

NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES

OT0605: Evidence-based Practice Project

**An Exploration of the Contextual
Influences on Occupational Choice for
Youth in Disadvantaged Communities**

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27th February 2017

Word count: 6,592

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
(HONS) OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**

Abstract

Background: The freedom to make autonomous occupational choices is key to maintaining health and wellbeing and is considered a human right. Youth living in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities face barriers to exercising this right. This literature review takes an occupational justice perspective to investigate evidence exploring the influence of the political, historical and socioeconomic environment on the perceptions of occupational choice of young people living in disadvantaged communities.

Method: Five databases were searched for qualitative studies that explored occupational choice in relation to the specified community. Four articles that addressed the research subject most appropriately were selected and critically appraised.

Findings: The findings suggest that the environmental contexts inform and constrain day-to-day occupational choices of youth living in disadvantaged communities. This is explored through two subthemes 'social connection' and 'asserting status' which link to the main theme 'it's just like that'.

Conclusions: Occupational choices appear to be a consequence of environmental contexts rather than individual volition. This has implications for occupational therapists conducting individualistic interventions with youth from disadvantaged communities. The complexity of the contextual influences on occupational choice should be considered more comprehensively by occupational therapists in order to promote health, wellbeing and occupational justice within this community. Further research is required to gain a deeper understanding of this subject.

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Introduction

The existence of socioeconomically deprived communities is a condition of current Western societies that is largely expected and accepted (Welshman, 2013). These communities often remain deprived for generations, despite regular government programmes and initiatives aimed at reducing poverty and tackling inequalities (Macnicol, 2017). For young people growing up in socioeconomically deprived communities, this cycle of disadvantage leads to low life expectancy and poor health outcomes (Marmot Review, 2010).

The concept of the 'underclass' has been renamed, explained and redefined throughout the past 130 years in line with political agendas and policies (Welshman, 2013). Despite efforts to label and define this community, no clear definition or term currently exists that is distinct from politically weighted ideologies (Macnicol, 2017). For the purpose of this literature review, then, the term 'disadvantaged communities' will be used to loosely define socioeconomically deprived areas where there is minimal engagement in health-promoting occupations.

The term 'occupational choice' originated from economist Eli Ginzberg in 1951 to describe the process of decision making regarding career choice (Ginzberg, 1972). This term has been adopted and developed by occupational therapists to refer to the choices made to engage in everyday activities within individual and environmental circumstances (Creek, 2008). Individuals perform occupations within the context of their social, political, economic, historical, physical and cultural environment (Hocking, 2012). Young people living in disadvantaged environments may be experiencing

occupational deprivation – the prolonged lack of opportunity to engage in meaningful occupations (Creek, 2014) – or occupational marginalisation – the inability to practice occupational choice due to contextual barriers limiting and excluding occupational engagement (Duncan & Creek, 2014).

The ability to choose and engage in occupations is considered a human right (Hammell & Iwama, 2012). Occupational injustice occurs when societies systematically oppress this right or limit opportunities for healthy occupational engagement and inclusion (Creek, 2014). This results in communities experiencing prolonged occupational deprivation and marginalisation (Braveman & Suarez-Balcazar, 2009). Occupational injustice, combined with other inequitable social determinants, including education, employment, housing and social and political marginalisation, result in health inequities (Gerlach, 2015). When contextual demands conflict with engagement in healthy occupations, there is a risk that youth within these contexts may engage in occupations that promote destructive behaviour and perpetuate environmental conditions (Lopez & Block, 2011).

With every new government come new policies, programmes and strategies to address health inequalities and promote opportunity for youth participation (Farrow, 2016). A political shift from social 'Welfarism', where youth were one of the largest beneficiaries (Mizen, 2004), to the current neoliberal age, has led to privatisation and competition of youth services where policy is driven by the economy, efficiency and effectiveness (Bunyan & Ord, 2012). In line with these priorities, current United Kingdom (UK) youth policy is aimed at placing increasing responsibility on local authorities and individuals for their own health and wellbeing (Bunyan & Ord, 2012).

The current public health agenda takes an asset-based approach, focusing on utilising the strengths and resources of a community to maintain health and wellbeing and build resilience (Public Health England (PHE), 2014a; College of Occupational Therapists (COT), 2017). Through a youth-centred asset-based approach, the aim is to encourage young people to take more control and responsibility over their health and wellbeing and engage in education, volunteering and social activities to prevent ill health (PHE, 2014a; PHE, 2014b; PHE, 2013; HM Government, 2011). However, despite policies, guidelines and service delivery promoting youth engagement within disadvantaged communities, deprivation and health inequities in the UK remains high (PHE, 2014a). Furthermore, there is no indication of increased youth participation in change-making action (Farrow, 2016).

During a practical placement within a voluntary and community sector organisation, this author was made aware of a large range of charitable and statutory service opportunities offered within the community aimed at positive youth engagement. This author, in discussion with community residents and service leaders, observed a lack of uptake of the opportunities available. This led to an interest in why, if occupational opportunities exist, they are not engaged in and whether youth in disadvantaged communities perceive a sense of choice in their occupational roles and habits.

