

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

Liz Harrison,
Prof. Diane Cox.
May 2018

Contents

- 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
- Conclusion
- References

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)

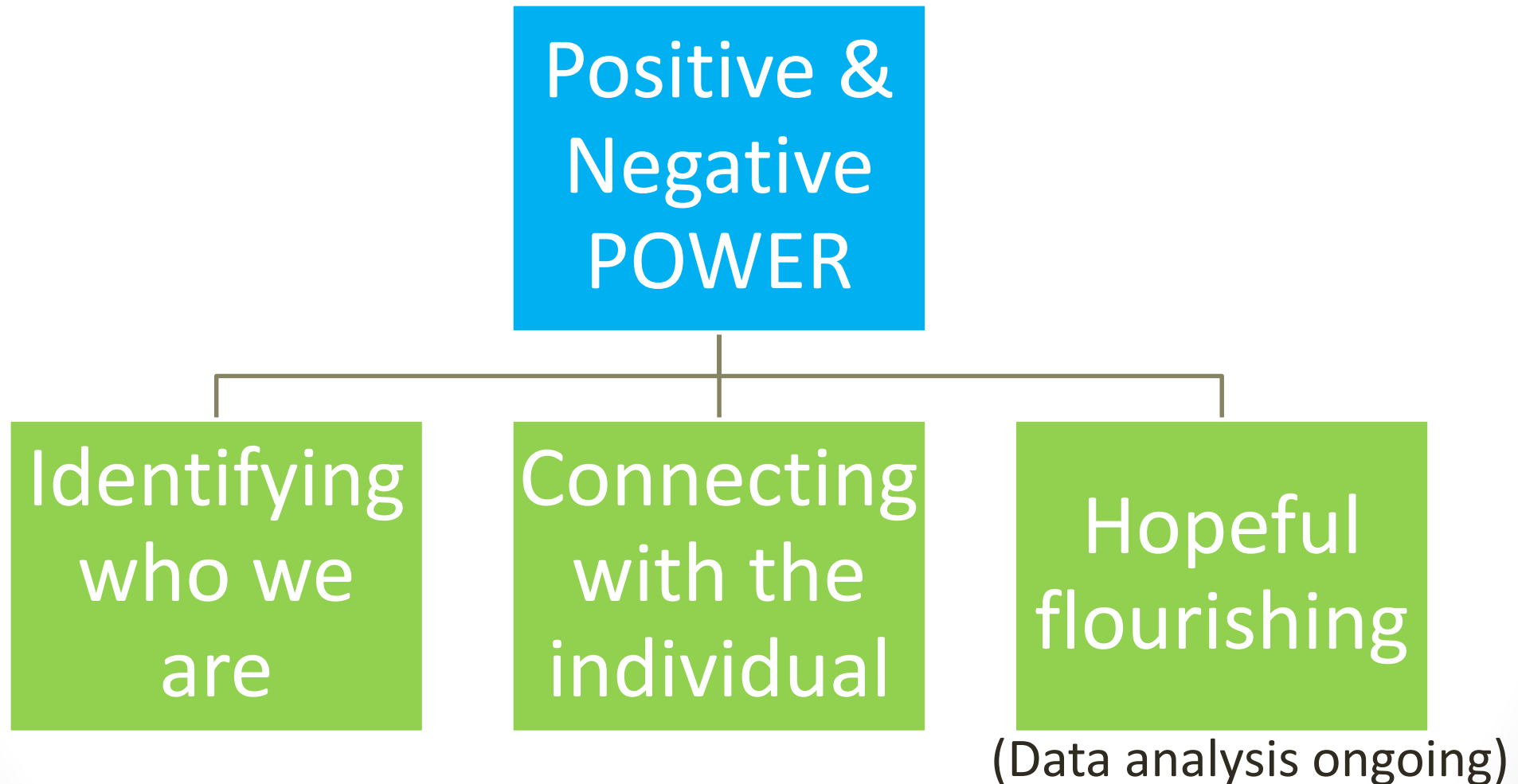


How did I carry out the data collection

- 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:



