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**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 4<sup>th</sup> theme – POWER and Occupational Therapy
- Conclusion
- References



# Why am I doing this?

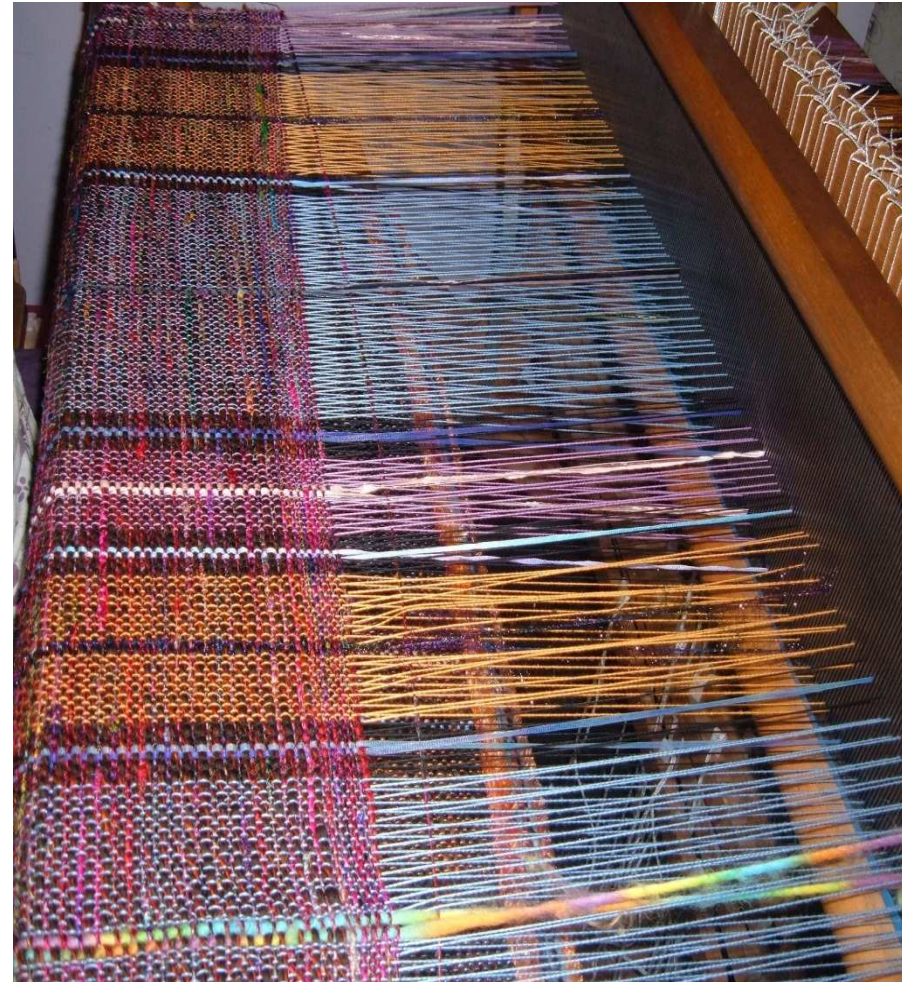
- Exploring the history & values of the profession highlighted a gap in knowledge
- Spirituality is a debated issue within OT with no firm conclusions having been reached (Harrison, 2009; Morris, 2013).
- Adding to the evidence base regarding this area of OT practice