Historically, Occupational Therapy (OT) has situated choice within an individualistic paradigm where each individual is free to make choices based on personal motivation (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). A common assumption within OT is that the locus of occupational choice is situated within internal volition, allowing the individual to make autonomous choices about the

occupations that are engaged in (Yerxa, 1992; Townsend & Wilcock, 2003; Kielhofner, 2008). However, this position has been challenged in recent years, suggesting that although occupational therapists have a longstanding recognition of the micro level influence of the physical and social environment on occupational engagement, occupational therapists neglect to acknowledge the macro level influence of socioeconomic, historical and political contexts on occupational choice (Phelan & Kinsella, 2009; Hammell, 2015).

There is a growing body of literature within occupational science that addresses the interrelation between occupational choice and the context it exists within: Dickie, Cutchin & Humphrey (2006) draw on the Deweyan holistic philosophy of transactional relationships between the context and the person. They propose that occupational choices are not a dualistic interaction between the individual and environment, rather, occupational choice is embedded in, and inseparable from, environmental context. Phelan & Kinsella (2009) suggest that the assumption of free choice is based in culturally bound values that disregard contexts where occupational choice is mandated. Gerlach (2015) encourages occupational scientists to consider the occupational choices of marginalised communities through an intersectionality lens in order to understand the contextualised power dynamics that lead to inequities and occupational injustice.

In addressing occupational injustices, occupational scientists move away from the medical paradigm and towards a social and political justice framework (Galheigo, 2011). Philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault (1991) developed the concept of governmentality, proposing that those in

power create universal 'truths' that are not a rational response to social problems, but rather a way to imperceptibly dictate the way individuals come to see themselves and their reality, with the control of these discourses in the power of those considered to have the knowledge. According to Foucault (1991), the gathering of knowledge/statistics by the State allows for a categorisation of persons and communities that leads to individuals adopting the identity of their categorisation and monitoring their own, and others', actions to conform to their mandated identity. This subtle interplay of power and contextual expectations influences the way in which communities come to view their occupational choices and possibilities (Laliberte Rudman, 2010).

As the contemporary context shifted from the Keynesian welfare state to the neoliberal market-centred agenda of individualism, consumerism and self-sufficiency (Bunyan & Ord, 2012), emphasis has been placed on individual responsibility for health and prosperity and away from the social responsibility of government in promoting equality and justice (Morrow & Hardie, 2014).

This focus on individualism leaves disadvantaged communities with the responsibility of socioeconomic inequities but without the resources within their wider contexts to provide realistic opportunities for health-promoting choices (Laliberte Rudman, 2012).

As has been highlighted, the wider socioeconomic and political context of disadvantaged communities may inhibit the choice of youth to engage in health-promoting occupations (Phelan & Kinsella, 2009). For example, young people living in disadvantaged communities are more likely to choose high-risk occupations, such as excess drinking and drug use (WHO, 2014).

Disadvantaged youth are making occupational choices on a daily basis,

however little is known about what influences these choices (Gallagher, Pattigrew & Muldoon, 2015; Galvaan, 2014; Kloep et al, 2010).

In order to decrease the perpetuation of risky and unhealthy occupations and to work towards occupational justice, occupational therapists require an awareness of the influence of broader environmental contexts on the occupational choices of youth in disadvantaged communities (Farias, Laliberte Rudman & Magalhães, 2016). Therefore, this literature review will seek to understand the influence of a disadvantaged context on young people's perceptions of their occupational choices.

Literature Review Strategy

A literature search of articles was undertaken using Northumbria University literature database, Web of Science, Sage Journals, Taylor and Francis and CINAHL. Key search terms used included youth, choice, occupation, occupational justice, deprivation and context, in various combinations with relevant synonyms and truncation used for each term. The aim of the literature search was to identify research conducted between 2006 and 2016 that addresses 'well' young people's perceptions of their everyday occupational choices within their disadvantaged contexts. Inclusion criteria consisted of English, peer reviewed articles relevant to the topic. Exclusion criteria consisted of research focused on ill health or disability, education, work or other specific occupations, and any research without subjective experiences of the young people.

Different search terms and databases were used until no new relevant articles emerged, indicating saturation (Randolph, 2009). Electronic literature searches have limitations due to categorisation and key terms (Aveyard, 2014). Therefore, a hand search of relevant journals, reference lists and authors was additionally conducted. There appears to be a paucity of research on this topic, indicated by only four articles meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Article A (Gallagher, Pettigrew & Muldoon, 2015) explores occupational choice of youth in a disadvantaged community. Article B (Galvaan, 2014) explores the influence of the socioeconomic, political and historical environment on occupational choice for marginalised South African youth.

Article C (Kleop et al., 2010) explores young people's views of their possibilities and choice within a disadvantaged environment. Article D (McCulloch, Stewart & Lovegreen, 2006) explores the relationship between social class and youth identities, cultures and choice. For further details, see Appendix 1.

The Critical Review Form for Qualitative Studies (Lets et al, 2007) was used to critically appraise the articles to identify the rigour of the research and the utility for this literature review (for the evidence table, see Appendix 2).

Following a critical appraisal of the methodology, the findings were appraised iteratively in order to identify emerging themes in the research, which will be considered below following a critical appraisal of the literature.

Critical Appraisal

Studies A, B and C are of qualitative design and study D is mixed method.