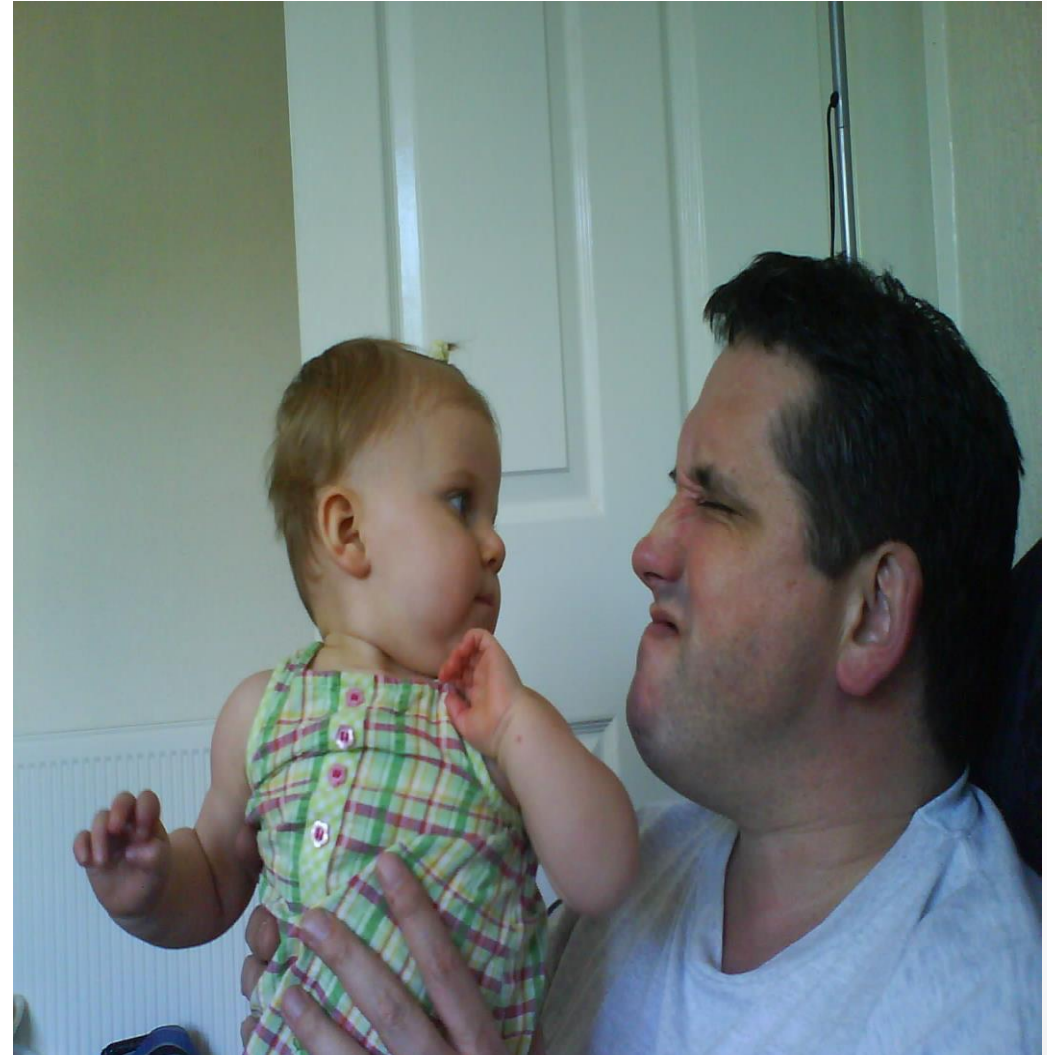
Identifying who we are



- “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*

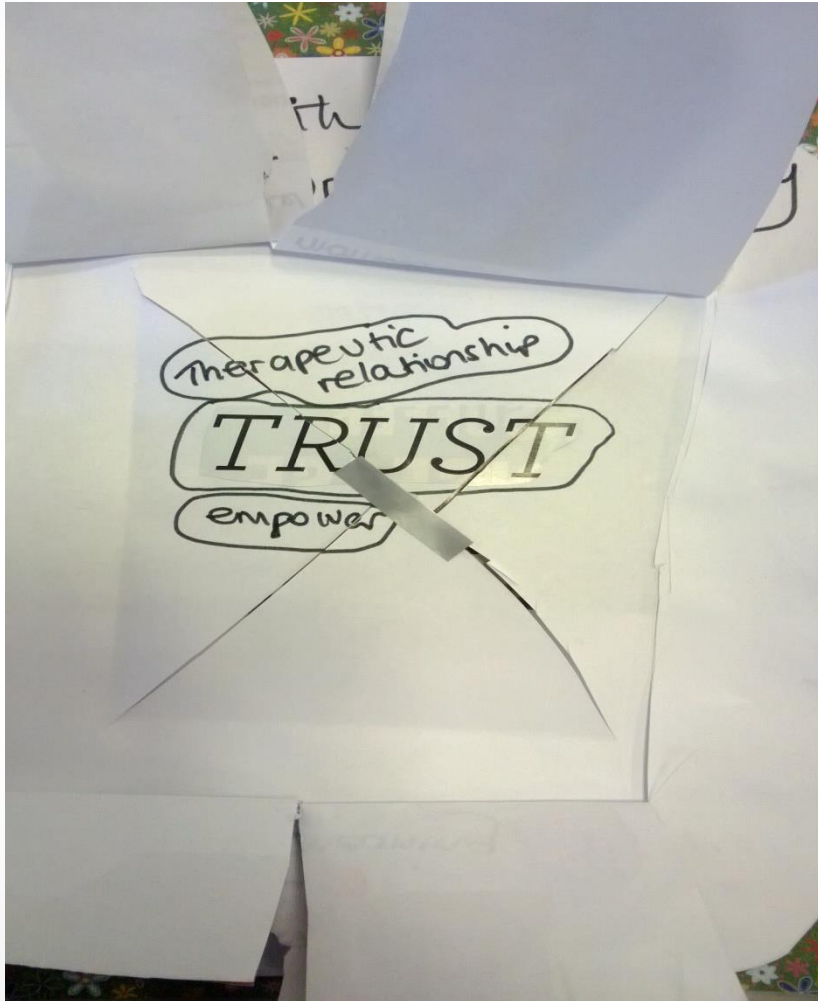


Hopeful flourishing

- “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



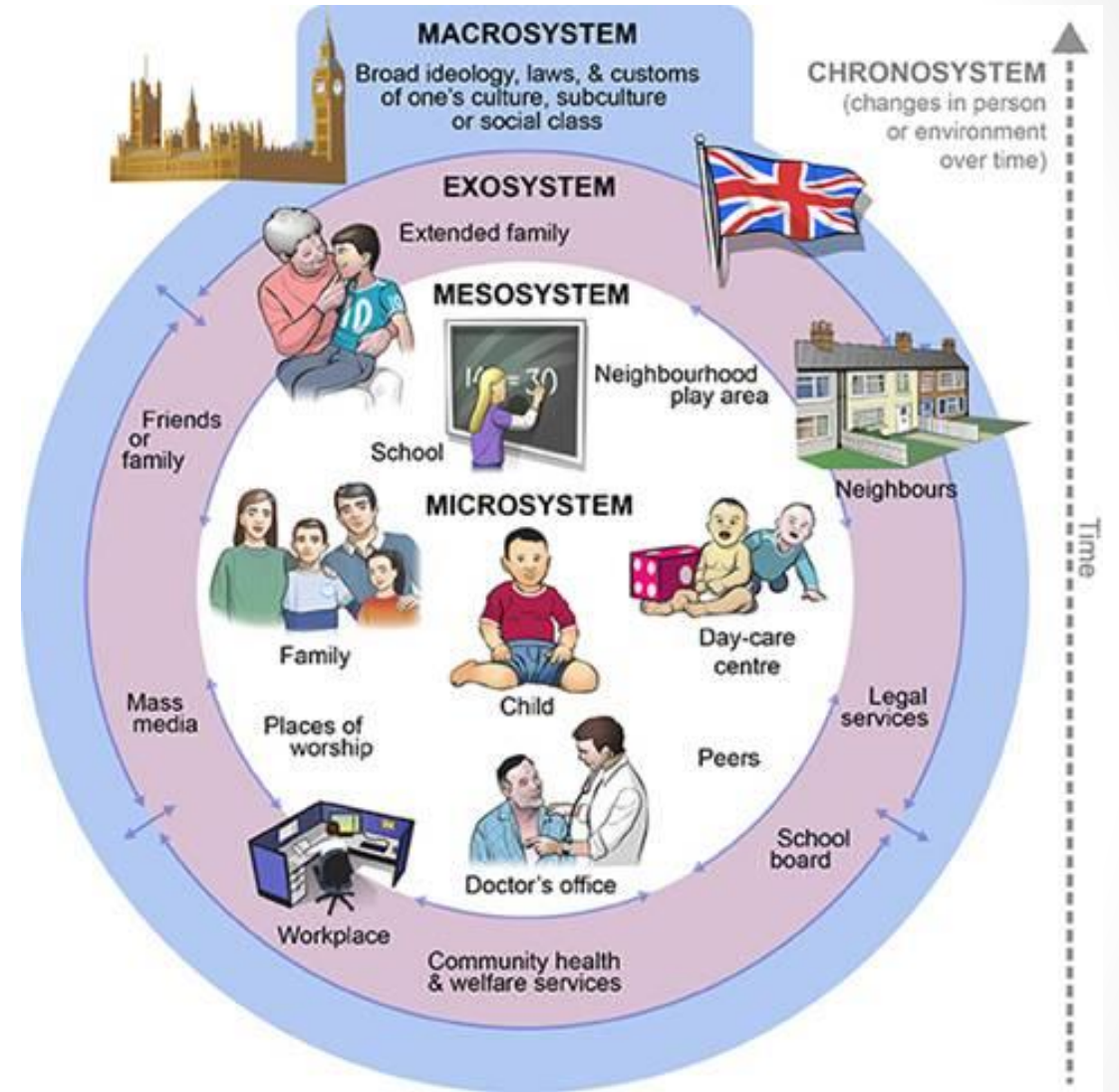
- “I think for children a lot of the activities are dictated to them” – *Emily*
- “I think the tradition of a checklist really takes you away from that” *Janette*.
- “We also are being scrutinised constantly about our throughput of work” *Oscar*.
- “We want to be on the support team not the instructor”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

