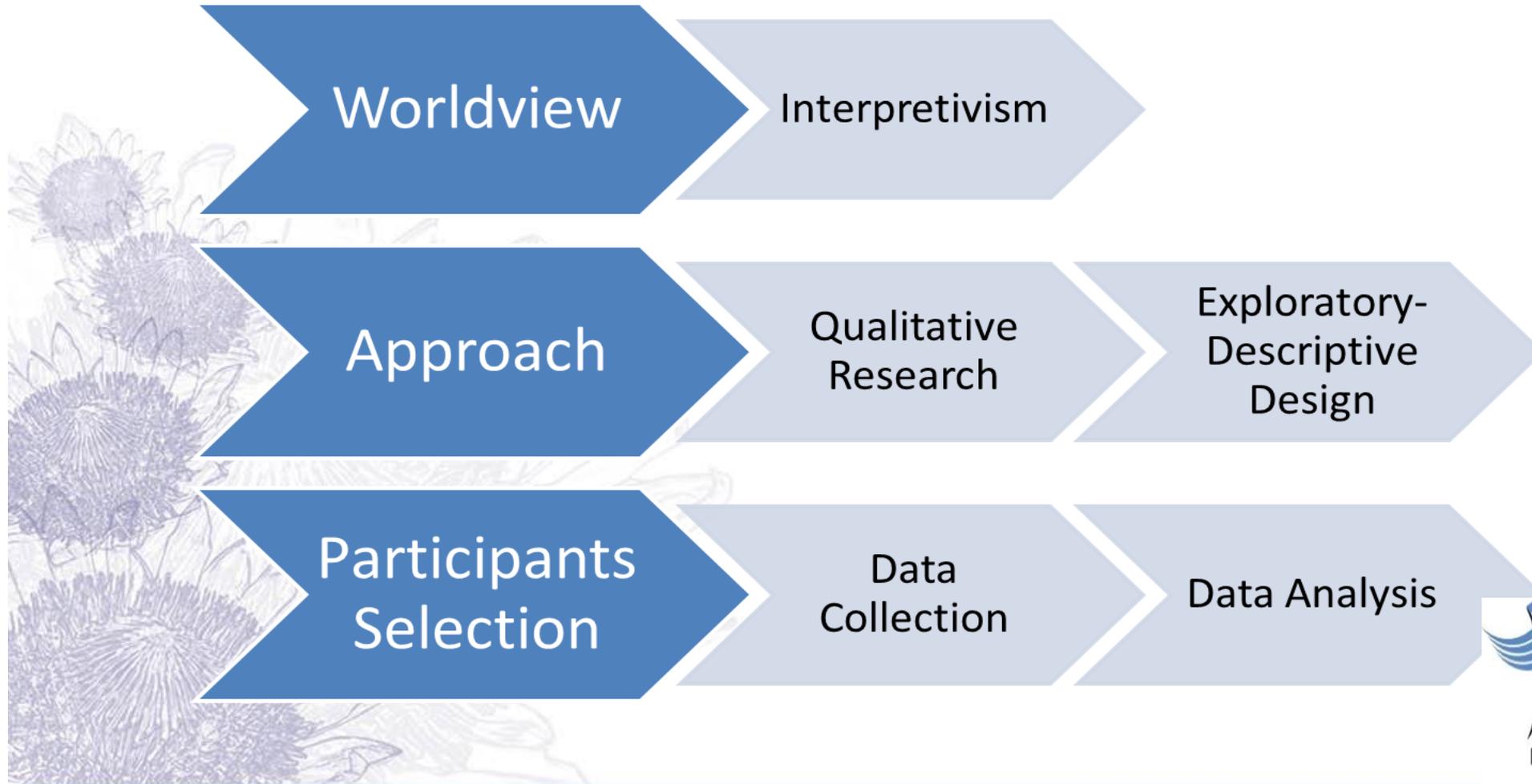
Duncan, EAS. (2011). *Foundations for practice in occupational therapy*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Churchill Livingstone: Elsevier.