The studies sought to gain an understanding of the young people's experiences of their choices within their disadvantaged contexts. This body of research concluded that the broader environmental context created a barrier to the young people's perceptions of occupational choice. Article C presented an exception, suggesting that disadvantaged communities can sometimes provide motivation for health-promoting occupational choices. The wider findings and implications will be analysed following a critical appraisal of the research methodologies.

Qualitative research is used to gain a rich understanding of an experience or phenomenon (Addo & Eboh, 2014). Qualitative research is considered low on the hierarchy of evidence, due to its nature of being subjective and consequently more predisposed to researcher bias (Aveyard, 2014). However, Jolley (2013) argues that evidence should not be based on a preconceived notion of importance, but rather on its applicability to the research question. Due to the selected studies seeking to explore the subjective experience of the participants, a qualitative research design is appropriate (Addo & Eboh, 2014).

Study D used a mix methods design, an increasingly valued design (Östlund et al., 2011), which can draw on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative designs, enhancing its overall quality (Moule & Goodman, 2009). A disadvantage of mixed methods designs is the potential challenges of time, financial limitations and researcher skills, due to the extent and variety of

data being collected (Kroll, 2009). Furthermore, this design can result in ambiguous definitions of methodology (Östlund et al., 2011), which is apparent in study D's unclear methodology and audit trail. Nevertheless, as study D focused primarily on qualitative data, the use of quantitative data to objectively categorise socioeconomic status strengthens the trustworthiness of the qualitative conclusions by minimising the researcher bias related to subjective definitions of social class (Moule & Goodman, 2009).

The sample sizes of the studies range from seven participants in study B to 45 participants in study D. Optimal sample size is specific to the study's characteristics and context and therefore there is no exact number required to guarantee a representative sample (Polgar & Thomas, 2008). Larger samples in qualitative studies can result in less in-depth findings, due to time and resource constraints (Addo, 2014). This could indicate why study D conducted only one semi-structured mixed methods interview with no other data collection method used, thus reducing the trustworthiness of the findings (Streubert, 2011). A strength of study D's sampling method, however, is the use of samples from two cities which found no significant difference between the findings of both locations. This solidifies the transferability of the findings across various locations (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Study B prioritised collecting rich data from a small sample, recognising that the sample is not representative of the full diversity of the population addressed. This emphasis on a quality- rather than large-sized- sample is suitable for the critical ethnographic study design used in study B, due to the ethical responsibility of the researcher to have a rich understanding in order

to address social and political injustice in a conscientious manner (Madison, 2012).

Study A used snowball sampling to identify the sample of nine participants. This sampling method is considered of least credibility due to potential selection bias and unrepresentativeness (Houser, 2012). However, snowball sampling can be an appropriate method when recruiting marginalised communities (such as disadvantaged youth), due to participants identifying relevant candidates who may not be known, or easily identified, by the researcher (Addo, 2014). Article A stated that sample saturation had been reached, but did not clarify how this conclusion was arrived at. This ambiguity results in the reader being unable to identify if researcher bias influenced the decision to cease the recruitment process (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data for studies A and B were collected and analysed by means of visual methodologies. Photovoice is a participatory action research method, developed by Wang and Burris (1997) to enable individuals to become catalysts of change through: identifying and recording issues within their communities; raising awareness and promoting critical dialogue through discussions and photographs and; reaching policy makers.

A scoping review by Lal, Jarus & Suto (2012) showed that Photovoice is a valid method within OT, social sciences and community-based health promotion research with a young population. This is due to it being both participant- and occupation-focused and it having the potential to capture complex phenomena in a simple format, hence redressing the power dynamics between researchers/professionals and marginalised populations

(Lal, Jarus & Suto, 2012). It is therefore a suitable method for the aims of the studies. Nevertheless, is not without ethical implications:

A study by Walsh et al. (2008), that employed Photovoice methods with youth living in a disadvantaged community, raised a number of concerns regarding ethical issues. This included increased stigmatisation due to the singling out and categorisation of communities, increased awareness of community disadvantage among participants and potential consequent negative perceptions, and managing expectations for change. Additional ethical issues include capacity and ensuring consent and confidentiality (Walsh et al., 2008). Lal, Jarus & Suto's (2012) review concludes that Photovoice is a trustworthy method if the complex ethical implications are managed.

Wang & Redwood-Jones (2001) set out key principles to guide ethical use of Photovoice, which underpins Wang's (2006) nine-step Photovoice strategy for youth communities; the process used by study A. The clear audit trail in article A shows that seven of the nine steps were adhered to. However, there is no mention of the two steps related to collaboration with policymakers, a key aspect of the rationale for utilising Photovoice. This raises the question of whether study A potentially promised change to participants and was unable to follow through or whether policymaker engagement was never intended, in which case Wang's (2006) nine-step process may not have been the most appropriate strategy.

Article B clearly stated its intentions to use adapted Photovoice methods to focus on data collection and analysis in order to gain a richer understanding

that could not be achieved solely through verbal interviews and observation. Rather than using Photovoice methods to seek direct political change, the use of a visual methodology was utilised to provide additional data and enhance the credibility of the ethnographic study design.

The whole of study B's research process, including risks and ethical considerations, were discussed clearly and regularly with participants in order to ensure that participants were informed, assented to research demands and were keen to continue. This conduct is in line with the three basic principles of research ethics: respect for persons, beneficence and justice (Belmont Report, 1979). Considering the literature around Photovoice, this method enhances the trustworthiness of both studies, however it appears that the full ethical considerations and appropriateness of this method have not been fully considered in article A.