- Brian et al. (2015). 'Occupational Therapists as change agents in multidisciplinary teams'. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*: 78(9), 547 – 555.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory. A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London. Sage Publications.
- Duncan, E.A.S. (Ed) (2012). *Foundations for Practice in Occupational Therapy*. Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone.
- Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline & Punish: The birth of the prison*. Penguin Social Sciences
- Harrison, V.E. (2009). 'Should Occupational Therapists address the spiritual needs of children with physical disabilities within their practice? A literature review'. TREP7000 assignment, University of Cumbria.
- Heidegger, M. (1978). *Being & Time*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic Research. Design, Methodology and Applications*. California. Sage Publications.
- Morris, D. N. (2013). 'Perceptions of Spirituality and Spiritual Care in Occupational Therapy Practice'. *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health*, 29(1) pp 60-77.
- Reed, K., Smythe, L. & Hocking, C. (2012). 'The meaning of Occupation: A Hermeneutic (Re)view of Historical Understandings'. *Journal of Occupational Science*. DOI: 10.1080/14427591.2012.729487.
- Russell, B. (1938). *Power: A New Social Analysis*. Allen & Unwin.
- Scaffa, M.E. & Reitz, S.M. (2013). *Occupational Therapy Community-Based Practice Settings*. Philadelphia. F A Davis & Co
- Smith, J.A., Flower, P. & Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. London. Sage.