



Occupational Therapy in the context of social transformation: Collective effort and consciousness

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Supported by the National Research Foundation (NRF) South Africa



Overview

- Transformative and Critical Theory
- Social transformation and participation
- Occupation-based Social Transformation
- Paradox in diversity
- Spirituality in occupational therapy
- Conclusion

Transformative and Critical Theory



Theories of transformative:

- **Critical consciousness** which assists in analyzing, posing questions and taking actions to address issues of concern related to social, political, cultural and economic context (**Paul Freira**)
- Individual and communities develop critical consciousness through reflection and action which is referred as praxis-oriented.
- Methods of consciousness-raising include activism and safe environment, reflective journaling, dialogue and critical questioning
- **Critical reflection:** beliefs, values and assumption that we gained through our life experiences (**Mezirow, 2003**).
- Methods of critical reflection include creating communities of care that supports the discovery of self through meaningful relationships, mutual understanding, collaboration and occupations

Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1), 58-63.

Lloyd, A.S. (1972). Freire, Conscientization, and adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 23, 3. DOI: 10.1177/074171367202300101



Collective Effort in Marikana Mine



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Despite having no legal protection or union support, thousands of miners continued to strike in solidarity for their common goal - a better quality life and the dignity it affords. The families of the striking miners were also in general solidarity with the protest and worked to support the movement, joining in protest action and bringing supplies when necessary.



Social Transformation and Participation



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- Occupational reconstruction promotes action-oriented framework for social justice, occupational injustice, collective action, political approaches and critical theories (Frank & Muriithi, 2015)



Farias Vera, L. (2017). *Advancing social transformation through occupation: A critical examination of epistemological foundations, discourses and contextual factors shaping research and practice*. PhD Thesis

Frank, G. & Muriithi, A.K. (2015). Theorising social transformation in occupational therapy: The American civil rights and South African struggle against apartheid as 'occupational reconstructions'. *South African Journal Occupational Therapy*, 11 -20.

Collective Occupations



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Occupation-based Social Transformative



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- Occupational therapy profession and occupational science to embrace and acknowledge the transformative potential and become praxis-oriented as part of the social contract
- Occupational science: hope to move the discipline towards a critical, reflexive and social responsive discipline by incorporating actions
- These actions are related to social justice, humanitarianism and human rights
- Informs the occupational therapy profession to consider a turnaround strategy by focusing on occupation-based socially transformative approach

Laliberte Rudman, D. (2018). Occupational therapy and occupational science: building critical and transformative alliances. *Cad. Bra.Ter.Ocu.*, São Carlos, 241-249

Faris, L., et al. (2018). Critical dialogical approach: A methodological direction for occupationa-based social transformative work. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, DOI: 10.1080/11038128.2018.1469666



Paradox in diversity

- Spirituality in community development brings social change, shapes relationships and collective empowerment
- Holistic framework comprises social justice, economic fairness, human rights and ecological sustainability
- Humanitarian values include social justice, altruism, and benevolence, humanism, integrity, justice, respect and responsibility
- Strengthening a community's actions may enhance community participation and promote its spirituality
- Learning-within-relationships with those from differing cultural and social backgrounds, which enables learners to realize both their interconnectedness and their interdependence

Piery, G. (2013). Transformative learning theory and spirituality: A whole-person approach. *Journal of Instruction*, 2, 30 – 42.

Spirituality in Occupational Therapy



- Spirituality resides in persons, is shaped by the environment and gives meaning to occupation
- The health, quality of life and well-being of individuals, groups and communities in the South African context
- To cope with any life crisis, hardships and illnesses
- Very little research about the importance of spirituality in communities



Spirituality in Communities



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ISSN On-line 2310-3833



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Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2310-3833/2016/v46n3a4>
South African Journal of Occupational Therapy. 2017; 47(1): 16-23.

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

"I am thinking of spirituality in the sense that people have experienced it, as they always form networks. This is an asset for the community. I think without spirituality the networks will not be strong; therefore, identifying spirituality as an asset also creates that connectedness." (Fourth-year student 10)



Spirituality in Occupational Therapy Groups



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OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN MENTAL HEALTH
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0164212X.2016.1245595>



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Exploring Occupational Therapy Students' Perceptions of Spirituality in Occupational Therapy Groups: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

An exploratory–descriptive qualitative research approach explored occupational therapy students' perceptions of spirituality in occupational therapy groups during the group fieldwork process. Four focus group discussions were conducted and thematically analyzed. Four themes related to the metaphoric expressions of spirituality emerged: (1) occupational group therapy is a vehicle for spirituality; (2) spiritual journey in occupational therapy groups; (3) engaging in occupations facilitates spirituality; and (4) make use of the resources to service the driver and vehicle. Occupational therapy groups appeared to be the facilitators of spirituality through engagement in occupations, which enhanced quality of life, health, and well-being of group members.

KEYWORDS

Occupational therapy;
occupational therapy
groups; qualitative;
spirituality; students

"The essence of spirituality brings the connections and binds people together."
(Fourth-year student 4, personal communication, 2016)



Conclusion

- Use of the transformative theories would enhance occupational therapy and occupational science interdependence between the disciplines.
- Occupational reconstructions' principles provide understanding of occupation-based social transformation framework.
- Embracing and acknowledgement of the paradox diversity will foster social transformation
- Spirituality is the core of meaning and purpose



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Thank You

“The essence of spirituality brings the connections and binds people together.”

(Fourth-year student 4, personal communication, 2016)