Where studies A and B triangulated their findings through the use of multiple data collection methods including visual methods, observation and multiple interviews (thus increasing the credibility and confirmability of the findings (Streubert, 2011)), studies C and D used one-off semi-structured interviews as their sole data collection method. Conducting quality interviews requires expertise in effective use of verbal- and body-language, questioning techniques and rapport building in order to collect accurate data and minimise bias (Green & Thorogood, 2014). Consequently, if this is the only method used, expert interviewers are required to increase trustworthiness (Green & Thorogood, 2014). Study D drew substantially on a bachelor dissertation of one of the authors and it is unclear whether she also conducted interviews as part of the study. This potential inexperience in

conducting research interviews questions the validity of the data (Addo, 2014).

Social desirability bias (the wish to respond in a morally desirable manner (Dahlgren & Hansen, 2015)) can influence qualitative data (Green & Thorogood, 2014). Bias can increase when the researcher is familiar with the participants outside of the research context (Taylor, 2009), as is the case in study C. Article C notes the stark difference in perceptions between the females interviewed (positive outlook) and the males interviewed (negative outlook). Taylor (2010) suggests that within a neoliberal age, females self-govern themselves in a manner deemed socially desirable, therefore potentially affecting the findings. This perspective has not been considered in article C.

Interviews allow for the collection of more in depth and rich data than alternative methods, such as questionnaires, and are therefore considered a credible qualitative data collection method (Priest & Roberts, 2010).

Nevertheless, due to the variety of factors that can influence interviews, and the lack of strategies used to reduce bias in studies C and D (e.g. reflexive practice), the confirmability of the findings would have been strengthened with additional data collection methods being utilised (Green & Thorogood, 2014).

The pervasive nature of bias means that no qualitative research can be completely bias free (Polit & Beck, 2014), nevertheless steps can be taken to reduce it, such as reflexivity (Polit & Beck, 2014). All the articles identify the initial assumptions of the researchers, however recognising personal

perceptions alone will not prevent bias (Green & Thorogood, 2014).

Reflexivity, as utilised in studies A and B, requires continual critical analysis of the researchers own world view in relation to the nature, context and aim of the research and the impact of this subjective view on the findings (Green & Thorogood, 2014).

Neglecting to engage in reflexive practice, as appears to be the case in studies C and D, can result in confirmation bias (the interpretation of findings to confirm researcher expectations (Altermatt, 2008)) and hence reduce the dependability of the findings (Green & Thorogood, 2014). The rigour of the data analysis can be further enhanced through peer review (used by all four studies), member checking, triangulation, transparency and prolonged engagement (utilised in studies A and B) (Green & Thorogood, 2012).

There are no systematic rules for qualitative data analysis (Houser, 2012), however a clear structured approach is required in order to reduce systematic bias and ensure the trustworthiness of the research (Houghton et al., 2015). All the articles are explicit in their data analysis process, however articles A and B provide more in-depth information and rationale, showing the appropriateness of the methods used for their study designs. For example, study B used a pragmatic horizon approach to data analysis, which recognises that perceptions exist within the 'horizons' from which they emerge (Carspecken, 1996). This is a critical ethnographic data analysis method (Carspecken, 1996) and is therefore appropriate to the design of the research and the aim to explore the perceptions of disadvantaged youth within their wider contexts.

The less clear use of analytical frameworks within studies C and D questions the dependability of their findings (Houser, 2012). Nonetheless, despite unclear methodologies and questionable credibility, articles C and D provide a liberal use of participant quotes, which provides the reader with increased clarity of how themes emerged and findings were reached, thus enhancing credibility (Houser, 2012). Additionally, study D used quantitative methods to further support the qualitative findings, and compared results between two cities –finding no significant difference- hence increasing the transferability of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014).

All four studies are located within disadvantaged communities. Studies C and D are both located in the United Kingdom, study A is located in Ireland and study B in South Africa. The location of research can affect its transferability to an alternative practice setting, particularly when exploring the wider contextual factors (Polit & Beck, 2014). However, all the articles provide a detailed description of the research context that show clear parallels between the settings. The only significant exception is the additional contextual factor that apartheid plays in study B. However, due to the interest of this literature review in the contextual influences on occupational choice, this factor was considered relevant for this review because of the additional depth and understanding it provides.

The above critical appraisal provides an analysis of the overall rigour of the four selected studies. Considering the outcomes from the critical appraisal, the findings will now be analysed. The themes presented below emerged from the findings of all four articles, however, in order to gain the most accurate understanding of the influence of environmental context on the

occupational choices of disadvantaged youth, emphasis will be placed on articles A and B. This is due to the methodology of those studies being more robust and therefore the findings more trustworthy.

Themes and Findings

The findings of this body of research indicate that the occupational choices of youth living in disadvantaged communities are directly influenced, and a part of, their environmental contexts. These findings can be understood through two subthemes, 'social connection' and 'asserting status', which link to the main theme: "It's just like that" (titled with a colloquial Cape Flats phrase taken from a theme in article B, p.47).