# 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)





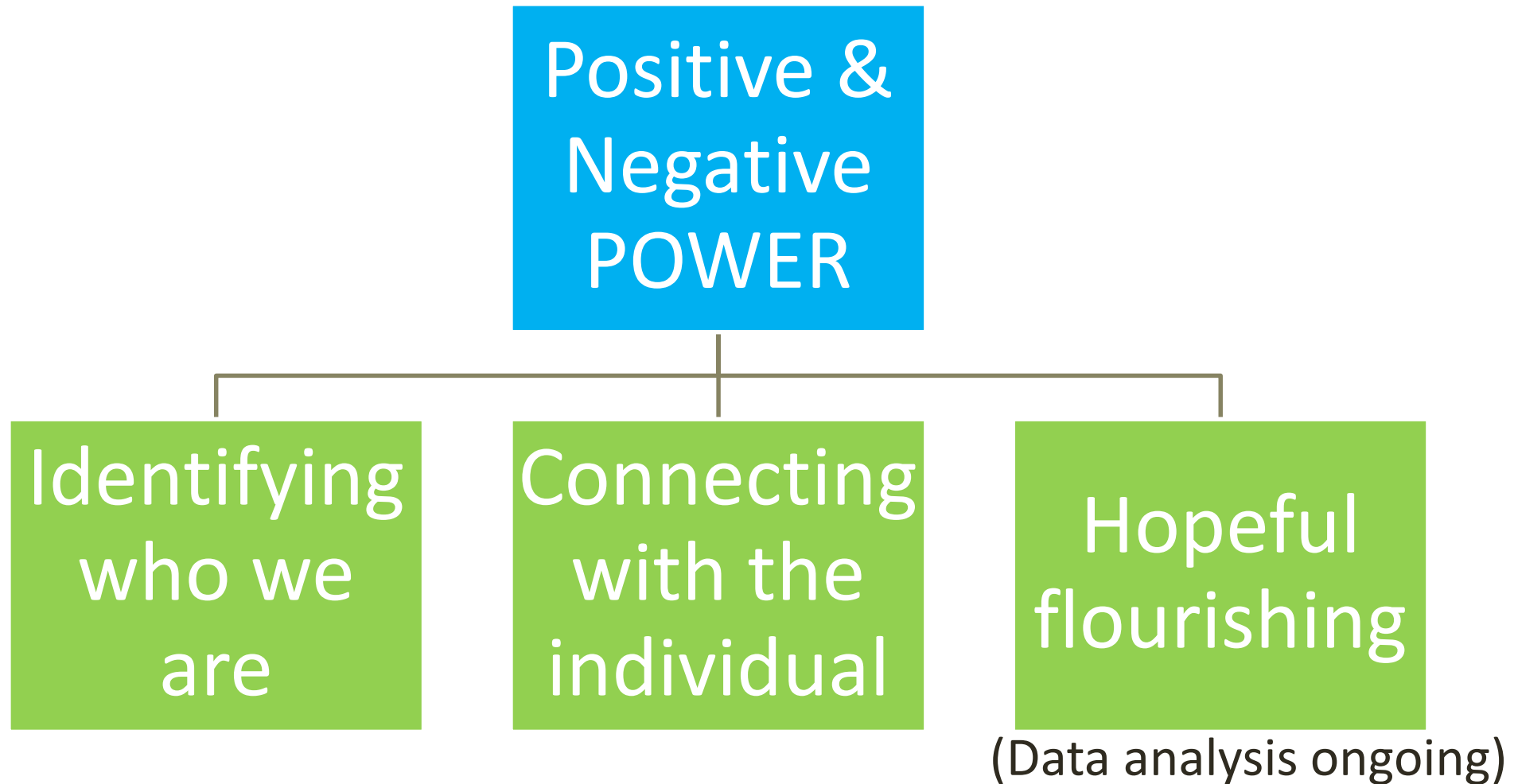
# How did I carry out the data collection