Murray, I. (2013). *Spirituality as a dimension of integrated community development*. PhD Thesis. Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

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# Methodology



# Findings and Discussion

Students' exposure to spirituality in community settings

- Exposure in communities
- Improvement of students' self-awareness
- "Journaling" facilitated students reflections

**Community development strategies**

- "Community entry helps"
- Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD)
- Empowerment strategy

**Perceived enablers of spiritual occupations**

- Supportive environment
- Motivation from occupation
- Community project

Themes Two	Categories
<b>Community development strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>“Community entry helps”</b></li> <li>• Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD)</li> <li>• <b>Empowerment strategy</b></li> </ul>



*“Community entry helped me; while in the community, you need to make friends, you also need to become part of the people in order to experience what they do on a daily basis and be one of the community members. It [Community entry] also makes you aware of different facets that you personally didn’t previously engage in with your spirituality. Community development assisted me to engage in their spirituality so that I can motivate them to develop and carry on as part of their internal motivation to further develop within the community.” (Fourth-year student 5)*

*“The community fieldwork process actually brought it [Spirituality] as it makes them [Community members] feel empowered. The empowerment strategy promoted community members’ willingness and acceptance to do anything that was related to their spiritual aspect, and they also felt that spirituality played an important role in the community.” (Fourth-year student 6)*

Tareen, EU, & Abu Omar, M. 1997; Community entry: An essential component of participati  
*Health Manpower Management, 23(3): 97-99*



## Themes Three

## Categories

### Perceived enablers of spiritual occupations

- Supportive environment
- Motivation from occupation
- Community project



*“Spirituality creates supportive environments within the community, particularly if they [Community members] share the same religion, and they have a sense of connectedness amongst each other. If they [Community members] engage in spiritual activities, it [Spirituality] motivates and enables them to actually engage in those activities that promote their health in the community.” (Fourth-year student 7)*

*“In occupation-based practice, we use spirituality as a means to motivate people to engage in their occupations as a part of their occupation-based practice. They [Community members] were practising their religion and faith as they were singing hymns and praying, and I also engaged in their spiritual activities, and I felt: wow this is a good way to keep oneself motivated!”.(Fourth-year student 5)*

Wilding C, May E, Muir-Cochrane E. Experience of spirituality, mental illness and occupation: life-sustaining phenomenon. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 2005; 52: 2 -9



# Spirituality in Communities



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## Spirituality in the Occupational Therapy Community Fieldwork Process: A qualitative study in the South African context

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Spirituality is an integral part of communities; it is influenced by the environment and provides meaning and purpose to occupations. However, spirituality has been a controversial concept within the profession of occupational therapy and is the cause of much debate with a range of viewpoints emerging among students and educators practising in communities. However there has been limited research carried out on spirituality in the community fieldwork process in a South African context.

**Methods:** An exploratory-descriptive qualitative study was used to explore occupational therapy educators' and students' perceptions regarding spirituality in the community fieldwork process, using focus group discussions which were thematically analysed.

**Results:** Three themes emerged: students' exposure to spirituality in community settings, community development strategies and perceived enablers of spiritual occupations. The results indicated that community entry, asset-based community development and empowerment strategies of locality development seemed to assist students in their exposure to spirituality in communities. These strategies enhanced students' understanding of the role of spiritual occupations in which community members collectively engage in order to improve their social participation and connectedness.

**Conclusions:** The findings provided an understanding of and insight into spirituality in the occupational therapy community fieldwork process. These findings may help us to understand the significance of experiential learning regarding spirituality in communities.

**Key words:** community development, occupational therapy; spirituality; fieldwork

Thus, the current findings provide impetus for students and educators to be more spiritual sensitive to their own and others' needs while engaging in social contract with communities.



# Thank You



For more information about the study

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