Social Connection

A strong theme in all the articles is the influence friends and family have on occupational choices. It appears that for the youth concerned, occupational engagement (and lack of it) is not perceived to derive from personal motivation or meaning, but is rather a collective choice; shared with, influenced by, and mandated by, the social group and family expectations. Laliberte Rudman (2013) and Hammell (2009a) support this concept, suggesting that occupational choices within disadvantaged communities prioritise belonging and togetherness, counter to the assumptions of the current individualistic paradigm of privileged societies.

Asserting Status

A second common theme is the choice of occupations that are perceived to assert position or acquire status and capital within social fields. Asserting power and comparing selves to others influenced occupational choices and

in some cases became an occupation in itself (for example in the form of 'slagging' (making fun of others) (article A, p.5)). This monitoring and governing of one's own and others' actions is described by Foucault (1982) as the subtle way in which communities come to view behaviours as normal, ideal or unnatural, hence perpetuating non-healthy habits and limiting choices to what is considered morally acceptable within the social environment.

"It's just like that"

The clear predominant theme signifies the acceptance of youth in disadvantaged communities that choices exist within, and are limited by, the socioeconomic, political and historical contexts of their lives. Occupational choices are presumed and mandated with little consideration given to engaging in occupations outside of the contextual norm. Occupational choice is perceived to exist, but only within the disadvantaged contexts. It appears that occupational choices are made to support 'being' rather than 'doing' within an environment, with the emphasis on existing and being within a community rather than striving for individual action.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social fields, habitus, capital and doxa can provide an understanding of the transactional relationship between occupational choice and the contexts within which they are made (Galvaan, 2014). Bourdieu (1977) theorised that agents have characteristics moulded and regulated by environment and experience (habitus) which they use to leverage their social, cultural and economic position (capital) within their

environments (fields). Each field has its own set of written and unwritten rules (doxa) which must be abided by (Bourdieu, 1977).

Hence, occupational choices and actions can influence both habitus and capital, but must be made within field doxa in order to maintain and gain capital (Galheigo, 2011). This theory underlines the key themes: asserting status (capital), social connection (fields) and “it’s just like that” (doxa) and suggests that occupational choice and action (habitus) exists primarily within the contexts of the social, political and historical contexts/fields (Galvaan, 2012).

The one inconsistency in the findings lies in article C, which showed that some female participants were motivated by their disadvantaged environments to make occupational choices outside of the norm in order to “get out” of the contexts they live in (Kloep et al, 2010, p. 517). This discrepancy may be linked to the older sample in this study who could be feeling increasing responsibility for their present and future actions, typical of this age (Cieslik & Simpson, 2013). Due to study C having the least methodological rigour of the four studies and minimal youth participation in the research, the findings are taken with caution, nevertheless this perspective aligns with the themes ‘asserting status’ and ‘social connection’ and has been considered in relation to the implications for OT, which will be subsequently discussed.

Service User Involvement

Service user involvement in research is becoming increasingly integral to the health research agenda (INVOLVE, 2012), and hence should be considered when appraising the value of research. The opportunity to be involved in research is included in the Department of Health (2012)'s ambition to create a health service where people have control over their care. The National Institute for Health Research (2017) affirm this position by stating their expectation that service users participate actively in research.

Research study designs can benefit from service user involvement throughout the research process (Cook, 2012). The benefits include selecting research questions prioritised by service users, designing practical data collection methods that address the requirements of the participants, and disseminating the research to the research community, participants and wider public in a style that is suitable for all potential beneficiaries of the research (INVOLVE, 2012). Furthermore, service users can add valuable insight into ethical considerations, such as managing sensitive issues, working with minority communities and ensuring consent is truly informed (INVOLVE, 2012).

Service user involvement, however, is not without its challenges (Brett et al., 2010): It can lead to scientific and ethical conflicts of interest; the tokenistic use of service users by researchers in order to meet funding requirements, which may result in frustration and a sense of exclusion; and increased time and cost (Brett et al., 2010). A few of these challenges can be seen in studies A and B, including the ethical challenges of Photovoice methods addressed

previously. One participant in study A required significant support to use the camera and the additional time and resources required for youth participation compromised study B's sample size. Additionally, article A recognised that there were occasions where the participants had differing attitudes from the researcher towards the research process.

Legal status, developmental capacities and power differentials present further challenges to youth participation in research (Schelbe et al., 2015). However, there are methods to overcome these, for example gatekeepers (as used in study A) and conscientiously ensuring consent, assent and confidentiality (as done in both studies A and B) (Schelbe et al., 2015). Schelbe et al. (2015) suggest that providing compensation presents challenges in finding the balance between formally recognising the youth's contributions and avoiding coercion. Nevertheless, they suggest that compensation for effort is an ethical step to redressing power imbalances. Compensation was not provided in any of the studies.

The service user involvement discourse can create blurred lines between user-controlled and user-consulted research, with the former empowering service users to lead research and the latter embodying patient/researcher power differentials (Cook, 2012), with service users feeling like they ought to be grateful to be invited by the 'expert' professional to participate in research (de la Haye, 2016). A Youth Policy working paper suggests that youth participation can often become a box ticking activity that demonstrates the "goodwill of adults", but does not accurately address the service users' voice or perspective (Farrow, 2016, p.5). Despite the challenges of service user

involvement in health research, de la Haye (2016) asserts that all efforts must be made to overcome the barriers and work towards equality.