- 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*

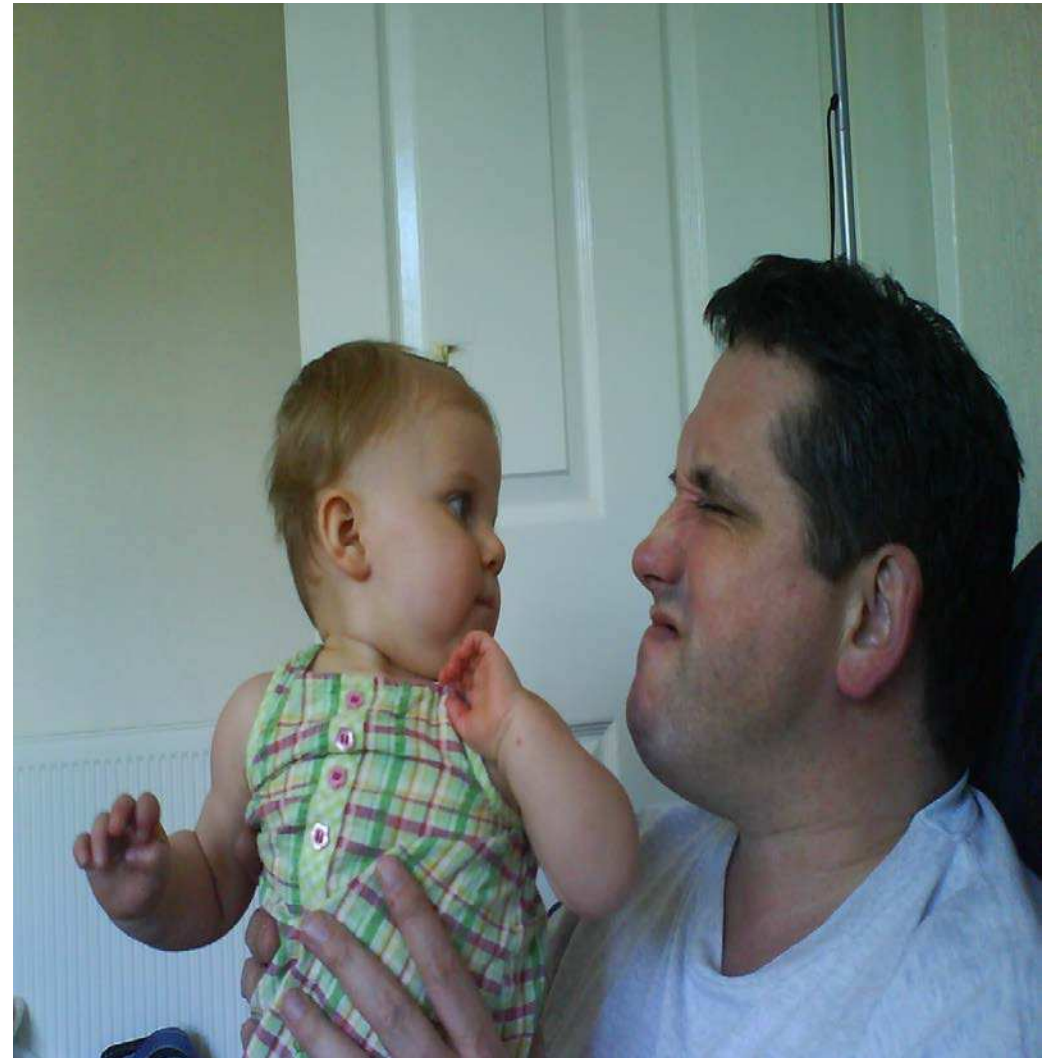


- “the core, as I see it, it’s something that no-one can get to and no-one can see, so it’s all hidden” *Fiona*.
- “It’s kind of about the skin we’re in and what makes us tick” *Stan*
- “Its just who you are. In a nutshell” *Catherine*



# *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*

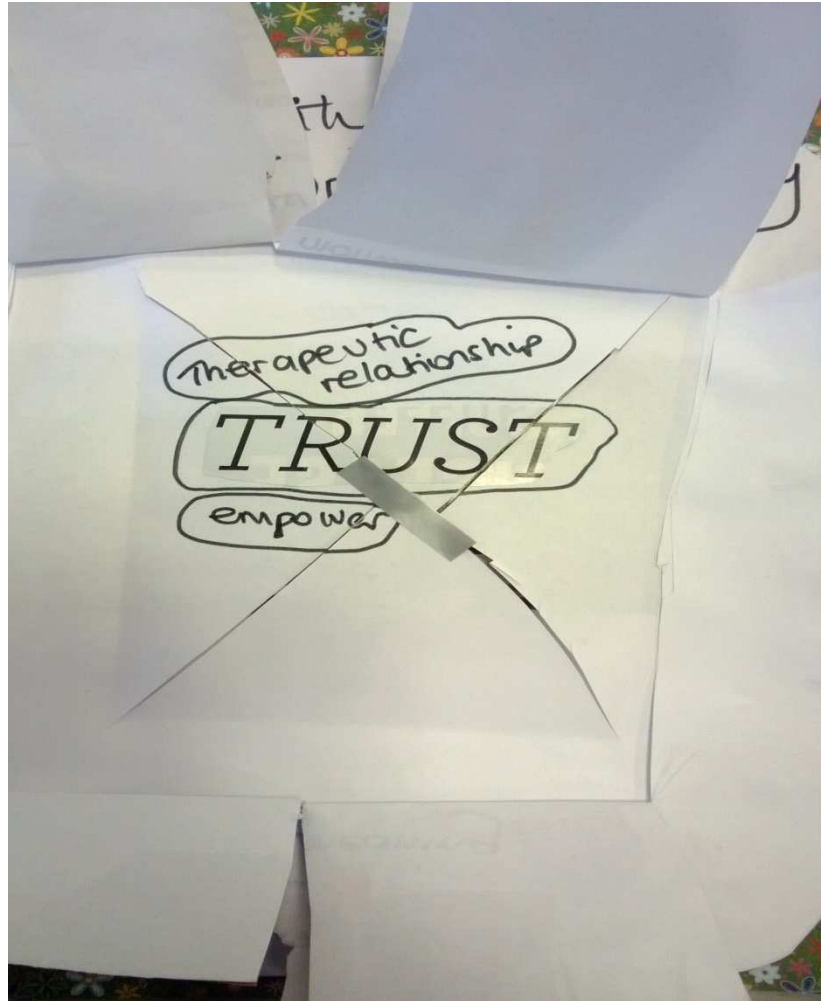


# *Hopeful flourishing*

- “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*.