When there is equality in service user participation in research, waste is reduced (Chalmers et al., 2014; Ioannidis et al., 2014) and the involvement itself can positively impact service users (Brett et al, 2010). Hart (1992) developed a model of youth participation, adapted from Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, based on the belief that there is a misplaced tendency to underestimate young people and that it is always best for youth to have a voice in order to encourage self-efficacy, political determination and healthy social and emotional development (Hart, 1992). Hart (1992) states that youth participation is a matter of human rights and professionals have a social responsibility to work towards co-production with youth. Furthermore, research co-production can be a meaningful occupation for service users and is a step towards occupational justice (Kramer-Roy, 2015).

Hart's (1992) ladder of participation sets out eight levels of youth engagement; three non-participatory and five participatory (see Appendix 3). Studies C and D involve the young people only as participants, with no decision-making power, and therefore lie within the non-participatory 'tokenism' category (Hart, 1992). Both studies would benefit from service user involvement throughout the research process, particularly in data analysis, in order to strengthen the methodology and overall rigour of the research (Mjøsund et al., 2017). As both articles indicate that the aim of their studies is to focus on enabling the voice of the young person, participatory methods would have been more effective in meeting this aim.

Studies A and B use member checking at every stage, with the young people fully aware of the process and taken seriously throughout. The research was initiated and led by the researchers and therefore these studies lie within the participatory 'consulted and informed' category (Hart, 1992). Barriers to increased service user involvement have been discussed, however as both articles state the desire, and obligation, to work towards occupational justice, the level of involvement could nevertheless have been increased through shared decision making and working with policy makers. If research is to have a lasting impact within a community, members must have a high-level of involvement throughout the whole process (Morrow et al., 2012).

This literature review is of value to all professional groups working with youth living in disadvantaged communities. In order to work towards occupational and social justice, professionals, and those in positions of power, must have an understanding of the influence of the environmental context on perceptions of choices, and thus engagement (AlHeresh, Bryant & Holm, 2013). If, as the findings suggest, young people perceive that occupational choices exist primarily within the collective expectations and assumptions of the disadvantaged communities they live in, then change requires more than 'experts' providing additional opportunities or programmes. Emancipatory research may be one method for disadvantaged youth communities to educate health professionals and policy makers on the change they would like to see (Kramer-Roy, 2015).

Implications for Future Development

This review has sought an understanding of the contextually situated nature of occupational choice for youth in disadvantaged communities. Through a literature review of this subject, a scantily researched topic has been explored and the occupational science discourse has been expanded. The assumption within OT literature that all individuals are autonomous agents with the freedom of internally motivated occupational choices (Yerxa, 1992; Townsend & Wilcock, 2003; Kielhofner, 2008) has been challenged, thus developing a greater understanding of the factors influencing occupational justice.

Through a review of the literature, it appears that the instilled practical consciousness of youth living in disadvantaged communities perpetuate constrained patterns of occupational choice within the operant doxa. The transactional relationship between occupational choice and the geographic, cultural, socioeconomic, political and historical environments is substantial and results in inculcated occupational deprivation. Even where alternative opportunities for occupational engagement exist, the perception of the right and power to choose may be restricted by internalised oppression.

The perpetuation of social inequalities and occupational injustice within disadvantaged communities may lead to youth not inheriting adequate cultural capital required to navigate doxa outside of their community (Bourdieu, 1977), even when alternative occupational choices may be attempted. It appears that this reinforces the young people's perception that choices must be made within the expectations of the disadvantaged

community, and thus individuals' practical consciousness maintain the continuation of occupational injustice (Charlesworth, 2000).

For youth living in disadvantaged communities meaning is held in collective, rather than individual, occupational choices and engagement. As a profession, OT has been criticised for being ethnocentric in its assumptions that occupations arise out of individual choice rather than contextual requirements (Phelan & Kinsella, 2009). These findings contribute to the growing awareness of the transactional relationship between occupation and environment (Dickie & Cutchin, 2012). The complexity of this relationship shows that the attempt to combat occupational deprivation with one-factor opportunities for occupational enrichment would be ineffective (Galvaan, 2014). Change requires more than externally provided opportunities and individualised interventions (Gallagher, Pettigrew & Muldoon, 2015; Kloep et al, 2010).

It is apparent that in order to work towards occupational justice for both individuals and communities, occupational therapists are required to become political (Rebeiro Gruhl, 2009; Pollard & Sakellariou, 2014). Thomas (2009) calls on occupational therapists to be inspired to expand and develop the profession to meet the ever-changing health needs of communities affected by inequality. This is supported by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (2004; 2006; 2012) whose position statements set out the value of using occupational science knowledge to advance practice with communities and through championing occupation as a human right.

The importance of critical reflexivity within OT epistemology when striving for occupational justice should not be underestimated (Farias, Laliberte Rudamn & Magalhães, 2016). Drawing on Foucault, MacKay (2011) suggests that the normalising of the OT discourse results in a docile therapist that works to preserve OT identity, knowledge and power rather than to critically reflect on the ethical development of the self and profession. Knowledge possessed by professionals is generally considered to have value and be 'true' and is held above that of the individual or community with experience but no 'expert' knowledge (Pollard & Sakellariou, 2014). By relinquishing the perception that one expert universal truth exists, occupational therapists will be more prepared to work in a truly client-centred, collaborative and equal way (MacKay, 2011) with young people living in disadvantaged communities.

As OT practice re-explores its roots in the social field (O'Brien & Hussey, 2012) and becomes increasingly more diverse in the UK and globally (Wicks, 2012), caution must be exercised not to cause harm through the preservation of narcissistic professional claims (MacKay, 2011), thus upholding the socioeconomic and political environment that reinforces the perpetuation of occupational injustice in disadvantaged communities. Conceivably, referring to a community as occupationally 'deprived' creates a hierarchy of occupations, denigrating the occupations of being and belonging and favouring occupations that contribute to the hegemonic neoliberal agenda of individualism, self-sufficiency and economic output (Laliberte Rudman, 2013), hence exacerbating inequality (Hammell, 2009b).

Through the critical appraisal of four articles' methodologies and findings, this author has gained a greater understanding of the complexity of the

contextual nature of occupational choice and engagement for youth growing up in disadvantaged communities. In addition, this author has gained insight into the importance of developing critical reflexivity in relation to OT epistemology in order for OT practice and discourse to reduce harmful power imbalances and strive for occupational justice. To draw again on Foucault (1972), it could be plausible that the language and categorisation used within this literature review exacerbates the power imbalance between this author and the community in question.

The ability to source and critically appraise relevant research to inform evidence-based practice is required in order to achieve and maintain high standards of professional competence (COT, 2015) and maintain registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (2016). Through conducting this literature review, this author has gained increased proficiency in research skills, which will enhance future evidence-based practice. In addition, this author is keen to conduct future research together with youth living in disadvantaged communities in order to gain further insights and provide the young people with a potentially meaningful occupation outside of the operant doxa of the community.

Conclusion

Limitations

Due to the dearth of research, a small sample of only four articles were critically appraised, with two studies having questionable rigour. The studies used different 'youth' age group brackets, ranging from ten to 21 years of age. As this time of life is critical for development and change (Furlong, 2013), this broad variation affects the transferability of this literature review. Additionally, this author's novice researcher status may affect the thoroughness of the literature review methodology and the robustness of the overall findings (Aveyard, 2014). This author used a critical appraisal tool and sought advice from peers and her supervisor in order to minimise bias and potential errors (Aveyard, 2014).

Future Research

Understanding of occupational choice from an occupational justice perspective is limited (Gallagher, Pettigrew & Muldoon, 2015). Further high-quality research in this area would provide a greater understanding of the contextual influences on occupational choice and aid OT practice with disadvantaged communities where context-driven occupational choices perpetuate poor health outcomes. Further explorative research into the differences between the younger and older age groups' occupational choices would be of benefit in order to explore whether perceptions of contextual limitations change or develop with age. Emancipatory research would advance understanding of areas of concern for young people and provide

disadvantaged youth communities with an opportunity to be heard and to affect change (Kramer-Roy, 2015).

Summary

This literature review set out to explore the contextually situated nature of occupational choice of youth living in disadvantaged communities. The findings illustrate that occupational choice is largely dictated and constrained by the socioeconomic, political and historical environment. For youth living in disadvantaged communities, occupational choice is a collective, rather than an individual, concept, with the young people monitoring and comparing each other's actions to fit within the accepted doxa of the community. Occupational choice is perceived to exist, but only within the mandated restrictions of the disadvantaged communities. This transactional relationship between environmental contexts and occupational choice results in a perpetuation of occupational injustice.

An appreciation of the complexity of occupational choice for youth living in disadvantaged communities may support the path towards occupational therapists becoming more political and critically reflexive and working towards occupational justice through community health and well-being. This literature review reveals the need to consider occupational choice as a collective, context-specific concept.

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Appendix 1: search strategy table

Database	Search Terms	Filter	Results	Inclusion/Exclusion criteria	Articles
Taylor & Francis - Journal of Occupational Science	(youth OR (young people)) AND (choice) AND (disadvantage* OR depriv*) AND justice AND (context* OR environment OR communit*)	2006 – 2016. English. Items with full text.	38	Peer reviewed research Article Subjective experience of participants Focus on perceptions of choice Socioeconomically deprived Indigenous groups Institutions Work Disability Immigration/asylum	Article B
Sage Journals – British Journal of Occupational Therapy	(youth OR (young people)) AND (choice*) AND (marginal* OR disadvantage* OR depriv*) AND justice AND (context* OR environment OR communit*)	2006 – 2016. English. Items with full text.	21	Peer reviewed research Article Subjective experience of participants Focus on perceptions of choice Socioeconomically deprived Mental health conditions Physical conditions Vocational rehab	Article A
Web of Science	((young people) OR youth) AND (depriv* OR disadvantage*) AND (context* OR communit*) NOT (health OR disab*)	2006 – 2016. English. Items with full text.	545		Too many hits
Web of Science	((young people) OR youth) AND (depriv* OR disadvantage*) AND (context* OR communit*) NOT (health OR disab*)	2006 – 2016. English. Items with full text. Search terms in title only. Articles.	13	Peer reviewed research Article Subjective experience of participants Focus on perceptions of choice Socioeconomically deprived Sport specific Education / school	Articles A & C
Taylor & Francis - Journal of Youth Studies	(free choice) AND (youth OR young people) AND (social class) AND lifestyle AND identit*	2006 – 2016. English. Items with full text.	97	Peer reviewed research Article Subjective experience of participants Focus on perceptions of choice Socioeconomically deprived Education / school Work / employment Marginalised groups other than for socio-economic reasons	Article D