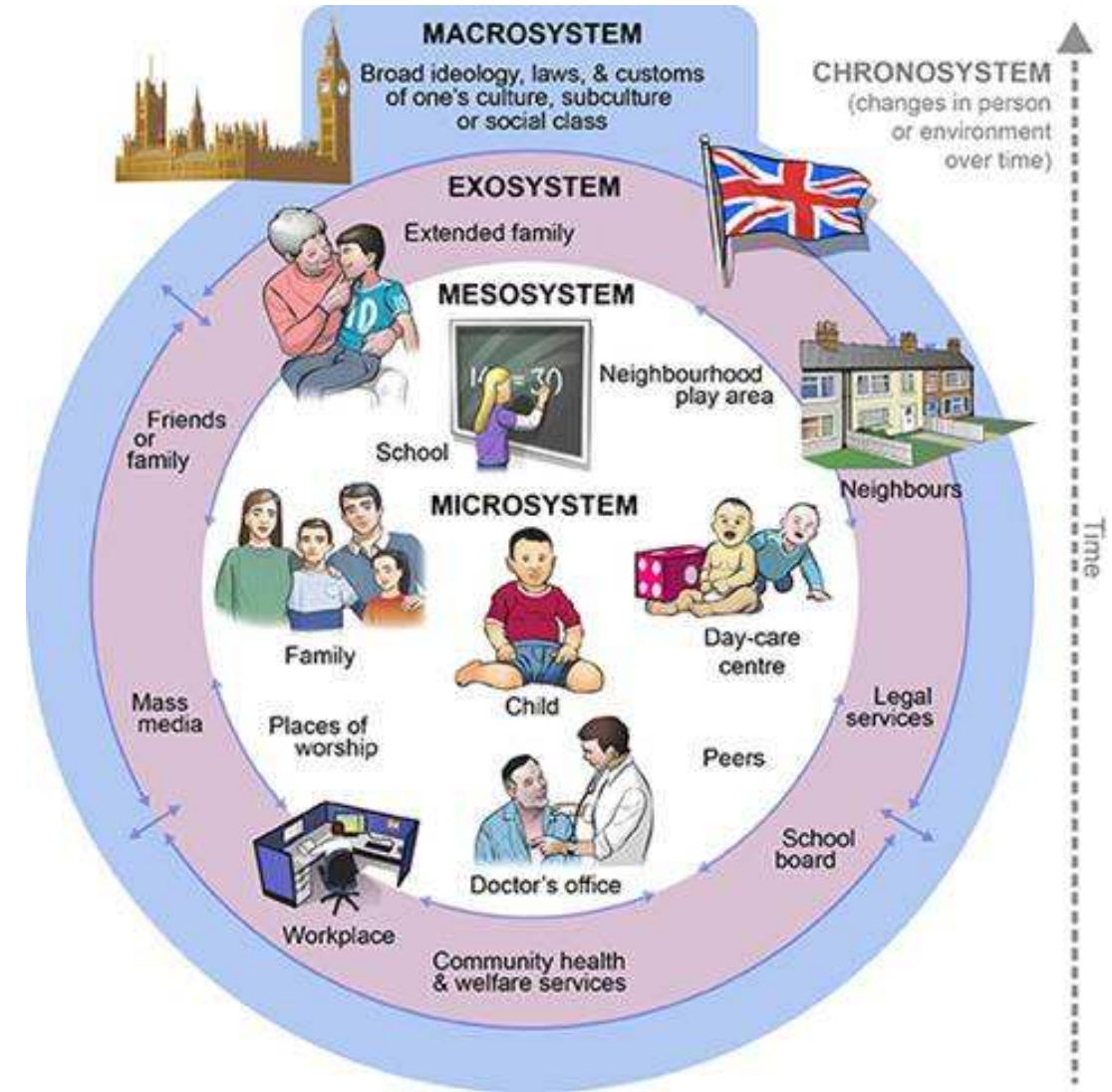
# What is power?

- 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:

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