Appendix 2: evidence table

Article	Country	Study Design	Sample	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis Method	Overall Rigour/Trustworthiness	Findings & Themes
<p>Article A Gallagher, M., Pettigrew, J. & Muldoon, O. (2015). Occupational choice of youth in a disadvantaged community. <i>British Journal of Occupational Therapy</i>. 78(10): 622-629.</p>	Ireland	Qualitative. Participatory action research – Photovoice.	9 participants: 10-14 years. Observation, followed by convenience and snowball sampling. Facilitated by gatekeepers .	Photovoice based on Wang’s (2006) 9-step strategy. 1-year observation, photos & photo-elicitation interviews.	Thematic analysis – Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases guided interpretation of data. NVivo 10 software.	<p>Credibility – Service user involvement, triangulation (member checking, multiple data collection methods used, experienced researchers supporting study), reflexive journal used.</p> <p>Transferability – Adequate degree of description of setting and participants.</p> <p>Dependability – Clear audit trail, experienced researchers supporting data analysis. Occasionally unclear how statements arrived at. Photovoice study design supports dependability.</p> <p>Confirmability – Member checking, triangulation, reflexive journal, although no specific mention of bias.</p>	<p>Themes: Dat’s pretty much dat; It’s me wit my friends; I got a worsor one of her an all.</p> <p>Findings: Occupations are mandated rather than chosen within socio-economic context. Transactional relationship between occupational choice and environment</p>
<p>Article B Galvaan, R. (2014). The contextually situated nature of occupational choice: marginalised young adolescents’ experiences in South Africa. <i>Journal of Occupational Science</i>. 22(1): 39-53.</p>	South Africa	Qualitative. Critical ethnography	7 participants: 11-13 years. Criterion-based selection. Progressive and sequential network sampling. 4 year process.	Photos, photo-elicitation interviews, interviews with significant adults, observation	Pragmatic horizon approach. QSR Nvivo,	<p>Credibility – Service user involvement, triangulation (member checking, multiple data collection methods used, peer debriefing), reflexive journal used, 5 year process. Conducted in Afrikaans –language of participants.</p> <p>Transferability – High degree of description of setting and participants. Specific to a particular post-apartheid community in SA.</p> <p>Dependability – Clear audit trail, appropriate methodology for research question. Not many examples from data.</p> <p>Confirmability – Member checking, triangulation, reflexive journal, acknowledgement of potential bias.</p>	<p>Themes: It’s just like that: my friends and I; being sussed.</p> <p>Findings: Occupational choices perpetuate injustice and mirror the hegemonic and historical discourses of colonialism and apartheid.</p>

<p>Article C Kloep, M., Hendry, L., Gardner, C. & Seage, C. (2010). Young people's views of their present and future selves in two deprived communities. <i>Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology</i>. 20(6): 315-524.</p>	<p>Wales</p>	<p>Qualitative. Unclear study design. Phenomenology assumed by reader.</p>	<p>11 participants: 16-18 years. Purposive, opportunity sample.</p>	<p>Semi-structured Interviews based on two questions (regarding a typical day and an ideal day).</p>	<p>Theory guided thematic analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).</p>	<p>Credibility – Unclear how saturation was deemed reached. No service user involvement, no reflexivity, only 1 interview & 1 data collection method. Unclear methodology. Findings cross-validated within research group throughout. Transferability – Adequate description of setting and participants. Dependability – Clear examples of data and interpretations. Some strong statements made with minimal bias reduction strategies used. Unclear focus, unclear methodology. Confirmability – Researcher previously knew participants through role as youth worker – potential bias (recognised). No software used for data analysis. Findings cross-validated within research group throughout.</p>	<p>Themes: Identity; possible selves; abilities and resources. Findings: Life choices intrinsically linked with macro-level environmental contexts, however large variation between individuals' perception of choice within adverse environment.</p>
<p>Article D Mcculloch, K., Stewart, A. & Lovegreen, N. (2006). 'We just hang out together': Youth cultures and social class. <i>Journal of Youth Studies</i>. 9(5): 539-556.</p>	<p>England & Scotland</p>	<p>Mixed methods. Further design(s) not specified. Phenomenology assumed by reader.</p>	<p>45 participants: 14-21 years. Purposive, opportunity sample.</p>	<p>Semi-structured Interviews, framework adapted from Muggleton (2000). -Mostly individual, occasional pair and group interviews.</p>	<p>Theory & interview framework (Muggleton, 2000) guided thematic analysis. Atlas TI.</p>	<p>Credibility – No service user involvement, no clarification of saturation, no indication of reflexivity, only 1 interview, differences in number of participants per interview. Unclear methodology. 10-year-old study. Large sample (45 participants). Triangulation through qualitative and quantitative data collection. Multiple researchers. Transferability – Clear description of setting and participants. Two locations used – differences not significant. Dependability – Clear link between data and findings. Unclear audit trail, unclear methodology. Confirmability – No recognition of bias or evidence of bias reduction strategies e.g. reflexivity and member checking. Triangulation via qualitative and quantitative data collection. Multiple researchers.</p>	<p>Themes: Goths; chavs / neds; skaters; other. Findings: Socio-economic position affects and limits choices in social group participation</p>

Appendix 3: Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation

