Partners in Learning:
An Investigation into a Service-Learning Module for Community Partners and Occupational Therapy Students
Declaration

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Summary

Research Aim: This study aimed to explore the outcomes and perceptions of community partners (CPs) and first and second-year occupational therapy (OT) students in an occupational therapy service-learning module.

Participants: Participants included two groups of first and second-year OT students and five groups of community partners; disabled people working with students during the service-learning module.

Methodology: This study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design over two phases. The quantitative strand utilised a pre- and post- survey design containing measures to (i) ascertain the nature of the service-learning relationship for OT students and CPs, (ii) measure the personal and professional development of OT students and the personal development of CPs (iii) explore the impact of service-learning on occupational competence and perceived value of occupations for OT students and CPs, (iv) measure any changes in OT students’ attitudes towards disability as a result of the service-learning experience. The qualitative strand examined CPs and OT students’ experiences and perceptions of service-learning through focus groups. In addition, first-year students’ reflective workbooks were analysed to explore students’ growth and learning.

Results: Three themes emerged from integrating and analysing the results: (i) ‘the nature of the service-learning relationship’, (ii) ‘occupational engagement and participation’, (iii) ‘outcomes of service-learning’.

The nature of the service-learning relationship: First and second-year OT students were more likely to define the service-learning partnership as a reciprocal relationship by the end of the service-learning module. In contrast, most CPs were uncertain of the term ‘service-learning partner’. For CPs, the relationships developed with the OT students were the primary means through which partners evaluated the service-learning experience. Positive relationships had characteristics of mutual acceptance, appreciation and respect, resulting in a sense of inclusion. Students spoke about relationships in terms of acceptance, appreciation and a sense of connectedness with their partners.
Students developed skills for managing relationships. The interaction with their CP was the primary catalyst for students’ learning during the service-learning module.

*Occupational engagement and participation:* Community partners’ occupational competence did not show any statistically significant improvement over the service-learning module; however, partners placed more value on occupations over time. First and second-year students improved in occupational competence and in the value of everyday occupations. For CPs, engaging in meaningful activity provided opportunities to share knowledge, try new things and find new roles. Students facilitated meaningful activities for their partners. Students experienced service-learning as meaningful learning experience, provided them with opportunities to learn from staff and overcome feelings of discomfort. In the reflective workbooks, discomfort was the primary emotion experienced during learning events.

*Outcomes of service-learning:* Community partners showed no statistically significant improvement in personal development scores, however, partners reported developing skills, experiencing personal development and feeling empowered. CPs reported enjoying the experience and making an impact on the students. First and second-year students showed statistically significant improvements in their attitude towards disability scores and a statistically significant increase in personal and professional development scores. OT students reported improving attitudes towards disability, developing new skills, gaining a deeper understanding of occupational therapy theory and real-world learning. In addition, OT students experienced personal and professional development outcomes. These results were mirrored in the reflective workbooks.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Introducing the Research

Service-learning is a pedagogical approach which aims to link academic learning to real-world issues through the provision of service to the community (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Geiger & Werner, 2004; Jacoby, 1996). Service-learning, whose roots are in social justice and social inclusion (Butin, 2007; Cipolle, 2010; Edelstein, 2011; Einfield & Collins, 2008) has long enjoyed the benefits of naming itself as a mutually advantageous pedagogy. Dewey’s theories of democracy and education run strong within the philosophy of service-learning (English & Stengal, 2010; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Pacho, 2015) but these concepts do not always transfer into practice. Service-learning literature is dominated by student outcomes and learning (Delano-Oriaran, Penick-Parks & Fondrie, 2017; Warren, 2012; Yorio & Ye, 2012). Though reciprocity is seen as the cornerstone of service-learning (Furco, 2000: Tinkler, Tinkler, Hausman & Strouse, 2014) true mutuality between individuals is rarely explored (Morton & Bergbauer, 2015, Steinman, 2011). The basic tenet of democracy is “for the people, by the people, of the people” (Lincoln, 1863). While some studies, though comparatively few, focus on community organisations (Hayward & Li, 2017: Kirby, Held, Jones & Lyle, 2018; Tinkler et al., 2014)—on their input, outcomes and partnerships—there is a lack of literature on the experiences of the people using those services. This cannot be a fulfilment of Democracy as Dewey posited. Even if the immediate partnerships are between university and organisation, the end goal should always be the individual community member. This is particularly tangible when the community partners are disabled people, whose voices for so long have been omitted from research and have lacked control over their own services (Albrecht, Seelman & Bury, 2001; Whalley-Hammel, 2015). This current study examines a different perspective to service-learning; placing the person before the service, aided by occupational therapy concepts.

This research aims to examine the service-learning module in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in Trinity College Dublin as a mechanism for developing reciprocal partnerships for occupational therapy (OT) students and individual community partners. This study will examine the outcomes and experience of the service-learning module for both individual community partners and students.
1.2. Introducing the Researcher

Transparency in research containing qualitative data is important as no one is without bias (Moravcsik, 2014). My experience with service-learning is specifically related to the module covered in this study.

As an occupational therapy student, I engaged in this service-learning module in my first and second year. My experience of engaging in service-learning as a student was profound, though it was not something I fully appreciated until years later. Both of my service-learning experiences involved working with older adults who had dementia and mental health issues. On reflection, service-learning taught me how to ‘be’ with people and to act as a genuine agent in the relationship, sincere to myself and the other person. I learned to re-define my understanding of occupation and meaningful activity beyond self-care, productivity and leisure. This experience of service-learning shaped my future practice, how I work with people and how I view occupation.

After graduating as an occupational therapist, I facilitated community-based projects for people with intellectual disability. OT students joined me while they were completing their service-learning module. The inclusion of students changed my own practice and my design of community projects; I observed the positive impact student participation had for my clients and how my clients impacted the students.

Based on client feedback from engaging in service-learning, the presence of students added a dimension to their interventions that could not be replicated with a therapist. Client feedback revealed students were seen as peers and the clients felt they could help the students, a valuable dynamic for clients and a rare opportunity for them in a therapy context.

From my own observations and reflections, I saw the breakdown of power dynamics and prejudices as the students, who began the experience thinking they were going to help disabled people, ended up heavily relying on and learning from those very people. Through clients’ feedback of the students I learned at times clients saw value in a students’ participation or presence when I thought a student was performing poorly. I realised I was evaluating students’ performance and impact based on my own criteria as a therapist which was not necessarily relevant to, or valued by, my clients. The realisation that my clients had a vastly different perspective on the experience of working with the students to my own became essential to the development of the focus of this study.
Prior to conducting this research, I also had experience facilitating the de-briefing sessions of the service-learning module. For one academic year, I facilitated first-year students in their service-learning module. I was responsible for listening to students’ experiences, challenging their attitudes and preconceptions to disability and assisting them in problem-solving. I also provided support for students who were finding the process difficult. This experience gave me insight into how and why students learn. I learned about students, their perspectives and attitudes towards the concepts of disability, health and occupation.

I believe my experience in service-learning gave me a unique insight into understanding the philosophy, the process and the potential outcomes of service-learning from different perspectives. It also allowed me to consider the important elements of service-learning for research. Thus far, my experiences of service-learning have been predominantly positive. It is important as a researcher that I recognise this as a potential bias that I will endeavour to omit as much as possible from the research.

1.3. Defining Service-Learning

The theoretical foundation for service-learning as a pedagogy is based on Dewey’s writings on participatory democracy and community-focused learning (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). The concept of service-learning has adopted many meanings as a pedagogical approach, and it is because of this, education researchers have struggled to create a single, concise definition (Furco, 1996). It appears the definition of service-learning is heavily influenced by any given researcher’s values and philosophical perspective. Jacoby, for example, (1996) emphasises the importance of the service-learning partnership and the relationship between “activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (p.5). While Jacoby’s definition of service-learning emphasises the importance of the service-learning partnership, it appears to be firmly rooted in the perspective of student learning and development. It implies a learning experience taking place within a context of community service and perhaps a lesser focus on the service to the community itself. In contrast, Brown (2001) describes service-learning as “expanding educational institutions’ (and the individual representatives of those institutions) participation in the community, especially in terms of fostering coalitions and creating responsive resources for and with that community…” (p.5). Brown’s interpretation
highlights the potential for influence of service-learning on the larger community instead of merely focusing on the impact of the individuals engaging in the service-learning process. While Brown’s definition appears to focus on extending away from the institution’s physical environment into the community, it still appears to hold an unequal balance in the role of the institute in regards to community service and the onus on the institute as the responsible party instead of playing an equal role. Brown’s (2001) definition of service-learning emphasises the relationship between the university and its students’ relationship with community services but does not account for the individuals within the community services. Another definition of service-learning was offered by Bringle, Hatcher and McIntosh (2006):

Service-learning is a course-based, credit-bearing education experience in which students participate in an organized service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. (p.12)

Bringle and colleagues’ definition offers a clear and concise definition of service-learning and its outcomes. It defines service-learning from a student-centric perspective which is a common theme within the various definitions of service-learning.

As expected from a high variance in definition, the implementation of an individual service-learning module can differ greatly depending on the context of the university, the academic paradigm and the service-learning module facilitator. Service-learning offers many opportunities to experience and engage with the greater community. For example, some service-learning programmes have required students to set up a non-profit association for refugees (Amick, Masric, Lewandowski & Ramire-Knight, 2011) and others placed students within charitable organisations (Schaffer, Hargate & Marong, 2015). Gitlow and Flecky (2005), outline a programme where students engage in art classes along with disabled individuals in the community. The decision to place students in such community partnerships arose from the respective philosophies and aims of the respective course organisers and department expectations.

Despite the potential differences in any given service-learning experience, the service-learning methodology maintains certain elements which always remain constant such as ‘learning by doing’ in a collaborative relationship with the community (Flecky & Gitlow, 2011). Service-learning integrates academic learning with relevant civic engagement and challenges the teacher, learner and the community partner to connect course materials to the greater community (Howard, 1998). In essence, service-learning is the attempt to combine learning in the classroom with real-world experiences through
service to the community and reflective consideration (Butin 2007, Boyle-Baise & Langford 2004, Maurrasse 2001) which is completed in such a way that each is strengthened by the other (Ehrlich, 1996). Service-learning is different from experiential learning in part due to its relationship to, and integration with, course content. It aims to work towards an understanding of course content. In essence, a well-designed service-learning experience enhances academic goals and enriches students’ civic development and often has social justice as a central outcome even when the goal of the educator is academic (Schwartz, 2011). Bittle, Dugglby and Eillison (2002) combined the ideas of multiples service-learning scholars to provide a clear structure of the four essential elements of service-learning; (a) meaningful service, (b) reciprocity, (c) development of leadership and (d) reflection.

1.4. Study of Occupation and Service-Learning in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in Trinity College Dublin

1.4.1. Study of Occupation module

‘The Study of Occupation’ is a compulsory year-long module for first and second-year occupational therapy students. The aim of this module is for students to gain an understanding of people as occupational beings and develop an appreciation of others’ interests, values, habits and routines (Wilcock, 1999). The Study of Occupation module has two elements; (i) a taught element where concepts related to occupation are explored and discussed within lectures and (ii) a practical element where students gain a real-world understanding of these theories through service-learning.

1.4.2. Service-learning partners

To achieve the module aims, service-learning requires students to meet with an individual from the community, who is referred to as a ‘community partner’. Within the literature this term is often used exclusively to represent community-based organisations (Abravanel, 2003; Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009; Hosman, 2014; Jacoby, 2003; Sausjord, 1995), however, ‘community partner’ can also refer to individuals (Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009).

Community partners who engage in this service-learning module are disabled people living within the community or who are from a different socio-economic background to the student. They become involved in service-learning through various avenues. Some
community partners engage with day services in the local community, others are enrolled in academic courses or in local clubs/groups. In addition, some community partners live in the local area and are not availing of community services but are known to the students. Community partners may be approached directly by the student or may learn about service-learning from staff working in the services. Alternatively, service-learning may be designed into the structure of the community partners’ services/courses. For example, one of the community partner groups involved in this study learned about health and fitness and developed coaching skills as a part of an academic course through playing sports with occupational therapy students.

1.4.3. The service in service-learning

Service-learning is based on the concept of mutuality; both parties should contribute to, and benefit from the experience. By engaging in activities which are meaningful for community partners, it is believed both parties can benefit from this service-learning experience. Meaning is unique to each person based on their own internal processes and experiences, and so it cannot be assumed (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2017; Weinblatt & Acreech-Barr, 2001). For students to understand the meaning behind the activities and to explore new meaningful activities, they must develop a collaborative relationship with their partner. The activities completed during service-learning are typically agreed upon between the community partner and the student, unless they are incorporated into the community partners’ course, in which case students and community partners work to complete the course aims together. These activities may include playing sports, learning Irish Sign Language, knitting, walking, talking, shopping, swimming, knitting or anything that is meaningful to the community partner.

1.4.4. The structure of service-learning

Service-learning is incorporated into the structure of the academic year. First year students complete service-learning over the course of two terms. Second year students complete service-learning for one term in the second half of the academic year. First and second year students are expected to meet with their community partners for approximately two hours a week to engage in meaningful activities together.

First-year students choose their own service-learning experiences. Each year there are a handful of service-learning experiences organised by the facilitator which students can apply to partake in. Alternatively, the student can choose their own service-learning experience. Second-year students are provided with a list of pre-organised service-learning experiences which they can choose from.
During service-learning, students attend an hour-long debriefing session on a weekly or fortnightly basis. In these sessions, the facilitator provides support to students and explores and challenges students’ thoughts and behaviours relating to occupation, health, disability and students’ experiences in service-learning.

Students are required to keep reflective journals during service-learning where they can explore their own thoughts, feelings and learning. These journals can be used to prepare students for the debriefing sessions and make sense of their experiences.

1.4.5. Assessing service-learning

First-year students are assessed on their reflective journals at the end of the year for the quality of their reflections but not for their content. Students are assessed particularly on the demonstration of their community partner as an occupational being.

Second-year students are assessed through an assignment at the end of the year where they are required to complete a presentation demonstrating the students’ learning and experience working with the community partner. This includes demonstrating knowledge about the person, the ability to talk about occupational therapy models and theory and to describe personal development and learning.

1.5. Social Justice and Social Inclusion in Service-Learning

Service-learning has its roots in social justice and social inclusion, stemming from the philosophy of democracy (Megivern, 2010). Service-learning aims to promote settings where individuals are both self-determining by acting for themselves and interdependent through acting for others (Bell, 1997). The Civil Rights movements and John Dewey’s works on education and democracy contributed to the development of the service-learning pedagogy. From these philosophical underpinnings, service-learning is naturally aligned with the concept of social justice, and it is both a goal of service-learning and is the process of service-learning itself (Bell, 2000).

The concept of social justice has become increasingly important in modern society to challenge the inequalities implicit within many traditional systems of sexism, racism, ableism and classism (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2013). Despite its widespread use, the meaning of social justice has been greatly debated and has no single definition. Jost and Kay (2010) defined social justice as:
a state of affairs in which (a) benefits and burdens in society are dispersed in accordance with some allocation principle (or set of principles); (b) procedures, norms and rules that govern political and other forms of decision making preserve the basic rights, liberties and entitlements of individuals and groups; and (c) human beings (and perhaps other species) are treated with dignity and respect not only by authorities but also by other relevant social actors, including fellow citizens (p.1122)

Jost and Kay’s definition provides a succinct and inclusive explanation of social justice not only from a societal focus but also at an individual level, however; it is by no means the definitive definition of social justice. The importance of social justice has increased greatly despite the lack of a single formal definition, and therefore, the actions towards achieving social justice are varied depending on the discipline and profession. In occupational therapy, to focus on social justice is to enable “people to participate as valued members of society despite diverse or limited occupational potential.” (Townsend, 1993, p.176). The concept of social justice in occupational therapy allows for an individualised, pragmatic approach. It appears to be an individual perspective on a greater theory of societal social justice which is naturally aligned with Bell’s (1997) definition of social justice as the “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (p.21).

Social justice and service-learning both stem from an ethos of social change and the shift from the charity paradigm to addressing systemic social inequality (Eyler & Gyles, 1999). Social justice is often used to refer to a societal state of opportunity, such as seen from Bell’s (1997) and Jost and Kay’s (2010) definitions. Other academics have attempted to define the person as a catalyst for social justice (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968; Friesen, 2007)

In service-learning social justice can be promoted through non-traditional learning outcomes such as developmental and social skills, academic achievement and civic engagement (Schwartz, 2011). Bell (2000) stated that social justice is a goal and a process of service-learning and various researchers have assumed that social justice as a concept in service-learning is inevitable due to their natural alignment (Jacoby, 1996; Rosenberger, 2000; Warren, 1998). While it appears that service-learning can improve social justice, some researchers have cautioned the perception of social justice as an inevitable by-product of service-learning. Instead, it has been suggested that service-learning can have no impact or even produce negative outcomes if it is not managed appropriately. Some studies have found that if the service-learning is not managed well, students may not
experience a positive change in attitudes and their prejudiced and stereotypes may become further entrenched (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Green 2001; Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorski 2005; Vaccaro, 2009). According to Jacoby and Dean (2010), when service-learning is handled poorly it can “reinforce students’ stereotypes [and] elicit negative behaviours” (p.32), which can in turn cause challenges when students engage with other communities (Vaccaro, 2009). Therefore, when considering service-learning experiences, it would appear to be imperative to pay attention to the concept of social justice. Megivern (2010) suggests a social justice-focused service-learning experience to encourage students to think about their privileges without trying to enforce a single, authoritative perspective of social justice governed by the facilitator’s agenda.

Like social justice, social inclusion is an important concept in service-learning and has many definitions within the literature depending on the area in which it is discussed. The United Nations has defined social inclusion as “the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.” (p.17). Social inclusion in this study is important in that it is set within the concept of education, occupational therapy and service-learning, all of which have their own interpretations of what constitutes a socially inclusive system. These differences have implications regarding practice and the steps taken to ensure social inclusion.

Social inclusion is not well defined in an education perspective, and the meaning is often implied but not defined (Cameron, 2006), though attempts have been made to explain the concept. Lerner (2000) argued that social inclusion involves the placement of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. While this is one element of social inclusion, it is not the only method of inclusion. In contrast, social inclusion in occupational therapy is defined as;

…a concept that aims to ensure that all people have access to the same rights, services and benefits as well as access to employment and work, income and economic resources, material resources, education and skills, health, housing, social resources, community resources, and personal safety. Social inclusion recognizes and values diversity, by focusing on people’s sense of belonging and ensuring social equality and participation. Social inclusion can impact the delivery of national, regional and local programs and services to meet the needs of a diverse clientele (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, n.d).

The occupational therapy perspective of social inclusion recognises the greater context of society and the many elements that facilitate or obstruct the experiences of
social inclusion. This perspective also offers a practical approach to fostering social inclusion through occupational participation (Whiteford, 2011, Whiteford & Hocking, 2012).

Social exclusion is the poverty of inclusion that occurs in a society where there exists many communities which are solitary and self-contained, ranging from nuclear families to international society (Alfarandi, 1989). People are included in these communities through the relationships they develop which then binds them to others with mutual values and duties (Spicker, 2013). Those who are only peripherally linked to those communities are considered marginalised, and those who are not linked are considered excluded. Exclusion, therefore, can be avoided by encouraging relationships between these communities (Spicker, 2013). Spicker’s theory of community and marginalisation would suggest that service-learning may be an effective method of promoting social inclusion through the methodology of creating relationships between different communities.

As seen from the different perspectives on social inclusion mentioned above, it is a multi-faceted concept which reaches beyond the classroom and has implications in the greater context of society. According to the Irish Presidency (2013) “Social inclusion requires a comprehensive and cross sectoral approach to address the multi-faceted nature of marginalisation and exclusion in society” (p.1). Therefore, regardless of the discipline, it is important to have an awareness of the greater context of social inclusion on a societal level.

1.6. **Democracy, Critical Pragmatism and Phenomenology**

The three theoretically concepts of democracy (Dewey,1888/1997), pragmatism (Dewey,1899/2008) and phenomenology (Smith, Jarmon & Obsborne, 1999) underpin this research. Each one has contributed to the formulation of the design, the analysis of the literature, and the understanding of the results. In this section, the three concepts will be discussed as the underpinnings and inspiration of this research.

1.6.1. **Democracy**

Service-learning has its roots in the concept of democracy. For Dewey, democracy far transcends political governing. Democracy is the expression of a shared moral and spiritual consciousness among communities of people who, in essence, sign a contract to unite through shared purpose, intention and meaning (Dewey, 1888/1997). Democracy,
according to Dewey, is about growth and change (Dewey, 1938/1997). Democratic education is the method through which that change occurs (Dewey, 1916/1997). Dewey believed that every person possesses infinite potential and a unique ‘personhood’ which people aim to realize within themselves (Micheletti, 2011). It is that personhood which is the heart of democracy and the reason for change in society (Dewey, 1888/1997). Dewey believed that education was fundamentally social (Munoz & Munoz, 1998). Through interaction with others, communities can learn from each other, grow and improve themselves based on self-reflection of values, behaviours, beliefs and customs (Dewey, 1916/1997). By engaging in this process, the person learns and grows and through equipping citizens to make informed, intelligent decisions and changes for the greater good, society learns and grows (van der Ploeg, 2016). The concepts behind Dewey’s democratic beliefs which are important to this study are; interaction, equality, the unique personhood of each person and reflection. These concepts have inspired the research design, the data collection methods and the analysis of the results, through a focus on individual experiences and outcomes, and through the data collection methods. Democracy is the lens through which the results of this study are analysed.

1.6.2. Critical Pragmatism

For Dewey, education should consistently aim towards the future and is, therefore, a means of preparing students to cope with the new forthcoming reality (Dewey, 1899/2008; Dewey, 1916/1997). Critical pragmatism recognises the uncertainty of a dynamic society in constant flux, and reasons that all education should be applicable and effective in the face of the uncertain future (Kadlec, 2007). Effective education, from a critical pragmatist perspective, is to stay informed of the lived experiences of those that are affected by it, and change educative practices as needed (Kadlec, 2007). This perspective is vital to service-learning research, as not only is it concerned with the outcomes and learning for students, but it aims to work with marginalised groups to promote inclusion and social justice.

As Dewey’s democratic education believed in breaking down these societal power inequalities (Dewey, 1938/1997), critical pragmatism appears to be well suited. Critical pragmatism is an accessible lens to this research as it often takes the perspective of concerning itself with a human focus on philosophy (Dewey, 1946), which, in a pedagogy based around democracy and people appears to be vital. To fully understand service-learning, the experiences of people must also be gained.
1.6.3. Phenomenology

Historically, pragmatism and phenomenology were considered idealistically opposed due to their independent development (Hertz, 1956/1995; Pierce, 1966). While pragmatism can be seen as deductive and phenomenology as inductive, both are concerned with the ‘lived experience’. Phenomenology delves into how humans experience the world. It provides researchers with the opportunity to empathise and understand the subjective experiences of participants (Smith, Jarmon & Osborne, 1999). Merleau-Ponty (1962) recognised the importance of providing context to human consciousness as an approach to understanding meaning. This is similar to the perspective of pragmatism (Rosenthal & Bourgeois, 1980). Both perspectives are valuable for understanding the experience of service-learning. Within the current body of service-learning literature, the community voices and how they experience service-learning is lacking. To compensate for the greater imbalance, this study aims to give ample space to the participant voices to later make sense of their experiences in the greater pragmatic lens of service-learning research. Therefore, to understand the effectiveness of a service-learning module, a phenomenological approach has been chosen.

1.7. Research Questions

This research aimed to examine the impact and perceptions of the service-learning module in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in Trinity College Dublin. To explore this, research questions were generated for community partners and occupational therapy students based on pre-existing literature for service-learning outcomes.

1.7.1. Research questions for community partners

1. What do community partners understand about the term ‘service-learning partner’ and what is their understanding of the nature of the service-learning relationship?
2. What is the impact of a ‘service-learning’ learning environment on personal development?
3. How does service-learning impact the occupational engagement and participation?
1.7.2. **Research questions for students**

1. What do students understand about the term ‘service-learning partner’ and what is their understanding of the nature of the service-learning relationship?
2. What is the impact of a ‘service-learning’ learning environment on students’ personal and professional development?
3. What is the impact of a ‘service-learning’ environment on students’ attitudes towards disability?
4. How does service-learning impact the occupational engagement and participation for students?
5. How do OT students demonstrate their growth and learning using guided reflection?

1.8. **Study Design**

This study is a mixed methods parallel convergent design, meaning that there are two strands which will be examined:

- The quantitative strand will provide pre- and post- measures relating to occupational competence and values, attitudes towards disability, personal and professional development, and the service-learning partnership.
- The qualitative strand will examine the same areas using focus groups and reflective workbooks.

The participants for this study include first and second-year OT students and the community partners who have engaged in the service-learning module in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in Trinity College Dublin. The data collection took place over the course of two years. Quantitative data were analysed using a mix of parametric and non-parametric statistical analysis. The qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis.

1.9. **Chapter 1 – Cultural and Political Background**

This chapter will explain the cultural and political background which led to the formation of service-learning module being examined. It follows the conception of inclusive education and the policies which informed it from the North American perspective, the European perspective and the Irish perspective.
1.10. Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter will explore the current literature in service-learning. The chapter will discuss the general literature context. It will then discuss the literature for student outcomes and experience. Literature related to community partners as organisations will then be discussed. Following from that, individual community partner outcomes will be explored. The gap in the literature in terms of partnerships with individual community partners will be identified. The findings from the literature review will be summarised.

1.11. Chapter 3—Methodology

The methodology chapter will reiterate the research aims. The mixed methods research design will be described and justified. The chapter will then be categorised into Phase 1 and Phase 2 to show the refinement of the research question over the course of the study. In each section, the participants, the recruitment methods and the ethical considerations will be described. The measures and methods will be discussed and justified. Finally, the method of data analysis will be described.

1.12. Chapter 4—Community Partner Results

The first results chapter will focus on the community partner results. The quantitative results from the community partners’ pre- and post-service-learning surveys will be described first. The qualitative results from the focus groups will then be explained. A summary of each section will be provided.

1.13. Chapter 5—OT student Results

The OT student results chapter will begin with the quantitative results from the pre- and post-service-learning surveys. The qualitative results from the focus groups and the students’ reflective workbooks will then be described. A summary of each section will be provided.
1.14. **Chapter 6—Integrating the Results**

This short chapter will describe the main findings from the results as they relate to the research questions. The results will be triangulated and integrated into three overarching themes for the discussion: ‘the service-learning relationship’, ‘service-learning partners as occupational beings’ and ‘service-learning outcomes’.

1.15. **Chapter 7—Discussion**

In the final chapter, the findings will be discussed in relation to the literature. The results will be made sense of through the use of occupational therapy theory, disability studies theory, Dewey’s theory of democracy and other relevant service-learning theory. The discussion will be synthesised to draw conclusions regarding the meaning of the data. The study’s limitations will be stated and areas for further research will be recommended.
2. Chapter 2 – The Cultural and Political Background

2.1. Introduction

Many universities and colleges were founded on the basic philosophical belief that the institute should serve the community in addition to providing education (Flecky & Gitlow, 2010). Institutions of education viewed ‘service’ as providing education for its citizens through research and the accrual of knowledge that is both applied and conceptual (Cameron, 1997). Despite the goal of serving the community, however, institutions of education have traditionally been isolated from the community and inaccessible to all but the most privileged (Tsui, 2003; Maxwell & Dorrity, 2009). There have been many issues accessing higher education due to race (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009), gender (Gordon, 1990), social-economic status (Mallon & Healy, 2012) and disability (Rothstein, 2010). Due to various influences, both in the U.S.A and in Europe, education in Ireland has moved from the model of higher education as an elitist privilege to the fulfilment of a human right.

In this chapter, the cultural and political background will be discussed to provide context for the research.

2.2. The North American Context

In the U.S.A, institutes of higher education were founded with heavy influences from the European educational models and traditions. Oxford, Cambridge, Paris and Bologna (Haskins, 1965) provided the original models for the foundation of the American higher education system. Harvard college, for example, took its statutes directly from the University of Cambridge (Shipton, 1936). Over time the European models were adapted to develop America’s own unique identity as a system of higher education (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004). For many years after, university placements were exclusively available to upper class citizens. To be accepted, universities required students to be proficient in Latin, receive preparatory training through private tutors or religious ministers and pass highly competitive entrance exams (Spady, 2011). Due to the Puritan ideals that governed the universities of this time, women too were excluded from such institutions (Mays, 2004).
This state of exclusivity continued in American higher education until a paradigm shift that began with the emergence of a new perspectives and philosophies on learning. John Dewey is seen as one of the most influential figures of modern education and has often been cited as the father of progressive education (Zilversmit, 1993). Dewey was among one of the first people to champion the inclusion of people from different cultures into education (Fallace, 2012), which marked the beginnings of inclusive education for all, regardless of gender, race, community, culture or disability. According to Dewey, education should be open to all and have meaning for the individual and the society (Dewey, 1938/1997). Dewey’s work on education and democracy established a new philosophy around education which inspired novel pedagogical approaches such as experiential learning, civic education and service-learning (Gyles & Eyler, 1994). Dewey provided a new lens for education, disagreeing with long-held beliefs that people should be educated according to their place in society. Instead, it was argued that people are holistic beings who learn best by engaging their mind, body, spirit, experience, and knowledge (Peterson, 2009). Dewey believed that a major mechanism for personal growth was reflection of past experiences, beliefs and ideals (Noddings, 1998). The works of Dewey, Democracy and Education (1916) and Experience and Education (1938), among others, set the foundations for service-learning.

Over time, Dewey’s conceptual framework gradually shifted from his beginnings in linear historicism to the cultural pluralist perspective. Cultural pluralism sees the value and intrinsic worth in different cultures and their processes (Hogg & McComb, 1969), allowing each culture to retain its identity while being accepted as a part of the larger society. The cultural pluralist perspective celebrated differences between communities and went hand in hand with the concept of inclusion and equal rights.

Supported by cultural pluralism, new ideas around education began to form. Nearly two decades after Democracy and Education was written, Dewey published Experience and Education (1938). This was the result of Dewey’s transition from linear historicism to plural culturalism and a revision of his own ideals due to his own experiences, peer criticism and feedback from various sources (Kolko, 1957). Dewey challenged the traditional ideals of disciplined, structured, and didactic education and instead suggested a student-focused, relatively unstructured classroom. Dewey’s proposals for the education system relied on the subjective experience of the student as a mechanism for learning through reflection through the interaction of two concepts; (a) continuity, the concept that a person’s experiences will influence their future, and (b) interaction, the situational influence on one’s experiences (Dewey, 1938/1997).
Changing the paradigm from an institution-focused perspective of education to a student-focused perspective, along with an appreciation for the subjective experiences of the students made way for the inclusion of new thinking into the education system. It created a space for open-mindedness to a different kind of student who did not fit into the traditional model of academia.

Dewey’s influence was integral to the modern day higher educational system. Equally important was the emergence of social-reform movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Disability Rights Movement of the 1960s (Pollack, 1999; Albrecht, Seelman & Bury, 2001). These movements helped to reform educational policy and practice.

The First and Second World Wars were a catalyst for social change and the Civil Rights movements in higher education and the broader North American society. Many soldiers presented a problem for the government regarding reintegrating veterans with physical, emotional and psychological issues into society. Veterans of the First World War had high levels of unemployment and difficulty returning to normal life. Veterans demanded benefits for serving in the war and protested the lack of care provided by the government (Batten, 2011).

The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the G.I Bill, was created in response to this. The purpose of the G.I Bill was two-fold; it aimed to encourage the smooth transitioning of servicemen into civilian life and to boost the American economy by including more educated citizens into the workforce. The G.I Bill contained provisions that allowed veterans to receive unemployment benefits, take out loans, or attend high school, college or vocational training (Mettler, 2005). Tuition was paid directly to each veteran, and they were given a stipend to cover living costs in addition to their fees regardless of race or socio-economic background (Serow, 2004). The G.I Bill made higher education accessible for vast numbers of working-class men who would not have been able to afford the cost and for men from ethnic minorities who served in the war. The vast number of veterans enrolled in universities led to a change in perspective about what a university student should be. It challenged long-held conceptions of university students being primarily upper-class, male, white and Protestant (Mettler, 2005).

The Civil Rights movement began in the U.S. in the mid 1950’s and turned into a mass movement which held momentous attention until the mid-1960’s (Geschwender & Geschwender, 1973). The Civil Rights movements were the culmination of tensions growing within American society around the inequality of treatment based on race, gender
and class since the very beginning of the American state when, in the Declaration of Independence (1776), Thomas Jefferson proclaimed that “all men are created equal”.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 granted all Americans the right to vote; it prohibited discrimination in jobs or public accommodations based on race, colour, religion, or national origin. In addition, the Act allowed the federal government the authority to enforce access to African Americans and other people of colour while the Immigration Act of 1965 opened U.S. borders to new sections of the globe. These movements of social inclusion greatly affected the disabled community in America and encouraged disabled people to become organised and speak out against inequality (Rimmerman, 2013).

Before the 1960s, the federal government had very little input in the education of children with disabilities (Salvatore, 2001). Taking place within the culture of the civil rights movements, John F. Kennedy was elected as President in the 1960 elections. Kennedy was a vocal advocate for equality and civil rights. In particular, the Kennedy family had a vested interest in rights for intellectual disability. Kennedy’s dedication to equality led significant changes in the U.S law and wider society. Kennedy enacted the Presidential Panel on Mental Retardation in 1962 (Braddock, 2007) which gathered data and made recommendations for change. In 1962, Kennedy signed the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Reform Act and the Mental Retardation Planning Amendment in 1963 (Turnbull, 2012).

With the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, congress began to take small steps at that point to make provisions for educating these children by awarding funds to develop academic facilities for training teaching staff. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 also provided funding for children who would not be able to ‘succeed’ in regular vocation programmes due to disability (Salvatore, 2001).

Later, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 re-examined and reformed the services provided to disabled people. This act aimed to promote active inclusion and prevent discrimination on the grounds of disability within any federally funded service including employment and education.

In 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was brought into law alongside the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA). The EHA’s primary aims were to ensure that all children with disabilities have access to public education and related services, to ensure that their rights are protected, to assist the states and localities to provide education and to ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate those children. IDEA served as an expansion of the rights and services set out in the EHA. Zames Fleischer & Zames (2005) noted, however, the act was never fully funded.
It was not until 1990 when Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) the U.S achieved its first comprehensive law that addressed the needs of disabled people. The act prohibited discrimination in employment, public services, public accommodations and telecommunications for disabled people (Dickey & Satcher, 1991).

In education, appeals for inclusion stem from the argument that a singular, European-based perspective has had negative consequences for individual students and larger society. Supporters of diversity in higher education argued that excluding diverse perspectives in the curriculum has stunted students’ learning, leaving them poorly prepared to function in an increasingly diverse democracy (Astin, 1993; Espendsale & Radford, 2009; Harper & Yeung, 2013). The very purpose of higher education is to deepen students’ understanding of what is known, how it has come to be known and how to build on previous knowledge to create new knowledge, which is thus undermined by eliminating the voice of those whose experiences differed from those traditionally represented. Such exclusions reveal an inconsistency between the rhetoric and the practice of democracy (Schmitz, 1992). Correcting this inconsistency later became the cornerstone of the civil rights, women’s rights and other movements that have pushed the higher education community to offer a more inclusive curriculum.

Historically, the political and legal context of the environment has played a crucial role in the diversification of higher education (Thomson, 2008). As a result of these societal reforms, universities were obliged to increase their accessibility and become inclusive to new groups of people. Social inclusion policies have an overall aim to increase the participation in work and society generally for all people. For disabled people social inclusion policies also aim to enable full and meaningful lives. Education is integral to achieving these aims (Inclusion Ireland, 2013).

2.3. The European Context

Although the European Union (EU) never intended it to be a core focus, social policy began to emerge as an area of importance from 1957 onwards when the rate of integration into the EU increased (Laffan & O’Mahony, 2008). It is no surprise that social inclusion and social justice emerged from the European Union when their main goal had always been to unite the countries within the continent of Europe and create an inclusive society.
Today, EU’s social policy aims to promote employment, improve living and working conditions, provide an appropriate level of social protection and develop measures to combat exclusion. Equality is a central concept in the EU’s philosophies, and many groups look to the EU to further social rights (Laffan & O’Mahony, 2008).

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education was founded in 1996 with the aim to create and promote policies for special needs and inclusive education (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2015). Since their inception, they have helped countries implement inclusive education in line with the EU policies set out in the Education & Training 2020 programme and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

The Education & Training 2020 strategic framework has four main objectives; to make lifelong learning a reality, to improve the quality of education and training, to promote equity social cohesion and active citizenship and to enhance creativity and innovation at all levels of education and training. The programme outlines that all education and training policy should enable all citizens to benefit from quality education and be able to retrain and maintain the knowledge, skills and competences that are necessary for employment, inclusion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment. This policy seeks to lessen the inequalities of pupils from poor socio-economic backgrounds, immigrant backgrounds and disabilities. Representatives from the Education and Training programme work closely with individual states to assist in the development of social policies under the strategic objectives. Current Irish education policy has relied heavily on the above resources for support in their development. The strategic framework leaves primary responsibility for policy on rights and services for disabled people to national governments, but it does ban discrimination on the grounds of disability. It is concerned with improving co-operation between the member states, encouraging exchange and development of information and good practice in the EU, raising awareness of disability issues and ensuring that disability issues are taken into account in all EU legislation and policies (European Commission, 2013).

In 2007 the European Union officially recognised the first human rights agency; the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA). The objective of the FRA is to provide assistance and expertise to the relevant institutions of the EU and the Member States when implementing EU law (Council of the European Union, 2007). The FRA functions in such a way that it monitors legal developments and intervenes in the process if it appears to be in violation of fundamental rights (Sokhi-Bulley, 2011).
The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is an international agreement among States setting out human rights and corresponding obligations on States. The Convention began in 2008 and came into existence through a forceful call from persons with disabilities around the world to have their human rights respected, protected and fulfilled on an equal basis with others. Its main message is that persons with disabilities are entitled to the full spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination. The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure human rights, full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and respect for inherent dignity. The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is the first Convention that the EU has joined. It has been signed by all twenty-eight countries in the European Union though not all countries have ratified it as of yet (European Commission, 2014).

The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 was enacted to adopt a new way to break down the barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating in society on an equal basis. It identifies eight main measures to be undertaken by 2020. These measures include; to ensure accessibility to goods, services and assistive devices for people with disabilities. To achieve full participation of disabled people in society by enabling them to enjoy all the benefits of the EU citizenship, removing administrative and attitudinal barriers to full participation and providing high quality community-based services including access to personal assistance. To eradicate discrimination of grounds of disability. To enable many more disabled people to earn their living in the open labour market. To promote inclusive education and lifelong learning for disabled students. To promote decent living conditions for disabled people. To foster equal access to health services and related facilities for disabled people. To promote the rights of people with disabilities within the EU external action (European Commission, 2010). The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 is working to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

2.4. The Irish Context

The European Union played a pivotal role in the creation and development of modern Irish social policy. To understand the educational system, it is necessary to understand the political and cultural history. Three significant factors were (a) the church presence within Ireland, (b) the inherited education system from the British rule and (c) the social policies
in the newly conceived Irish state. The changes in Irish social and educational policy were formulated within the greater world context both inspired by The United States and Europe.

The Irish Free State was formed in 1922. Having previously taken instruction from Britain regarding social issues, health and education, the newly formed government had to devise their own philosophies and practices. Eamonn de Valera, a staunch Roman Catholic and a political conservative, dismantled the existing constitutional structures when he took power in 1932 (O’Tuama, 2011). *Bunreacht na hEireann* (1937), the Irish Constitution, outlines the fundamental rights of its citizens. These rights include but are not limited to; equality before the law, the right to life, personal liberty, freedom of expression, the right to fair procedures, bodily integrity, the right to privacy, the right to earn a livelihood, and the rights of the family.

While the Catholic Church has always maintained a strong hold on Irish culture, de Valera’s faith in the church helped to consolidate its power in the new Free State (Ó Tuama, 2011). When drafting the Constitution, de Valera included the assistance of two Catholic priests (Keogh & McCarthy, 2007), showing the foothold the church had in the Free State from its inception.

With a strong hold on Irish culture and the main provider of social services, the Roman Catholic Church had a large influence on social policy in Ireland for many years. The Irish State was disinterested in health, education and social services, and although it financed intellectual disability services, it had little control over them (Sweeney, 2010). Accountability for the quality of care was, therefore, governed by the rule of the religious orders and by their responsibility to their superiors which resulted in an unequal standard of care (Ryan, 1999). By the 1950s, the pace of expansion of intellectual disability specific services outstripped available religious staff which led to the introduction of other professions such as nurses into the services (Sweeney, 2010). Concurrently the ‘Parent and Friends Association’ was developed, which met the needs of families who did not wish to avail of existing institutional care.

In the 1960s, the ‘family and friends’ services saw rapid growth which helped to raise awareness and local interest in disability matters. Ultimately, this interest led to the production of a Government White Paper, *The Problem of the Mentally Handicapped* (Department of Health, 1960) which acknowledged and made provisions for doubling the number of services to meet the growing need. In 1965 the Commission of Inquiry into Mental Handicap (Department of Health, 1965) marked a fundamental paradigm shift in disability supports by recognising that community care afforded better outcomes to
service-users than those in institutional settings. The Commission stressed that the services should be run through voluntary bodies and that the state should be in charge of organising the activities of the organisations involved (Linehan et al., 2014).

By the time Ireland was voted into the European Union in 1973, the value and emphasis on social inclusion and justice in Europe was well established. It soon became apparent that Irish social policy was significantly behind mainstream European developments (Murphy, 2014). To secure its membership in the European Union, Ireland needed to immediately make key domestic social policy changes (O’Donnell, 2000).

Irish legislation first began to reflect the changing times through The Higher Education Authorities Act (1971) which initiated the Higher Education Authority (HEA). One of the HEA’s five general functions was to promote the attainment of equal opportunity in higher education. The Education Act of 1998 which was underpinned by the goal of providing the opportunity of education to every person in the state including those with a disability. The Education Act was created within an international context where UNESCO (1994) began its ‘Education for All’ (EFA) movement which created a set of international policies for increasing access to and participation within education across the world. The Education Act provided the groundwork for improving the accessibility of education to all students by creating the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). This council’s role was to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services and disseminate information on best practice concerning the education of children with special educational needs. Finally, it was responsible for reviewing education provision for adults with disabilities (National Council for Special Education 2013).

In 2004 the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act was conceived in the context of other relevant legislation including the Education Act, 1998, the Equal Status Act, 2000-2004 and the Disability Act, 2005 as well as various international agreements and human rights provisions. The EPSEN Act provided guidelines for inclusive education for children of primary and post-primary age and, where possible, mainstream education was to be provided (National Council for Special Education, 2014).

In recent years, the understanding of inclusion has begun to move away from an exclusive focus on special educational needs towards an understanding that inclusion concerns every child and adult within schools and wider society. The National Report for Ireland on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (2010) outlined the main objective of promoting social cohesion, equality and equal opportunities for everyone through social protection systems and social inclusion policies. It aimed for access for all
to the resources, rights and services needed for participation in society, preventing and addressing exclusion and fighting all forms of discrimination leading to exclusion. The National Report for Ireland on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion’s policy objective is to provide equal access to quality work and learning opportunities for all. The vision, as set out in *Towards 2016* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006), is of an Ireland where people with disabilities have, to the greatest extent possible, the opportunity to live a full life with their families and as part of their local community, free from discrimination.

It is because of the above laws that Irish third-level institutions were required to examine and amend their missions, policies, and organisational structures. It is within that context that Trinity College Dublin (TCD) has developed The Access and Equality Policy, The Dignity and Respect Policy, The Ethics Policy and The Equality Policy (2011). All of these policies focus on equal opportunity and access for students and respect for the differences of all students and staff.

The latest publication of Trinity College Dublin’s Strategic Plan 2014-2019 is firmly based on the values of the existing education policies. The Strategic Plan acknowledges the importance of partnerships and providing “equal opportunity to all with the talent and ambition to succeed” (2014, p.2). The Strategic Plan highlights the importance of inclusion and its commitment to social inclusion and access programmes. The Strategic Plan shows the institution’s commitment to working with the community and aims to “embed a culture of volunteering, public service and engagement” (p.74) especially through the involvement with the Campus Engage National Network.

Service-learning has been run in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy since the 1990s. In connection with the larger European initiative Project Career, the first service-learning module was conducted through Project Interact (1998). Project Interact ran for two years and consisted of forty students on the programme; 30 first-year OT students and 10 adult students with intellectual disability. One of the aims of the pilot programme was to integrate adults with moderate intellectual disabilities into mainstream certified vocational education. At the end of the programme, twenty students with intellectual disabilities received a certificate from the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA).

Co-ordinators of the project reported many beneficial outcomes that arose from the programme including learning interpersonal skills and challenging of values and beliefs (MacCobb & Keane, 1998). The students with intellectual disability found new roles outside of the programme, became more vocal and challenged their right to express
themselves, becoming more confident and independent. Importantly, social inclusion and integration in the college with increased engagement in the college campus services was an outcome and students challenging their right to partake in the college emerged (MacCobb & Keane, 1998). Project Interact was deemed to be successful, and because of this, the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in TCD continued to run the service-learning module within the department with the first and second-year students. Today the service-learning module is still run in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy as a part of the Study of Occupation module for first and second-year students.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter detailed the history of inclusion in society and higher education from the perspective of The United States, The European Union and Ireland. Though many institutes of higher education have claimed to serve the community, it is only relatively recently that inclusive education has been actively sought after. This is thanks to the incremental steps taken, originating with the shift in thinking from philosophers such as John Dewey, through to the changing political and cultural climates in the U.S, the EU and Ireland. It is because of these historical changes that service-learning is currently situated in a context which offers opportunities to promote social inclusion and social justice and further democratic goals.
3. Chapter 3 – Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will provide a summary and analysis of the literature that is relevant to service-learning in higher education. It will discuss how the current study is situated in the context of a broader conversation on service-learning and it will outline the search terms and methodology. Service-learning, its use of reflection and the outcomes in higher education will be discussed. How service-learning relations to occupational therapy will be explored.

Literature focusing on the experiences and outcomes of service-learning programmes for community partners will be explored, and it will discuss instances of service-learning relationships as a means for the service-learning experience. Finally, it will address the current gap in the literature and explain how this study aims to address the gap.

The literature in this study was obtained through systematically searching relevant databases and journals. For the full search methodology and list of search terms see Appendix A.

3.2. Service-Learning and Higher Education

Service-learning is used as a tool to promote university aims of serving the community and promoting relationships, while acting as a learning tool for students (Berasategi, Alonso & Roman, 2016; Furco, 1996; Einfield & Collins, 2008; Jacoby, 1996; Kenny, Simon, Kiley-Brabeck & Lerner, 2002). Service-learning’s popularity in higher education grew within a context of engaged scholarship (Boyer, 1990) which has also encouraged practices of community-based learning, undergraduate research and experiential learning (Butin, 2006). The scholarship of engagement model was an attempt by Boyer (1990) to re-evaluate universities’ practices of community engagement to ensure social justice was being served (Boyer, 1996; Butin, 2006; Mitchell, 2010). Service-learning is believed to have social justice is inherent in the processes and outcomes (Gijon Casares, 2012; Koch, Ross, Wendell, & Aleksandrova-Howell 2014; Toporek & Worthington, 2014), which derives from its origins in democracy, critical pragmatism and the context of civil rights (Schwartz, 2011). Reciprocity is a central concept of the philosophy of service-learning. Social justice is achieved not only from the service to the community but from the aim to
share power and equalise the relationship by appreciating the contribution of both parties (Butin, 2007; Mitchell, 2008). The relationship in service-learning is intended support and encourage shared service and shared learning between all parties (Jacoby, 1996). Indeed, Dewey’s principles that inspired service-learning describe the importance of education as a method of providing students with discipline, social efficiency and personal development (Dewey, 1916/1997). These qualities would give students the understanding and knowledge of citizenship that would encourage students to act in service beyond their own immediate interests (Dewey, 1916/1997). It was through this process that students could become citizens and work together in a greater democratic community. Dewey believed that it was necessary for citizenship to be encouraged if Democracy was to continue to exist (Dewey, 1916/1997). Such learning, however, could only be achieved through flexible guidance which was cognizant of the students’ needs (Dewey, 1902; McDermott, 1981). Dewey believed action and thinking were inseparable in experiential learning and reflection was the mechanism for learning (Dewey, 1910).

Reflection occurs when experiences are processed using guided thinking and application of theory (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985). It is an important element of any experiential learning and in service-learning is it integral to the learning process (Boyle-Baise et al., 2006; Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Connors & Seifer, 2005; Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983). Deweyan inquiry states that learning occurs at times when a person is faced with a genuine issue. As a result, the person experiences disruption or discomfort which then incites the genuine desire to resolve the problem (Dewey, 1910; Kadlec, 2007). Dewey’s critical reflection aims to promote the ability to identify structural barriers to democracy and to formulate new opportunities to challenge and eradicate those barriers (Kadlec, 2007). Inspired by Dewey’s approach to reflection, Schön (1983) and Kolb (1984) formulated their theories of learning and reflection. Kolb’s learning cycle (1984) has four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Kolb claims that learning comes from experience and reflection on those experiences (1984) however, it does not allow for meta-reflection—the act of reflecting on reflection (Gergen, 1992). Schön, however, may have found a solution for this. Based on the same assumptions of disruption as Dewey, Schön described the reflective proves as one where:

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to
generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation. (p.68)

Schön built upon Dewey’s critical reflection through the concepts of ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’ in professional practice. Reflection-in-action allows for practitioners to think on their feet and attend to their feelings, thoughts and theories during the experience (Schön, 1983). Reflection-on-action occurs after the event where practitioners can generate questions to explore their actions and influencing factors (Schön, 1983). These two concepts work together to provide flexible and thorough guidance (Marshall, 2008) which provides a useful framework for reflection in service-learning.

A study by Karasik (2013) examined the reflective practices utilised by faculty from a variety of courses who were engaging in older adult-related service-learning programmes. Some participants reported that the purpose of those reflections was to relate course content to the experience and understanding the benefits of the service or applying theory to practice. Faculty reported that the benefits of the service-learning experiences were academic such as gaining practical experience, supporting course learning, developing critical thinking skills, challenging stereotypes and civic engagement. Karasik’s (2013) study provides a broad picture of how and why faculty use reflection in their service-learning programmes.

Another study examined student learning gained from reflection in a South African service-learning programme (Goslin, Klashorst, Kluka & van Wyk, 2016). This study examined 410 students’ reflections over the course of three years. Prior to the commencement of service-learning, students were briefed on the expected conditions and were asked to reflect on expectations, attitudes and concerns. The researchers analysed the reflections at the end of the service-learning experience. Goslin and colleagues (2016), found that through reanalysing the reflections, students’ perceptions of service-learning changed from fear and low motivation to interest, positive attitudes and higher motivation to engage in the experience.

Reflection is often taken for granted and how students reflect is often omitted from research therefore it is important to include (Eyler, 2002; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). According to Dewey, learning occurs when students engage in non-judgemental reflection and citizenship develops from the solutions students construct as a result (Dewey, 1938/1997). Furthermore, reflection can help students to engage with the communities they work with, through adapting the thought process and behaviours (Maher, 2003). These elements can contribute to the fostering of social justice and further the democratic aims of service-learning.
3.2.1. **Service-Learning – Student Outcomes**

Many studies suggest that service-learning can have positive outcomes for students (Billig, 2009, Knapp, Bennett, Plumb & Robinson, 2000; Lohman & Aitken, 2002; Seifer, 1998; White, 2001). A strength of service-learning is the provision of outcomes for students outside of traditional academic practices (Harkavy, Pucket & Romer, 2000). Giles and Eyler (1994) identified categories of student outcomes which are often used in research to evaluate the effectiveness of service-learning programmes; (a) personal and interpersonal outcomes, (b) increased interest in citizenship and civic engagement, (c) improved academic learning, (d) application of knowledge and skills and (e) the re-conceptualisation of complex issues.

There are numerous meta-analyses which have found similar student outcomes. Celio, Durlak and Dymnicki (2011) completed a meta-analysis on the general impact of service-learning on students. Databases and service-learning related journals were used to search for service-learning studies. The reference lists from the articles were then examined for relevant literature. Finally, expert recommendations on studies for inclusion in the meta-analysis were gathered. This search methodology yielded 62 studies for inclusion in the meta-analysis. The results showed that there was a statistically significant improvement in five areas of student outcomes; academic performance, social skills, students’ attitudes towards themselves and their learning and civic engagement (Celio, Durlak & Dynmnicki, 2011). The meta-analysis only contains studies published before 2008 and therefore does not provide an analysis of the current service-learning literature. These results, however, mirror the categories of Giles and Eyler (1994) and the findings of other meta-analyses (Conway, Amel & Gerwien, 2009; Novak, Markey & Allen, 2007; Yorio & Ye, 2012).

Eyler and Giles (1999) conducted perhaps one of the most comprehensive studies using surveys and interviews which were collected from 1,500 students from many different institutions across the USA. The study contained 1,100 students who engaged in a service-learning module and 400 students acting as a control group. Sixty-six students from six universities were also interviewed. Eyler and Giles (1999) found that service-learning had a positive effect on students’ learning. Seven outcomes were identified for students; personal and interpersonal development, the application and understanding of relevant knowledge, engagement, inquisitiveness and reflective practice, critical thinking, civic engagement and changes in perspective relating to complex issues.
McMenamin, Mc Grath, Cantillon and Mac Farlane (2014) completed a literature review which included 53 qualitative and quantitative studies examining outcomes for healthcare students in service-learning. A systematic approach to searching seven databases was utilised. Thirty-one studies used quantitative inquiry methods while 13 studies used a mixed methods approach involving a combination of questionnaires and analysis of student reflections. Nine studies were purely qualitative. The studies were reviewed using Eyler and Giles’s (1994) categories for student outcomes and it was found that personal and interpersonal outcomes were present in most of the studies reviewed. Many of these personal and interpersonal outcomes included skills such as self-awareness, cultural competence, capacity to connect and build relationships, communication skills, leadership skills, self-awareness and self-reflection (McMenamin et al., 2014).

From the studies listed so far, the potential outcomes of service learning can benefit students when working with communities through gaining skills and knowledge about those communities and creating partnerships. This understanding of the needs of communities can potentially provide better health service to the community and improve learning for students (Ciaccio & Walker, 1998; Hales, 1997; Logsdon & Ford, 1998; O’Connor, McEwen, Owen, Lynch, & Hill, 2011; Redman & Clark, 2002; Singh et al., 2017). It is important to note, however, while outcomes are thoroughly examined for students, the processes of these service-learning programmes are often not adequately explained, making comparison between programmes difficult.

### 3.2.2. Personal and Interpersonal Outcomes

Eyler and Giles (1999) claim that a primary goal of service-learning is to link personal and interpersonal outcomes to academic outcomes. This can be directly linked to Dewey’s belief that thinking is inextricably associated with emotion, acting as the catalyst for learning (Dewey, 1934). By analysing one’s own thoughts and emotions in the face of an issue, and by working to resolve that issue, the person naturally grows as a result (Dewey, 1910). Furthermore, Dewey stressed the importance of interaction between communities, claiming that all learning was social. For Dewey, learning did not take place in isolation but rather existed within a world where object and action had socially constructed value and meaning (Dewey, 1916/1997). Learning is comprised of understanding and assimilating the values of the social environment (Dewey, 1916/1997). Based on this theory, any service-learning experience which offers interaction with the community should potentially provide opportunities for personal and interpersonal development. Eyler and colleagues (2001) compiled a list of all service-learning literature
between the years of 1993 and 2001. This compilation included 33 studies which found service-learning had a positive impact on students’ personal development. Elements of personal development in these studies included self-efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth and moral development. In addition, there were 25 studies which demonstrated a positive impact on interpersonal skills, leadership and communication skills (Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001). Since then, more studies have supplemented to the body of literature composed by Eyler and colleagues (2001).

For example, Ryan (2017) conducted a study assessing for self-efficacy, social skills, empathy, social responsibility and perceptions of personal involvement in the community. The study involved 50 undergraduate psychology students. The service-learning programme in Ryan’s (2017) study required students to complete 10 hours of community service working with older adults in a variety of services including assisted living and nursing homes. Measures relating to self-efficacy, social skills, empathy, social responsibility and involvement were provided to students in a pre- and post- survey design. Results from the surveys showed there were positive outcomes for students in the areas of empathy, social responsibility and involvement in the community, though there were no recorded improvements in self-efficacy or pro-social tendencies (Ryan, 2017). While there was no improvement for students in feelings of self-efficacy or civic behaviours, the other findings of increased empathy, social responsibility and community involvement relate back to Giles and Eyler’s (1994) categories. Ryan’s research was limited due to the low participant numbers with 21 participants in the service-learning group and 14 students in the control group, which may have impacted the statistical significance of the findings. This research, however, coincides with other service-learning literature related to student outcomes. For example, Milford and colleagues (2016) found that service-learning increased empathy skills, while Yorio and Ye’s (2012) meta-analysis found 13 studies which had personal insight as an outcome. Furthermore, Conway, Amel and Gerwien’s (2009) meta-analysis of 103 studies found positive changes in academic outcomes, personal outcomes, social outcomes and citizenship outcomes. In addition, other studies showed personal and interpersonal development in terms of leadership (Barnes, 2015; Foli, Braswell, Kirkpatrick & Lim, 2014; Lester, 2015) communication (Gefter et al., 2015; Keshwani & Adams; 2017: Lai et al., 2015; Ngai, 2006) self-efficacy (Sanders, van Oss & Geary, 2016) community engagement (Simons & Cleary, 2006) and cultural competence (Wolfe Kohlbry, 2016).
3.2.3. citizenship and civic engagement

Democratic education aims to equip students with the skills and knowledge to become citizens and commit to thinking and acting for the benefit of others in the face of an uncertain future (Dewey, 1938/1997; Kadlec, 2007). Dewey believed interaction with other communities was a method of achieving that aim (Dewey, 1938/1997). As Hollister, Wilson, and Levine (2008) explained: “engaged students are more likely to think about other people’s needs and interests, about the communities in which they are studying, and about the obligations that come with their privileges” (p. 18).

Eyler and colleagues (2001) found 33 studies between the years of 1993 and 2001 which suggested that service-learning could reduce prejudices and promote cultural competence. Twenty-three studies suggested students developed social responsibility and citizenship skills and 26 studies suggested service-learning learning had a positive impact on students’ commitment to service. There were three studies from Curran (1999) Grady (1998) and Pickron-Davis (1999), however, which warned that service-learning might have no impact or a negative impact on attitudes (Eyler et al., 2001).

A study was conducted to examine the impact of service-learning on student’s attitudes towards disability (Wozencraft, Pate & Griffiths, 2015). The service-learning programme involved a series of lectures focusing on disability and a weeklong camp working with disabled children upon completion of the lectures. Students were provided with the Scale of Attitudes Toward Disabled People at the beginning of the lectures, at the end of the lectures and then again after the camp had completed. The findings showed students attitudes changed between the beginning and the end of the lectures, but not between the end of the lectures and the end of the camp. The researchers claim that a reason for this finding may be that the lectures were so comprehensive for students that experiential work could not provide further improvement to student attitudes (Wozencraft et al., 2015). Though this may be the case, by using only one measure it appears the researchers may have missed valuable data. While students’ attitudes may not have improved, further understanding of the lived experience may have been gained from students had a qualitative approach been taken.

Obhi and Woodhead’s (2016) study hypothesised that more contact with older adults would be associated with more positive attitudes and an increased desire to work with older adults. A total of 753 participants were recruited from an introductory psychology course. Participants were given a questionnaire which examined students’ demographics, their experience in gerontology and their interest in working with older adults as a career. In addition, the study measured attitudes towards older adults, pre-
existing relationships with older adults and the quality of those relationships prior to the study. The results showed that the presence of good quality of the relationships was associated with positive attitudes towards older adults and with increased experience students became more interested in a career working with older adults. The researchers suggest intergenerational service-learning projects should be designed with particular attention to promote good quality interactions. There are some limitations to this study, however; the design was a correlational retrospective study, and therefore, the results cannot show directionality. This means it is unclear whether positive experiences with older adults came before or after the desire to work with older adults. Furthermore, the relationships measured in this study were only with family members, adding other variables into the results of the study which have not been considered. For example, the concept of ‘old age’ may be positive based on students’ experiences with their own families, but it may not transfer to other older adults as the relationships may be different in nature. Despite this limitation, there are studies which appear to support the findings that increased experiences with older adults may lead to positive attitudes (Augustin & Freshman, 2016; Beauvais, Foito, Pearlin & Yost, 2015; Boys, Quiring, Harris & Hagan, 2015; Loewenson & Hunt, 2011; Zucchero, 2011).

For example, A study conducted by Schofield and colleagues (2013) examined nursing students’ experiences with a service-learning programme. The programme required students to work in a service for a total of 32 weeks, focusing on learning about the health and well-being of diverse populations. The study was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 14 students. The results of the study showed that students’ assumptions on health were challenged, students gained self-awareness and understanding of their role through learning to care (Schofield et al., 2013).

In another study it was found that service-learning increased personal student citizenship skills (Caspersz & Olaru, 2017). Kezar and Rhoads (2001) found evidence of improved self-confidence, social responsibility, civic-mindedness, self-esteem, and personal efficacy. Similarly, Bird, Islam and Moraros (2016) found that students enhanced their self-confidence, built social networks and became more civic-minded because of service-learning experiences. A study by Long (2014) found service-learning influenced students’ self-efficacy towards cultural competence. Similar results were found by Wolfe Kohlbry’s (2016) mixed methods study that found nursing students increased their cultural competence.

Similarly, Barnes (2015) found that by partaking in an online course which included 5 hours of service to vulnerable populations such as homeless people, at-risk
teens, children and people with mental health issues. The results suggest that there was a small increase in leadership skills and interest in social justice. A limitation of this study, however, is that the service debriefings were conducted online and therefore there were no face-to-face debriefings, only written correspondence which may have an impact on the reflection occurring during the course. In addition, not all faculty engaged with their students in a debriefing which is an essential element of service-learning; if assumptions and biases are not challenged, service-learning can strengthen prejudices (Eby, 1998; Koliba, 2004; Sullivan-Catlin, 2002; Wade, Boyle-Baise & O’Grady, 2001). Dunn-Kenney’s (2010) research into a teaching education service-learning programme examined biases of 21 graduate students towards African American families availing of an education and work transitioning service. Students worked with the service to run family days and playgroups during the service-learning experience. Students kept activity logs and reflective diaries which were analysed by the researcher after the service-learning programme was complete. The study found that though most students challenged their biases, there were five students whose prejudices were strengthened by the experience.

In general, the reported outcomes of service-learning tend to be positive and it is difficult to find negative or entirely ineffective service-learning experiences in the literature. The trend towards positive results may not only be because of the abundance of successful service-learning experiences but may be due to publication bias or reliance in the success of certain programmes due to funding requirements (d’Arlach, Sánchez & Feuer, 2009). In addition, because service-learning has high levels of burden for its’ facilitators, researchers may have an interest in seeing programmes succeed (Lambright & Alden, 2012; Tyron, Stoecker, Martin, Seblonka, Hilgendorf & Nellis, 2008). There is a need, however, to highlight negative outcomes for students to ensure that service-learning is achieving its citizenship aims.

3.2.4. **improved academic learning**

Service-learning fosters learning using reflective practices (Dewey, 1910). Quality reflection is associated with more in-depth understanding and increased knowledge (Eyler and Giles, 1999). Eyler and colleagues (2001) found 32 studies which suggested that academic knowledge is an outcome of service-learning. It is important to note, however, while academic knowledge can be generated from service-learning, results are mixed when academic knowledge is measured against GPA or exam results (Eyler et al., 2001).

The knowledge gained from service-learning is naturally dependent on course aims the type of community interaction. For example, a service-learning programme to work
with incarcerated women involved students from criminal justice, art, massage therapy, business and health of the nation courses (Lizzul, Bradley, Di Giorgio, Äikäs, Muolo & Zinger, 2015). Twenty-nine students participated in the study. Students were provided with pre- and post- survey containing three sections, academic learning, personal growth and civic engagement. Results showed an improvement in the academic learning scores of 40% between the pre- and post- surveys (Lizzul et al., 2015). Students’ surveys were scored using the DEAL critical thinking rubric which only allows a four-point scale of scoring representing ‘completely lacking’, ‘underdeveloped’, ‘good’ and ‘excellent’. These scoring systems are still fundamentally subjective, however, and may have poor inter-rater reliability.

A meta-analysis was conducted on cognitive outcomes for students (Novak, Markey & Allen, 2007). Qualitative studies providing data on cognitive learning within the Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning were included. A total of nine articles were chosen for the meta-analysis. The results showed service-learning could improve students’ cognitive outcomes regarding academic learning, skills learned, application of knowledge and re-evaluating understanding of social issues (Novak, Markey & Allen, 2007).

Milford and colleagues (2016) conducted a service-learning programme for medical school students. The service-learning programme involved a community-based paediatric obesity intervention programme. Students worked in the programme to help educate and set goals with families. Twelve students took part in the study, a pre- and post-survey, designed to measure attitudes, knowledge and skills regarding health literacy. Students’ journals were also analysed for data. The results suggest students’ knowledge and confidence in their health literacy improved. The small sample size of this study appears to be a limitation. In total, 22 students applied to be involved in the study, but only 12 were chosen as they had a perfect attendance record, which may have impacted the overall findings.

Gallini and Moely (2003) examined the experience of service-learning for students enrolled in a variety of liberal arts and science courses. A questionnaire was provided to 142 students to measure their views on service-learning. A similar control questionnaire was provided to 192 students not attending service-learning on their views of their courses. Students were asked to identify how much the course influenced their academic, community and interpersonal engagement and were asked to detail their plans to continue engaging in university. The results suggest that service-learning students evaluated their courses more positively than non-service-learning courses and students rated themselves...
more likely to continue in university as a result. Academic benefits were rated to be the most important predictor of student’s retention rates. Students also reported service-learning could enhance their interpersonal and community engagement and help apply their learning and skills to the ‘real world’. Though these results were positive, the study is limited in that it only collected results from the end of the service-learning experience. It was beyond the ability of the study to measure if there were significant changes in students’ responses between the beginning and end of their service-learning or control courses. Other studies, however, have claimed similar findings (Billig & Welche, 2004; Bringle, Ruiz, Borwn & Reeb, 2016; Fitch, Steinke & Hudson, 2013; Yorio & Ye, 2012)

There appears to be less literature focusing on academic learning in service-learning than other non-traditional learning outcomes. This may be because academic learning is specific to the course and may not be deemed valuable for other researchers or perhaps because of service-learning’s claim of non-traditional outcomes, researchers put less focus on traditional outcomes.

3.2.5. application of knowledge and skills

Through reflection, students take experiences and construct knowledge (Schön, 1983). Classroom environments, separate from real-world learning, can act as a barrier to deep understanding and consolidation of theory (Giles and Eyler, 1999; Schön, 1995). Curiosity is an eagerness to experience the world and generate learning (Dewey, 1910). When social components are introduced, curiosity becomes a higher form of questioning, moving from questions of ‘what’ to ‘why’ (Dewey, 1910). Service-learning allows students the opportunity to express their innate curiosity and through reflection, gain a deeper level of understanding and apply their learning to new situations. (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Steinke & Buresch, 2002). Eyler and colleagues (2001) found 18 studies which suggested that service-learning can aid students in the application of knowledge to real-world situations.

Students can learn competencies in professional-based service-learning programmes such as the Stanford Youth Diabetes Coaches Programme (Gefter et al., 2015). Medical residential students worked with low-income minority students in six high schools by teaching health management strategies. Forty-one medicine residents completed online surveys to provide qualitative information on the impact of service-learning on their professional competencies and self-management skills. The study found despite the service-learning programme being brief in its length—eight hours in total—there appeared to be an improvement in competencies surrounding students’ ability to communicate with
adolescents, contribute to the health of the community and use action plans (Gefter et al., 2015). A significant limitation of this study is that it claims that the service-learning programme being examined in the study is a “success for communities and medical education” (p.1). This is an issue as it is assuming success for the communities because the programme is serving the community. However there was no measurement of community outcomes. The assumption that the provision of service automatically constitutes benefit to the community and a lack of focus towards community outcomes is pervasive in the service-learning literature.

Other studies have also had an impact on students’ professional skills and competencies. Valdovinos (2016) found that psychology students developing both practical skills in assessment giving but also interpersonal and communication skills by working with children. Overton (2015) found that service-learning improved self-efficacy in assessment-giving and collaboration between counselling and educational diagnostician students. Beck, Chretien and Kind (2015) found that professional identity could be developed for medical students participating in a medical speciality camp as counsellors.

Other studies, such as Nowakowski, Kaufman and Pelletier (2014) hypothesised that service-learning could assist in the development of competencies in geriatric physical therapy. Nowakowski and colleagues researched an on-campus service-learning program which provided group treatment to older adults who had experienced chronic effects of stroke. The program ran for ten weeks each semester and provided twice weekly therapeutic exercise, balance and gait retraining for 12 people. First and second-year physical therapy students paired together to administer treatment, supervised by the service-learning facilitator. This allowed for first-year students to learn more about their course content and for the second-year students to develop leadership and mentorship skills while furthering their experiences of geriatric patients. Nowakowski and colleagues collected data through using the observations of the service-learning facilitators to assess the students’ performance. They judged the development of the students’ competencies by comparing the observations to the competencies required for completion of the course. These competencies included health promotion and safety, evaluations and assessment, care planning and coordination, interdisciplinary and team care, caregiver support and healthcare systems and benefits (Nowakowski, Kaufman & Pelletier, 2014).

Similarly, a service-learning program was examined for development of professional competencies and professional preparedness in speech and language therapy students (Pakulski, 2011). Twenty-six speech therapy students were involved in a therapeutic playgroup to assist children with auditory disabilities and provide support for
the families. A pre- and post- questionnaire was developed to test for self-efficacy, knowledge and skills relating to the service-learning program. Students were also asked to reflect on their experiences through guided, open-ended questions. The results suggest there is a significant difference in professional preparedness after the service-learning program and that students participating in this program met their course competencies. The researcher also reported students returned with anecdotal evidence that parents of the children involved in the group reported positive language skill outcomes from the program. The researcher notes, however, that this was not the focus of the research and to date, there has been little focus on the impact of service-learning programs on the community partners involved.

3.2.6. reframing complex issues

As Jacoby and Brown (2009) explained, service-learning can “enable students to develop the very qualities to which liberal education aspires: understanding of our complex and interconnected world, reflection and critical thinking, problem solving, communication, tolerance for ambiguity, appreciation of diversity, and respect for the views of others” (p. 225). Students gain first-hand experience of many different issues facing people in society and are confronted with their own prejudices and assumptions. This experience allows students better understand issues which may affect others in society. Eyler and colleagues (2001) found four studies which suggest that service-learning has a positive impact on student’s ability to understand complex issues. Other studies already mentioned in this literature had similar results (Conway, Amel & Gerwien’s, 2009; Giles & Eyler, 1999; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Wolfe Kholbry, 2016; Yorio & Ye, 2012).

A qualitative study was conducted by Knecht & Fischer (2015) using a phenomenological inquiry into ten undergraduate nursing students’ experiences of working with homeless people. Using interviews, Knecht and Fischer (2015) found five main themes regarding the students’ experiences. Engaging in the service-learning experiences challenged students stereotypes about homelessness. Students reported feeling overwhelmed with the needs of the community. Students learned about their role as community carers. Students learned to advocate for the community and students reported reciprocal benefits from developing relationships and caring for the community. The students in this study appeared to have a meaningful experience in service-learning and have a sense of reciprocity from interacting with the community partners. A limitation of this study is that the researchers assume that the experience was reciprocally beneficial for the community partners based on students’ interpretations alone. As discussed with other
studies, there may have been reciprocal benefits in the service-learning experience. However, the methodology of this study did not lend itself to exploring reciprocity. This further highlights the culture of assumption of community benefit present in many service-learning studies.

A study by Wang and Rodgers (2006) measured the impact of service-learning on students’ cognitive outcomes. Six service-learning courses were examined. A total of 72 students participated in the study. Wang and Rodgers measured students’ cognitive development using a pre- and post-test design. Students were required to answer questions regarding the nature of knowledge, the role of the instructor, the role of peers, the role of learners, evaluation in the learning process and educational decision making. The results showed that there was a significant improvement in students’ ability to think critically and students had a better understanding of social justice by the end of the service-learning course (Wang & Rodgers, 2006). Reframing of complex issues appears to be the least cited of all outcomes in service-learning. The conception of what a complex issue is, may be subjective and may be different not only from study to study but the researcher and the students themselves may have a different understanding. In addition, if the study is quantitative in nature, capturing changes in understanding nuanced situations may be difficult. In addition, as with many studies, the researchers do not detail the process of the interventions, the course aims and assessments of the service-learning programmes, making them difficult to make meaningful comparison.

Despite the philosophies underpinning service-learning and its popularity as a tool for social justice, the literature heavily focuses on the student outcomes and experiences. There are comparatively few studies examining community partners (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Tryon & Stoecker, 2009; Tinkler, Tinkler, Hausman & Strouse, 2014; Worrall, 2007). The imbalance in literature is a direct challenge to the claims of fostering social justice, as it denies the very reciprocity on which service-learning is built. A reason for this may be due to the difficulties service-learning has experienced attempting to integrate into universities resulting in a need to justify the use service-learning (Antonio, Astin & Cross, 2000; Bell et al., 2000; Brukardt et al., 2004; Butin, 2006; Pedersen, Meyer & Hargrave, 2015). Alternatively, many researchers desire to motivate and inspire students through service-learning (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Bringle, Hatcher, & Games, 1997; O’Meara & Niehaus, 2009) which may have led to the student-centric focus in the literature. Furthermore, research is carried out by universities, and so the interest is naturally focused on university outcomes as research funding may provide incentives towards examining student impact (d’Arlach, Sánchez & Feuer, 2009).
This may also explain why much of the literature examines the outcomes and not the processes of service-learning. Regardless, student and university outcomes dominate research in service-learning.

3.2.7. Service-Learning – The Community Partner Outcomes

Community partners in service-learning are contacts within the community. Community partners can either be individuals or community organisations (Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009). Community partners are vital to the service-learning experience; without them, service-learning could not occur. Despite this, there has been comparatively little research in this area which predominantly focuses on community organisations as community partners. The reason for this is not known, perhaps it is due again to funding issues where the incentive is to continue the partnership by looking at the organisation perspective (d’Arlach, Sánchez & Feuer, 2009). Alternatively, it may be due to the assumption that staff can speak accurately to the experiences of individuals availing of the organisation or service. If that is the case, it is a dangerous assumption to make, as staff may not be aware of the impact on individual community partners. It may also be possible that staff within the organisations have a vested interest in the success of the service-learning programmes possibly due to reliance on the universities support or out of fear that they will not have continued partnerships should the feedback be poor. Some researchers are beginning to recognise the importance of including community partner perspectives into the service-learning body of literature (Ryan, 2017; Novak, Markey & Allen, 2008; Steinman, 2011; d’Arlach, Sánchez & Feuer, 2009) however, to date, there still exists a substantial imbalance in the overall literature.

3.2.8. Outcomes for Community Organisations

As seen from the section above, there are many student benefits from engaging in service-learning. The concept of reciprocity underpinning service-learning dictates that community partners should also benefit from engagement and it is often assumed to be the case. Bushouse (2005) claimed service-learning is a “‘win-win-win’ situation for the university, students and community” (p.32). Research into community impact has been deficient, however, (Cruz and Giles, 2000) and service-learning has been criticised for not
listening to community voices (Birdsall, 2005; Hickey, 2016; Stocker & Tyron, 2009). Often, researchers acknowledge a lack of community perspective as a limitation of their research and few have actioned to change this.

There are some researchers, however, who have attempted to address the absence of community voices. Blouin and Perry (2009) posed the question ‘whom do service-learning really service?’ To answer this question, Blouin and Perry (2009) interviewed staff from 20 organisations which had been involved in service-learning programmes with their university. These organisations were chosen to be of diverse populations to provide a representative sample. In total, 13 executive directors, four volunteer co-ordinators and three programme directors were interviewed. Staff were asked to talk about their experiences with service-learning courses and students and about the benefits of service-learning and the costs for the organisation. They were asked about the challenges they experienced and to advise what instructors can do more effectively. The study found students provide labour which allows organisations to run volunteer programmes, allow staff to focus on other work and reduce negative stereotypes about universities. Students can pose a risk to community organisations, however, particularly when working with vulnerable populations. Staff must be wary of students who are ill-prepared, uncommitted, disrespectful or non-compliant with confidentiality and can potentially cause harm. Another cost staff reported was the draining of organisation resources of time and energy if students were not suitable. These issues can arise from poor student conduct, poor communication or a poor fit between the course and the organisation. Staff reported the service-learning programmes with the best outcomes occurred due to true partnerships between the university and community. This was completed by sharing goals, providing clear student roles and managing expectations (Blouin & Perry, 2009). The results from this study suggest that the staff’s experience is that service-learning works at its best when the partnership is present.

Tyron and Stoecker (2008) conducted interviews with 67 community organisation representatives to explore their experience of service-learning. The findings show that community partners recruit students for a variety of reasons. Some organisations do not perceive service-learning as beneficial but feel obliged to help students as a part of their mission statement to educate the public. Other community partners reported facilitating service-learning in the hopes of using it as an opportunity to train people who might work for them in the future. The primary reason, however, was their need for students to provide services. Services often involved students doing work on websites, surveys or other routine IT tasks. Short-term service-learning programmes were often problematic as it requires a
lot of effort but provides little benefit to either organisation or student, which can lead to feelings of tension and resentment. Sometimes students exploit organisations’ promises of training if they agree to work beyond their course requirements but later pull out once they meet their academic needs. Staff note how students can sometimes have a negative impact on their clients, particularly in vulnerable groups such as with young people who come to rely on the students. Many participants in the study reported the difficulty of designing a meaningful project for both the students and the organisation and find the experience to be unfair to the students. Some participants also noted that students who were uncomfortable with diversity or held strong biases could be problematic and sometimes damaging to clients. Staff also felt that the relationships between students and clients could be exploitative, feeling that students see the community as a commodity to use for their benefit. Staff also expressed dissatisfaction with communication between the university, the students and themselves, particularly regarding expectations and roles. Participants in this study noted positive outcomes arise from clear, realistic and shared goals, committed stakeholders and strong, trusting relationships with faculty to create simple, effective projects. Again, the positive outcomes in this study appear to come from when a true partnership is experienced between the organisation and the university. These findings are similar to those of other studies which found many organisations host students to fulfil their mission statement (Rinaldo, Davis & Borunda, 2015; Worrall, 2007). Community partners report benefitting from students labour and additional resources (Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006; Leiderman, Furco, Zapf & Goss, 2003; (Rinaldo et al., 2015; Seifer & Vaughn, 2004). Furthermore, when expectations are clear, and there is sufficient support from the university, service-learning was found to be most beneficial (Gelmon et al., 1998).

Though the above studies appear to be fraught with expectations, miscommunications and commitment issues, other studies have found community organisation satisfaction from the service-learning experience. For example, in a study by Beitman, Gahimer and Staples (2015) community organisations reported positive outcomes for a shared service-learning course for physical therapy and OT students in Belize. Community staff reported that the educational interventions carried out by students were valuable to service-users and staff alike. While there were some difficulties, such as the need for service far outweighing the time available, and cultural differences in approaches to interventions, the overall experience was positive (Beitman et al., 2015). It is crucial to examine community partner outcomes because a considerable amount of resources is expended on the organisation’s part. If a service-learning programme is not successful and
does not benefit the organisation, it can be not only exploitative but potentially be
damaging, particularly for smaller organisations who do not have resources to spare (Tyron
et al., 2008; Sharpe & Dear, 2013; Steinman, 2011).

3.2.9. Outcomes for Individual Community Partners

Reciprocity is an integral element of service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). The attention of service-learning research, however, is vastly focused on the outcomes for universities and students. Literature for individual community partner outcomes is notably sparse. It is essential to focus on the perspectives of these partners as service-learning is intended to be beneficial for all involved, yet the experience of individuals does not appear to be equally valued.

Bringle, Clayton, and Price (2009) claim service-learning can create partnerships which have a transformative effect on both members. A transformative relationship, however, requires reciprocity of benefit. As individual community partners are so under-researched, there is little evidence for transformative relationships. Cress and colleagues (2010) found university students completing service-learning with kindergarten classes can improve academic outcomes for children from underrepresented groups. Children in these groups are more likely to stay and graduate from school and complete college. James and Logan (2016) found that university students working with children in a school-based service-learning programme reduce negative university stereotypes and become seen as role models.

Gerstenblatt’s and Gilbert (2014) study examined the experiences of individual community partners and organisations in a community revitalisation project. Gerstenblatt and Gilbert’s study found individuals became more involved in the community because of service-learning. Community partners learned more about their community and how to build a better community. The results showed a lasting effect which encouraged community partners to continue the work after the programme finished. Community partners experienced an increase in civic participation, developing new knowledge, learning skills, trying new things, becoming energised and recognising the lasting positive effect of the students’ input (Gerstenblatt and Gilbert, 2014).

A study by d’Arlach, Sánchez and Feuer (2009) examined the outcomes for individual community partners in a service-learning programme. The service-learning experience in this study took place in a community organisation which provides services such as citizenship preparation, literacy classes and after-school programmes to an
immigrant Latino population. Students met service-users three times a week. Each session had two sections, the first half a foreign language textbook class where students and community partners were paired together to complete the exercises. The second half of the session required students and community partners to explore differences in power and class between both parties. Nine community partners were interviewed in this study. The interviews comprised of four sections relating to the programme, the students, potential solutions to undocumented immigration and changes in community partners’ behaviours. The results of the study showed most community partners experienced a positive change in attitudes. A small group of students who did integrate and only bonded with each other, however, which caused community partners to become less trusting of these students. Community partners’ own perceptions of themselves changed, and they learned to speak up for themselves and reflect on social issues. Though there were positive benefits, community partners spoke about feeling hopelessness when talking about actioning social changes.

Commonly, what occurs in the literature is the assumption of impact to individual community partners based on reports by students or staff (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Gefter et al., 2015; Knecht & Fischer, 2015; Mboka, 2017; Searle & Larsen, 2016; Tyron and Stoecker, 2008; Zucchero, 2011). According to Gelmon (2003) “Assessment of both the processes and impacts of community-university partnership for service-learning is essential to determine the extent to which benefits are derived for both partners” (p.61). Being aware of power imbalances is an important and well documented issue in service-learning (Camacho, 2004; Pompa, 2002; Stewart & Webster, 2011; Weah, Simmons & Hall, 2003; Yoder Clark, 2009). A lack of sensitivity towards community members and their struggles can have negative, long-lasting effects (Crabtree, 2008; Carrick, Himley, & Jacobi, 2000; Tilley-Lubbs, 2009) Second-hand reports or assumptions of impact, therefore, are not sufficient methods to assess outcomes for individual community partners. Furthermore, the literature focuses on the outcomes of service-learning and often does not detail the experiences and processes of service-learning. Often studies omit important details about the service-learning programmes. The design of programme, the recruitment of community partners and students, the nature of the interaction between partners and the assessments and support provided for participants all impact the experience of service-learning. By focusing predominantly on reporting outcomes, it is often difficult to assess the experiences for service-learning partners through the processes and ethos of the programmes.
3.3. Service-Learning and Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy can be described “the art and science of helping people do the day-to-day activities that are important and meaningful to their health and well-being through engagement in valued occupations” (Crepeau, Cohn & Schell, 2003, p.28). Gitlow and Flecky (2005) suggested the philosophy of service-learning, its educational strategies and the effectiveness for meeting student and community outcomes are compatible with occupational therapy theory. For one, occupational therapy aims to foster an inclusive society and promote social justice through enabling people’s engagement in daily occupations and reducing barriers to engagement (Townsend & Polatajko, 2007). In Ireland, a core competency for entry level occupational therapists is the comprehension and articulation of community needs and understanding the current and future complex issues that pertain to the community (AOTI, 2008). Community focused practice is based on the same philosophy of client-centred practice in which occupational therapy aims to operate (Hyett, McKinstry, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2016). Community-based practice is an ever-growing area of interest for occupational therapy (Wilcock, 2006). There has been a movement away from traditional health services to community-based initiatives where occupational therapists work together with the community (Minkler, 2012). The focus on community for both occupational therapy and service-learning appears to be strong. Developing relationships is an important element of working together with people in interventions (Taylor et al., 2009). The intentional relationship is the method by which occupational therapists interact with clients to improve outcomes of the intervention (Taylor, 2008). The intentional relationship guides the therapist through modes of behaviour and types of relationships which may occur when interacting with clients. It encourages the therapist to be aware of the characteristics of both themselves and the client and how those characteristics interact to form the relationship (Taylor, 2008). The intentional relationship holds an emphasis on the relationship as a mechanism for outcomes and appears to be a concept which can be aligned to service-learning.

Furthermore, occupational therapy and service-learning have similar philosophical underpinnings. Occupational therapy theory has been heavily influenced by Dewey’s theories. Dewey’s theory of transactionalism has inspired much of the theoretical perspective behind occupational therapy and occupational science (Bunting, 2016). Occupation is the way in which an individual interacts with the environment as an expression of their innermost selves. Our humanness is inextricably linked to how and why we engage in specific occupations and how we create order in our everyday lives through
that engagement (Kielhofner, 2002). Dewey’s pragmatism saw inquiry as the ongoing process where the individual tests the sense and meaning of everyday situations (Dewey, 1910/2005; Frank & Muriithi, 2015). Habits, as the actioned response to accumulated learning, are important in Deweyan inquiry (Dewey, 1922/1957; Wright-St Clair & Smythe, 2012). While habits can make new learning difficult due to humans’ predisposition for repetition, every habit is the result and the expression of responsiveness to complex physical, social and cultural environments (Dewey, 1958). People use habits as a method of interacting with the environment (Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard & Coppola, 2008). As the environment changes, so does a person’s habits (Kestenbaum, 1977). In addition, habits have an important role to play in Dewey’s conception of occupation. To Dewey, occupations are the process through which a person’s mind and body interact in a way that holds social and communal meaning (Aldrich & Cutchin, 2012). By emphasising the importance of the relationship between the person and the environment in occupation, Dewey highlights the interdependence between the person, their actions and their context (Dewey 1926/1988). The heart of transactionalism is that the meaning and the relevance of occupation needs to be understood within the context where it takes place. The person defines and re-defines themselves and the world through their engagement in occupation (Dickie, Cutchin & Humphry, 2006). Similarly, Wilcock’s (1999) theory of ‘doing, being and becoming’ and the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO), a conceptual model are used to guide occupational therapists’ thinking and practice (Kielhofner & Forsyth, 1997).

For Wilcock (1999), ‘being’ represents “contemplation and enjoyment of the inner life…the peak experiences in which time disappears and hopes are fulfilled” (Maslow, 1968, p.223). ‘Becoming’ represents three aspects, according to Fidler (1996), becoming oneself, becoming competent in activities and becoming a social being.

The Model of Human Occupation is an open systems theory based on the concept that people affect and are affected by the environment. Within each person are internal processes which help develop occupational identity; volition, habituation and performance. People express these internal processes through occupation, thereby affecting their environment, which leads to receiving feedback on their actions. In turn, the person internalises the feedback and over time develops an occupational identity (Kielhofner & Forsyth, 1997). Dewey’s transactionalism can be seen through the processes of growth and change described in MOHO. Further expressions of transactionalism may be seen through the concept of co-occupation (Pierce, 2009) and the concept of occupational spin-off (Rebeiro and Cook, 1999). Co-occupation is an experience of shared occupation where both parties physically, emotionally and intentionally share meaningful activity (Pierce,
Occupational spin-off was conceptualised by Rebeiro and Cook (1999) after witnessing a transformative effect for the members of a women’s mental health group. Occupational spin-off describes the process and outcome of occupational engagement in distinction to the expected or desired aims (Rebeiro, 2001). It is the presence of unexpected, positive elements either during or after an environment of social support and participation. Occupational spin-off requires four elements to be present: affirmation, confirmation and actualisation and anticipation. Affirmation is where the person receives positive social feedback and encouragement and confirmation occurs during successful engagement in occupation. Actualisation is the process where the person becomes affected by the social and occupational environment. Finally, anticipation is the person, as an actualised self, looking forward to and taking steps towards, their own desired future (Rebeiro and Cook, 1999). The concept of transactionalism can be seen in occupational spin-off. The social environment directly contributes to the personal growth and development of those within the group. The outcomes which occur as a result of the experience are similar to Dewey’s claim that all learning is social (Dewey, 1916). By receiving positive feedback, the women in the mental health group as described by Rebeiro and Cook (1999) began engaging in new behaviours and actions, using inquiry to make sense of their world. In essence, they utilised new habits to transact with their environment (Kestenbaum, 1977) and created new meaning through imagining a new future (Alexander, 1992 cited in Dickie, Cutchin & Humphry, 2006)

Occupational therapy education and service-learning are further aligned in that both promote a culture of ‘learning by doing’ whereby students actively apply academic theory to community social issues (AOTA, 2003). The outcomes of service-learning also appear to be complementary to the aims of occupational therapy education. According to Burdach and Baldwin (1992), students who participate in service-learning gain skills in organisational problem solving and decision making while taking responsibility for community needs. In addition, Eyler (2000) states that service-learning has a powerful impact on students’ professional development by improving self-efficacy, self-esteem, and confidence in interpersonal skills in social and political arenas. Kezar & Rhoads (2001) found evidence in their research for outcomes of service-learning to include self-confidence, social responsibility, civic-mindedness, self-esteem, and personal efficacy based on the works of Astin and Sax (1998), Kendrick (1996) and Markus, Howard and King (1993). Giles and Eyler (1994) found that service-learning is strongly correlated with tolerance, personal development and application of academic learning. They have also found evidence to suggest reflective service-learning classes predict increased ‘complexity
in analysis of both causes and solutions to social problems’ (Giles and Eyler, p. 75). Finally, while participating in service-learning experiences, students are likely to view themselves as more connected to their communities and more effective agents of change (Eyler & Giles, 1999). These potential outcomes are important for OT students’ personal and professional development.

A study on an international service-learning seating clinic in Haiti found occupational therapy students improved the cultural competence, developed coping strategies to interact with clients and gained a better understanding of the culture (Short & St. Peters, 2017). Maloney, Myers and Bazyk (2014) conducted a qualitative study to examine OT students’ development of civic responsibility during the service-learning programme. Six students’ journals were examined and analysed. There were five main findings which occurred; students increased self-awareness into their own feelings, students learned to see homeless people as people. The student became more aware of social issues. Students developed self-efficacy in their professional skills. Students developed leadership skills. A limitation of this study was that it only contained six journals. However, this study’s findings are similar to the findings of others such as Giles and Eylers (1994) categories for student outcomes as discussed earlier.

Raiz (2007) examined two service-learning experiences which she took part in as an OT student; one in a homeless shelter and one in an after-school faith-based group. Raiz (2007) wrote a journal before and after visiting the homeless shelter each week. Raiz, (2007) notes how her clinical reasoning skills developed over time. As a part of the service-learning programme, Raiz (2007) and another student were assigned to a specific person at the homeless centre and completed activities with him ‘to engage our client in self-exploration and insight’. It was up to the students in this case what activity to do which they decided to explore practical skills with him. The second service-learning experience was a child after-school programme which provided greater structure than the homeless shelter for the students. Each week was themed towards a self-management goal. Raiz (2007) reported she learned clinical skills, became more confident in running groups and learned how to manage challenging behaviours. In addition, Raiz (2007) reported that the experience was enjoyable.

Vroman, Simmons and Knight (2010) claim service-learning needs to be evaluated through the processes of learning and not just the outcomes. Using a single case study design, Vroman and colleagues (2010) thematically analysed students’ reflective writings and critical thinking assignments to explore the nature of student learning. Vroman and colleagues used one particularly successful student’s reflective work for the study. The
study showed that this student learned to see meaning in the experiences she was witnesses regarding occupation. The student also developed ownership of her learning and knowledge. The student learned to apply theory to practice. In addition, she developed a deeper understanding of the concepts she was learning and applying. Being able to link external factors to the ability to engage and participate. Her understanding of occupation also deepened. Through understanding the history for her clients, the power of occupation in the moment and the connection between occupation and health. While this is a case study and with an exceptional student, it does suggest that at the very least, occupational therapy service-learning programmes can potentially produce these outcomes. As a case study, however, there is little generalisability.

Atler and Gavin (2010) conducted a mixed methods study to examine if service-learning had an impact on students’ confidence knowledge and skills in providing OT services to adults with neurological conditions. Forty-three second-year students participated in the study. A pre- and post- survey design where student completed surveys to identify their level of knowledge, skills and confidence before and after the service-learning experience. Students’ reflective papers were also analysed. From the qualitative data, Atler and Gavin found that having the opportunity to engage in service-learning changed students’ knowledge, skills and confidence. Not all students experienced changes in all three areas, however, and some students learned in greater depth than others though most students improved in interpersonal skills. The quantitative findings show that there was a statistically significant change in students’ views of their knowledge and confidence.

Through completing an inter-disciplinary service-learning programme, Flinn and colleagues (2009) examined the professional outcomes for occupational therapy and physical therapy students. Students were responsible for diagnosing 41 patients with musculoskeletal, neurological and mental health diagnoses and received rehabilitation services from OT and PT teams of students. Students believed they enhanced their cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. The experience allowed students to integrate their learning into practice. Students reported the ability to work with other cultures, demonstrate leadership skills and communicate in cross-cultural situations and to understand the needs of the community. In addition, students gained confidence. A small number of students also provided reflection papers. Students learned about challenges working with individuals from different countries such as diversity, roles as a volunteer, working together with teams and integration of knowledge (Flinn, et al., 2009). While this study appears to have positive outcomes for all parties involved, the perspective of the community partner was not considered even though the researchers state that the
students appear to have completed many assessments and treatments. This study does not focus on the power differentials which may be present. The patients attending the service-learning clinic do not have health insurance, and many cannot speak English. The success of students’ outcomes relating to patients may be because patients cannot mobilise to a different service as opposed to finding real benefit from the experience. Furthermore, the researchers do not provide any suggestion that staff within the service oversee students which may compound the issue.

Maloney and Griffith (2013) conducted a qualitative inquiry using a phenomenological approach to examine the effects of service-learning on the therapeutic communication skills for graduate students. Six students submitted reflective journals for analysis. Eight themes were obtained from the journals. Students spoke about the importance of developing a genuine client-therapist relationship and the importance of developing a rapport with the client. Students established boundaries through direct communication and attending to their own intuition which enabled students to negotiate stressful situations while still respecting their clients. Students learned communication skills and admired staff’s ability to communicate effectively. Eventually, some of the students became more comfortable in taking control of situations and directing sessions with clients. Through direct interaction, students also improved their communication skills. Clients expressed the importance and difficulty of providing client-centred care. Students became more self-aware because of the experience and some of their preconceptions were challenged. Students gained confidence and developed pride for their achievements. Students also become to understand the power of engaging in meaningful and purposeful occupation.

In occupational therapy courses, the design of service-learning naturally reflects the aims of the profession. For OT students, connecting to, and working with, people from different communities is especially important. Service-learning experiences which promote students’ understanding of the impact of health, disability and other factors on the ability to engage and participate in meaningful occupation is imperative. It is the role of occupational therapy educators to provide learning opportunities to prepare students to understand the complexities of disability and to nurture the ability to enrich the lives of clients (Gitlow & Flecky, 2005). As such occupational therapy service-learning programmes are often built on a foundation of a disability studies perspective.
3.3.1. Disability Studies Perspective in Service-Learning

It is said that service-learning can be expected to have social justice and social inclusion in its outcomes and processes (Gijon Casares, 2012; Koch et. al., 2014; Toporek & Worthington, 2014). Yet it is apparent there is a power imbalance in the focus of the literature from the priority given to student and university outcomes while community partners are under-researched. Maybach (1996) claimed a lack of awareness of service-learning’s impact on community partners could have negative consequences. Though others have mirrored Maybach’s (1996) concerns (Bringle et al., 2009; Camacho, 2004; Pompa, 2002; Stewart & Webster, 2011; Weah et al., 2003; Yoder Clark, 2009), two decades later, this issue has not been dealt with adequately. The lack of focus on individual community partners’ experiences and outcomes of service-learning in the literature harkens back to a time before disability rights were achieved. A major aim of the disability rights movement was to have a say in the policies and politics which directly affected the lives of disabled people. The slogan “Nothing about us without us” was coined by disability rights activists in the 1980’s to show the goal to have influence over the services and political environment which affects disabled people (Charlton, 1998). One of the achievements of the disability rights in the United States was the Americans with Disability Act in 1990 which prohibited discrimination in employment, public services for disabled people (Dickey & Satcher, 1991). This major change cannot have been unnoticed by the higher education community particularly as the scholarship of engagement movement (Boyer, 1990) was occurring almost simultaneously. Yet, the impact for individual community partners has not been attended to. The experiences of the community cannot be accurately represented by one staff member. Moreover, community organisations may have their own agendas and may be unwilling to jeopardise the partnership between the university and the organisation (d’Arlach, Sánchez & Feuer, 2009). Any claims of social justice need to be considered from the perspective of the community that are being served, otherwise service-learning runs the risk of being exploitative (Clayton et al., 2010; Sharpe & Dear, 2013; Steinman, 2011).

As the goal of occupational therapy is to promote social justice through the enablement of engagement and participation (Townsend & Polatjko, 2007), the philosophy of disability studies is well suited. Disability studies is a form of enquiry which rose from the civil rights movement in the United States during the 1960’s (Gleeson, 1997). Initially, its role was to challenge policy prescription, but it later evolved to take a socio-cultural perspective on mainstream issues of inequality and injustice (Davis, 2017; Dunham et al.,
2015, Thomas, 1999; Thomas, 2004). In addition, disability studies scholars rose awareness of the necessity to shift from a medical view of disability to the understanding of social, cultural and political factors which impact engagement and participation (Oliver, 1996). Through its dedication to the addressing issues which obstruct the development of a fair and just society, the aims of disability studies compliment Dewey’s democratic ideals. As Dewey stated: “every human being, independent of the quantity or range of his personal endowment, has the right to equal opportunity with every other person for development of whatever gifts he has” (Dewey, 1939. P.3)

Gent and Gurecka (2001) claim service-learning has the potential to be an effective pedagogy if students are given the opportunity to partner with disabled people to challenge notions of disablement. In addition, service-learning provides structured opportunities for students to reflect on their attitudes and assumption about the communities with whom they partner (Jacoby, 2003). This is particularly relevant when considering the ever-increasing trend of community involvement and collaboration in occupational therapy practice. Green’s (1997) study describes the use of service-learning to teach OT students moral reasoning skills. Findings reveal service-learning “increased awareness of diversity and a diminishing of formerly held stereotypes” (p. 848). Furthermore, Greene’s (1997) study suggested that service-learning could positively impact OT students’ attitudes towards dignity, equality and justice. Another later study by Greene (1998) investigated the extent to which service-learning enabled OT students to develop empathy and decrease their stereotypic notions of elders. The results of this study support service-learning as an effective educational approach (Greene, 1998).

Gitlow and Flecky (2005) conducted a study into a service-learning programme. The objectives of the courses were to explore the meaning of occupation in students’ own lives and the lives of disabled people and investigated how the environment can interfere with occupational performance. Students collaborated with disabled people and staff from a service called Accessible Maine which enables disabled people to access arts and culture. Students completed accessibility assessments of arts venues. The students were trained by disabled artists and staff regarding the importance and techniques of making arts venues accessible to all persons and the barriers that must be overcome in both the physical and social environment. In addition, students were provided reading on disability, resulting in a deeper understanding of disability. Not only did students learn how to complete accessibility surveys but they learned about the social environment and how it may enable or obstruct occupational performance. These findings correlate with the findings of Greene (1997; 1998) and Gent and Gurecka (2001). Furthermore, Eyler and Giles found that
service-learning is strongly correlated with tolerance, personal development and linking the college experience to the community. They also found evidence in their research to suggest that reflective service-learning classes predict increased ‘complexity in analysis of both causes and solutions to social problems’ (Eyler & Giles, p. 75).

Occupational therapy’s client-centred perspective should lead itself to further exploration of service-learning from the perspective of the community partners, however, as with other disciplines, this is once again often absent or assumed based on staff perspectives. Considering occupational therapy aims to promote social inclusion and has endeavoured to foster a disability studies perspective into its education practices, the omission seems incongruent. Yalon-Chamovitz and colleagues (2017) have identified this deficit in occupational therapy education in general. Occupational therapy provides a declarative approach to disabilities studies and client-centred focus in its theory but in is not always present in its practice (Yalon-Chamovitz, Kraiem & Gutman, 2017). In the case of service-learning, most of the literature appears to suggest this is the case. In their study, Yalon-Chamovitz and colleagues describe their own experiences as ‘co-teachers’ in a disabilities studies module with one of the teachers/researchers being a service-user for three semesters. They write about the experiences and difficulties faced when learning to work together in this dynamic, through addressing power differences, using dialogue between each other and their students and the effects their views were having on students’ own perceptions and learning. Though it was not a service-learning course, this showed a partnership between two communities which worked for students’ learning. This study appears to address Whalley Hammell’s (2015) concerns that OT practice does not always include the voice of the community partners, leading to powerlessness in OT interventions.

Shakespeare and Kleine (2013) completed a literature review on how disability is taught to health care students. Though service-learning was only one of the methods, Shakespeare and Kleine (2013) discovered that few studies had interactions with healthy disabled and older people which is essential to providing holistic care. Half of the interventions involved contact in a non-clinical setting, and only 16% of interventions studied entailed the disabled person acting as an expert, teaching the students. Sheakepeare and Kleine’s (2013) study seems to be complementary to Yalon-Chamovitz and colleagues’ (2017) study while highlighting the issue that exists within the service-learning literature of an under-representation of community partners in an equal partnership.
3.4. Service-Learning Partnerships

Relationships are fundamental to service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002), potentially allowing both parties to achieve goals beyond their individual (Long & Campbell, 2012). Through service-learning, universities can theoretically provide richer learning experiences for its students, meet social inclusion and civic aims, and benefit the community. Relationships are built to some extent in every service-learning experience, but scholarly attention is not paid to the formulation, management or outcomes of these partnerships (Bringle et al., 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Clayton, et al., 2010; Crabtree, 2008; Giles & Eyler, 1998; Hammersley, 2012; Hosman, 2014; Jacoby, 2003). Furthermore, the common term for a relationship used in service-learning literature is the term ‘partnership’, however, as Bringle and colleagues (2009) explain, not every relationship is a partnership. The relationship continuum described by Bringle and Colleagues (2009) states that relationships developed during service-learning can cover a variety of forms of interaction, ranging from the two partners being unaware of each other to a transformative relationship. Bringle and colleagues posit that a partnership is a higher form of a relationship which is categorised by the presence of three characteristics: closeness, equity and integrity. Closeness relates to the frequency of interaction, diversity of activities and strength of influence on the other person’s behaviour, decisions, plans and goals (Berscheid, Snyder & Omoto, 1989; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Bringle, Officer, Grim & Hatcher, 2009). Equity is an important characteristic of a satisfying relationship. It is the degree to which outcomes are perceived as similarly proportionate to the input of effort and resources (Bringle et al., 2009). Relationships with high levels of integrity have strong, consistent values and a transformative outlook on the world is offered (Morton, 1995, in Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009).

Furthermore, a beneficial relationship is not necessarily transformational. Transformational relationships are characterised by the growth and development of both parties while a transactional relationship is one which is created with the intention of meeting a specific goal. Transactional relationships have benefits which are immediate but are not enduring (Enos & Morton, 2003; Bringle and Clayton, 2009). Moreover, if a relationship is not at least transactional, it becomes exploitative and is therefore lacking in integrity, equity and closeness (Clayton et al, 2009). Despite Bringle and colleagues’ (2009) work, the literature thus far has paid little attention to relationships within service-learning. In more recent years there has been a call for researchers to use the partnership as a unit of measurement for the effectiveness of a service-learning programme (Bringle,
Clayton & Price, 2009). Once again, however, the literature about relationships focuses on community organisations and not individuals (Buch, Langly, Johnson & Coleman, 2016; Gas, 2010; Goertzen, Greenleaf & Dougherty, 2016; Long & Campbell, 2012). There is a distinct gap in the literature surrounding the relationships experienced by students and individual community partners.

3.4.1. Partnerships with Community Organisations

The dominant partnership witnessed in service-learning literature is that of the university and the community organisation. Collaborative partnerships between universities and communities have been identified as a factor for success in the promotion of community-empowering projects (Long & Campbell, 2012). These partnerships can benefit all involved despite different levels of involvement, motivations, goals and roles (Malm, Prete, Calmia & Eberle, 2012) which has led to a growing number of university-led partnerships (Hosman & Fife, 2012).

A study by Tinkler and colleagues (2014) examined important elements of successful partnerships from the perspective of the community partners, using semi-structured interviews with a total of six participants. In addition, the notes and reflections from a meeting with nine potential community partners were included. From the data collected, Tinkler and colleagues found communication, collaboration and respect were essential to community partners. There were six sections identified in this study; attentiveness to the organisations’ mission, understanding of the human dimension in the work, mindfulness of the partner’s resources, sharing responsibility for inefficiencies, considering the legacy of the partnership and placing importance in the process (Tinkler et al., 2014). The findings from Tinkler and colleague’s (2014) study appear to be similar to previous research which suggest community partners interest lay in partnerships (Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Leiderman, et al, 2003; Rinaldo et al., 2015; Seifer & Vaughn, 2004; Tyron & Stoecker, 2009). In addition, Tinkler and colleagues’ (2014) study had similar findings to other studies which focused on partnerships (Kimme Hea & Wendler Shah, 2016).

Hayward and Li (2017) conducted a mixed methods study on an international service-learning programme for physical therapy students. The study was conducted with 31 community staff members over the course of three years. Twenty-six community staff members were provided with surveys, and 11 staff members were interviewed. The study found community partner staff had an increased understanding of physical therapy over
time. Staff reported that for the partnerships to be effective, they had to have mutual respect, cultural sensitivity, preparedness to work in the organisation and communication. In addition, staff reported the extra resources and labour was much needed and valued. There were, however, some challenges between students and staff such as cultural barriers, the use of inappropriate or unnecessary treatment techniques and poor language skills. To improve the services, staff reported to needing more communication before the commencement of the programme, students should spend more time with the service-users, and staff should receive more feedback (Hayward & Li, 2017). The results from Hayward and Li’s study appears to continue the theme of the importance of treating community partner organisations as true partners through reciprocity.

A study by Hosman (2014) detailed the experiences of creating and managing an international partnership. The partnership was between the faculty and students of a university and an organisation supported by the Ministry of Education in Haiti. The project aimed to create solar power charging systems to power laptops in Haitian schools. By examining three years of the international service-learning, Hosman (2014) suggests that sustaining partnerships involves investing time and effort into developing the relationship. Clear, frequent communication, collaboration and willingness to work beyond the initial goals were instrumental in the experience. In addition, Hosman (2014) found that flexibility from both the university and community was vital to the success as external factors can easily disrupt the service-learning process. Hosman’s (2014) study is perhaps the most thorough examination into a partnership between a university and an international organisation. Showing the challenges and the successes of the partnership provide a useful picture of the process. It is interesting to note that while in many ways the programme was considered a success, the final year of the service-learning programme saw a host of disappointing events. The community partner organisation was dissolved and students made unsuccessful attempts to involve individual community partners in learning how to install the students’ equipment. Finally, the Haitian Ministry of Education would not agree to take on maintenance and installation once the students left, contrary to their previous understanding. While these issues were all out of the control of the researcher and the students, the lack of community engagement may suggest that what the service-learning programme aimed to achieve, while very useful, may not have been valued by the community. This suggests the importance of conferring with the community and allowing their voices to be heard in research.

In contrast to Hosman’s (2014) study, Jones and colleagues (2017) explored a successful reciprocal service-learning partnership in a rural community. Speech pathology
and occupational therapy students worked with children with developmental delays in a rural primary school. The service-learning programme ran for 144 weeks. In this study, community partner staff, students and university faculty engaged in focus groups and interviews to share their perceptions of the programme. From the data collection there were six themes between participants: community participants spoke about the inequalities which existed within the health system and the mutual benefit of service-learning. Furthermore, both faculty from the university and community partners reported that the programme was collaborative, and power was kept within the community. University faculty believed it was important that they delivered on their promises and because of this, the community partners trusted faculty when their plans did not work out. Community partners acknowledge the importance of consistency. Both the service and the students involved were maintained over an extended period which allowed for relationships to be built and continuity of service. Finally, community partners reported that university faculty were open to discussion and feedback to change the programme and shared knowledge with each other. As seen with other studies, the success of Jones and colleagues’ (2017) study appears to be due to the shared power, goals and values. In addition, the relationships and trust developed between the community staff and the university faculty allowed for efficient, successful partnerships.

In of these studies, the partnership appears to work well when the community partners are treated as equals. When there are clear lines of communication, partners are provided with necessary information and receive students and staff who wish to work with them collaboratively on projects that they value, the partnerships appear to be successful. While this is an area that has significantly less research than the student perspective, community organisations are starting to be examined and their needs understood.

### 3.4.2. Partnerships with Individual Community Partners

The service-learning literature often regards individuals in the community as community members. The term community partner is often left to community organisations and the staff within those organisations. Despite Bringle, Clayton and Price’s (2009) claim that individuals can be community partners, individuals in the community are often not bestowed the term ‘partner’. The de-classification of individuals as community partners suggests a power imbalance; the person is relegated to the periphery of service-learning planning when they should be the focus. Many authors stress the importance of being aware of power imbalances for students partaking in service-learning (Camacho,
2004; Pompa, 2002; Stewart & Webster, 2011; Weah et al., 2003; Yoder Clark, 2009) and some scholars have considered the potentially damaging long-term effects from a lack of consideration in this area (Crabtree, 2008; Carrick, et al., 2000; Tilley-Lubbs, 2009). Successful service-learning is reciprocal civic engagement as both learner and community partner can benefit from the collaborative relationship (Furco, 1996). There are few studies that mention the individual relationships that occur and are fostered during, and as an outcome of service-learning. It can be argued that these relationships determine the success of any given service-learning experience for both parties, however, it is one of the most under-researched areas of service-learning.

Brown and Bright (2017) conducted a study into the experience of service-learning for nursing students working with older adults. In their service-learning programme students were paired with individual community partners to develop relationships in addition to running activity groups. Forty-five students in total participated in this study. Data were collected through online surveys and analysis of students’ reflective journals. Before the service-learning programme, students wrote in their reflective journals. Analysing these entries, Brown and Bright (2017) found most participants expressed negative emotions before the service-learning programme. Afterwards, students demonstrated positive attitudes and new learning in terms of patient-centred care, teamwork and communication (Brown & Bright, 2017). This study is interesting because while the process of the service-learning programme is using the relationship as a mechanism for learning, it is heavily based on the benefit of the students. As one of the few studies with the intention to develop relationships with individual community partners, the community partner perspective is not included. In addition, the focus of the study goes against the patient-centred care that the service-learning programme being examined is aiming to achieve.

Steinman (2011) provides an interesting perspective on relationships through his experiences of developing a service-learning programme with a tribe of First Nations people. Upon approaching the tribe members, Steinman reported a sense of hostility when the idea of students providing help to the tribe was proposed. The tribe, however, welcomed students to come into the community to learn about their culture and traditions. Steinman reflected on this experience, writing that the community wished to make connections to help dispel misconceptions about their practices. In order to create the ‘authentic relationship’ service-learning theory calls for, Steinman removed the ‘service’ from the service-learning experience and created ‘space’ for the indigenous people’s perspectives (Steinman, 2011). Through this ‘space’, Steinman reflected the First Nations
people were able to have their voices heard and students engaged in democratic listening to community partners’ experiences. This approach provided a culturally appropriate interaction with the community partners, instead of forcing service on them. Ultimately, by making space for this interaction to occur, Steinman writes that it allowed for opportunities for transformation and change. Steinman (2011) concludes that service-learning should look towards building authentic relationships instead of focusing on the power inequalities to combat the hierarchical structures that can arise from service-learning. Steinman, however, notes that there has been no clear path towards creating those relationships.

Morton and Bergbauer (2015) created four off-campus service-learning experiences with the aim to focus on relationships, conversation and shared meaning. Students and community partners in each of the four service-learning experiences were intended to meet, talk and discuss future actions based on their conversations with each other. Morton and Bergbauer (2015) collected the data by listening in to the stories and later discussing the meaning of those stories between themselves. When both researchers found a story interesting or meaningful, they attributed theory to the narrative and their own reflections were analysed. There were two main themes obtained from the data; the democratic threshold of civic engagement and the meaning of community in service-learning. Relating to the first theme, Morton and Bergbauer (2015) found that becoming a citizen requires the person to think of themselves in relation to other people and society. By talking about social issues, the results suggest that participants became more political and experienced at working with multiple perspectives while maintaining their own. The second theme was the researchers’ understanding of community. Morton and Bergbauer (2015) state that community organisations are not representative of the community. According to the researcher’s, the community consists of the people within. This viewpoint is almost unique among service-learning literature as most studies assume the community and community organisations to be the same. Morton and Bergauer’s (2015) study does have some limitations, however. While the programme itself was focused on the relationships, as were the data collection methods through observing interactions between students and community partners, the results and the discussion were more focused on bigger picture concepts of citizenship and community. The relationships were examined only as a mechanism for obtaining the results. In addition, the description of the relationships came from the researcher and not the students or community partners. For example, at one point the researchers observe “The depth of conversation is often humbling and moving and sometimes transformational” (Morton & Bergbauer, 2015, p. 25). While this may be the case, it cannot be assumed that the experiences are transformational without understanding
the meaning of the discussion for the community partners. Furthermore, the researchers focus appears to be more on their own responses to the interactions than that of the community partners’ and students’. Despite this, Morton and Bergbauer are among the first researchers to approach the topic of relationships between individual community partners and students.

The first of these studies to directly broach community partners’ experiences of the relationship was conducted by Bialka and Haylik (2016). The service-learning programme in this study included students from a diversity and inclusion course, an introduction to school counselling course and a service-learning in the community course. For all three courses, the aim was to provide students with the opportunity to apply their learning to the real world. Students from the diversity and inclusion course worked with high school students with visual impairments for ten weeks in an activity club. Students from the introduction to school counselling course worked in a private urban college preparatory school to provide basic counselling to the high school students. Students from the service-learning course worked with high school students in the same school to provide individual tutoring. Thirty-three university students and ten high school students took part in this study. Data were collected from university students through focus groups, reflective journals and open-ended pre- and post- surveys. The high school students engaged in focus groups and the surveys. For university students, when responsibilities and roles were defined on a weekly basis, the experience was more valuable. When their role was not defined, students became frustrated. Students also reported service-learning was a useful tool for applying coursework to practice. The community partners reported desires for a less hierarchical relationship with the university students and wanting to learn about the university students personally. They also reported interest in the university and wanted to visit the campus because of interacting with the students. Both students and community partners felt the experience was more valuable when there was a relationship and both students and community partners recognised the similarities with each other (Bialka & Haylik, 2016). As seen with other studies, the relationship appears to be important to community partners (d’Arlach, Sánchez and Feuer, 2009; James & Logan, 2016), however, from Bialka and Havlik’s (2016) study it appears that the relationships from the community partners’ perspective were not entirely satisfying. Community partners reported desiring less hierarchical relationships and wishing to know them as people. As suggested by Bialka & Havlick (2016), the nature of the activities—tutoring and counselling in particular—may have lent itself to hierarchical relationships. Therefore, it
appears the activity itself may have been a barrier to providing the service that the community partners wished to experience.

3.5. Identifying the Gap in the Literature

As seen from this review, student and university outcomes is dominating the literature. Community partners, both organisations and individuals, are comparatively under-researched. Individual community partners, however, appear to be almost entirely absent from the research. The impact of service-learning on individuals is often assumed or reliant on student or staff reports. What is known of community partners, however, is that the service-learning relationship appears to be critical to the experience. There is a dearth of literature regarding individual community partners’ experiences of relationships. Furthermore, individual community partners’ voices are almost absent from the service-learning literature. To be worthy of its claims of reciprocity and social justice, service-learning literature must reduce this inequality. This study aims to bridge the gap by exploring a relationship-focused occupational therapy service-learning programme from the perspective of the community partners and the students.

3.6. Conclusion

Student outcomes have long been the primary focus for service-learning literature, as such, a body of literature exists which appears to provide substantial evidence for students’ outcomes. In addition, there is a clear picture of the particular outcomes which are possible as a result of service-learning for students in terms of Eyler and Giles’ (1994) outcomes; connectedness with others, personal development, increased interest in citizenship and civic engagement, improved academic learning, the ability to transfer knowledge and skills and the ability to reframe perceptions on complex issues. Several other outcomes include; social justice and changing attitudes towards older adults, disability, ethnic minorities and poverty.

In contrast, the community partner perspective is immensely under-researched. Community organisation outcomes appear less clear-cut than is often assumed. Service-learning can be a drain on the organisation’s resources and if faculty or students do not commit to the service-learning experience, service-learning can be damaging to the organisation. Organisations can benefit from service-learning when there is clear
communication and expectations, dedicated students and when the service-learning programme fits the goals of the community.

For individual community partners, the outcomes of service-learning were more dependent on the service-learning programme. Occupational therapy, and its use of disability studies theory, appears to be a perfect match for service-learning and a person-focused approach, however, as seen from the literature, most studies still do not take the community partner perspective into account.

The gap in the literature appears in the relationships experienced by students and individual community partners. A few studies have suggested the importance of relationships to students and community partners, but no studies have focused on the relationship as a primary aim of the research in the context of a service-learning programme developed to foster relationships.
4. Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an explanation of the research question, followed by the purpose of the study and research design. The research paradigm will also be discussed. The study took place over the course of two phases which will be discussed separately. In the section relating to phase one, there will be a description of the methodology, the ethical considerations, the measures used and the sampling strategies and data collection. Changes made to the methodology between phase one and phase two will then be described. The data analysis processes will be outlined for both the quantitative and qualitative strands. Finally, the verification procedures will be discussed.

4.2. The Research Question and the Purpose of the Study

This study sought to answer the research question;

“What are the outcomes and perceptions for community partners and occupational therapy students in a person-centred service-learning experience?”

To do this, the outcomes and perceptions of the service-learning module were examined for community partners and OT students. This study aimed to give voice to the community partners who are often absent in service-learning literature.

The purpose of conducting this research was to challenge the trend of the current organisation-centric service-learning literature. While many studies examine outcomes for students (Celio, Durlak & Dymnicki, 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Warren, 2012; Yorio and Ye, 2012), the university and community organisations (Buch et al., 2016; Goertzen et al., 2016), almost no literature exists examining the impact on individual community partners. This study, therefore, offers a novel perspective to the body of literature in two ways; (a) The service-learning module in this study is unique in that the community partner is the primary focus and students are encouraged to develop relationships with their partners to engage in meaningful activities together. (b) Using the service-learning relationship as a lens for this study, both community partners and students are given equal value in their perceptions and outcomes of the service-learning module. Higher education institutions often cite their aims beyond academic goals such as personal development and civic engagement in their mission statements (Trinity Strategic Plan, 2014-2019). Creating
relationships with community partners may be a method to achieve these aims while simultaneously creating opportunities for engagement and competencies for OT students.

4.3. Research Aims

To answer the research question, community partners and occupational therapy students had separate research aims.

Community partners had three main research aims:
1. To explore the understanding of the term ‘service-learning partner’ and the nature of the service-learning relationship
2. To examine the impact of the service-learning module on personal development
3. To understand the effect of the service-learning module on the occupational engagement and participation

For occupational therapy students there were five research aims:
1. To explore the understanding of the term ‘service-learning partner’ and the nature of the service-learning relationship
2. To examine the impact of the service-learning module on personal development and professional development
3. To understand the effect of the service-learning module on the occupational engagement and participation
4. To measure changes to students’ attitudes towards disability as a result of the service-learning module
5. To explore students’ growth and learning through the use of guided reflection

Overall, the aim of this research is to understand if this service-learning module functions as a typical service-learning program in terms of impact, considering the unique perspective employed. To examine this, the five aims listed above were developed based on a literature review of other service-learning programmes’ outcomes for students. From what little research there was on community partners’ outcomes and the assumption that service-learning should be reciprocal, community partners were examined with similar measures. The only measures which were not shared between community partners and students were aims four and five; attitudes towards disability and demonstrating growth through guided reflection as these were deemed not relevant for the partners.
4.4.  Research Design – Mixed Methods Design

This research utilises a mixed methods convergent parallel design; qualitative and quantitative data are collected in parallel, analysed separately, and then merged (Wittink, Barg & Gallo, 2006). Qualitative research assumes that reality is subjective, and individuals construct knowledge and understanding based on their experiences within their social and cultural context (Gray, 2009). In contrast, quantitative research focuses on the collection of numerical data and statistical analysis to define an objective reality (Williams, 2007). Qualitative methodologies are well suited to the form of inquiry which seeks to make sense of complex situations. They are ideally suited to providing in-depth understanding insight into phenomena which may not have been a response to a specific hypothesis (Creswell, 1998; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

A mixed methods design was chosen for this study as the integration of quantitative and qualitative data can further strengthen the findings from one or other method if there is consistency between the findings (Holzman, Horst & Ghant, 2017). Some researchers have criticised the use of mixed methodology claiming that the qualitative and quantitative research designs are fundamentally contradictory (Bergman, 2008). Johnson and Turner (2003) however, suggest that a well-designed mixed methods study can take the best from quantitative and qualitative research design. Bryman (2008) also suggests some research questions are best answered through mixed methodology. Service-learning, in particular, can benefit from mixed methods research as it allows for an in-depth look at complex situations while providing quantifiable data (Schumer, 2015).

By using a comprehensive quantitative-qualitative system, I was able to incorporate multiple measures to a wide range of outcomes and triangulate data. As individuals’ outcomes and experiences exist in a complex cultural and social environment while hypothetically still producing measurable outcomes, a mixed method approach was deemed most appropriate for this study. Furthermore, mixed methods research naturally aligns itself with the philosophies of pragmatism (Denzin, 2012) as it allows for a critical perspective of experiences within the greater context (Morgan, 2014). I used Creswell and Plano Cark’s (2010) model for selecting the research design. The decision-making process is categorised into four key headings;
4.4.1. *Interaction between the strands.*

This refers to the extent to which the quantitative and qualitative strands are kept independent or interact with each other. The strands for this study were independent of each other as they were designed, collected and analysed separately in order to create triangulation, thus classifying this study as a parallel convergent design.

4.4.2. *Priority of the strands*

This section refers to the importance the researcher has attributed to the quantitative and qualitative strands to answer the research question. This study had used both qualitative and quantitative measures to explore the research question and aims however, there is an emphasis on the qualitative data in this study due to the critical pragmatist perspective and a focus of the lived experience for participants.

4.4.3. *Timing of the strands*

Timing be defined as the time the data sets are collected or the order in which the researcher uses the results from the two sets of data within the study. This study’s timing was concurrent as the quantitative and qualitative data were gathered simultaneously in each phase to triangulate data.

4.4.4. *Merging the strands*

The point of interface is when the quantitative and qualitative strands are mixed. In this study, the point of interface was at the interpretation phase. The two strands were kept separate until I was ready to draw conclusions. To do this, I analysed the data from the quantitative strand and the qualitative strand separately and then merged the findings. I chose this point of interface to minimise any bias when interpreting the data for triangulation.
4.5. Participants

Participants included five groups of community partners and two groups of first and second-year occupational therapy students. This section will provide a description of the participants.

4.5.1. Community Partners

Table 1: Total community partner participants recruited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants Recruited</th>
<th>Certificate for Contemporary Living Course</th>
<th>Independent Living Skills Course</th>
<th>Brain Training Group</th>
<th>Residential Home for Older Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants Recruited</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>N=28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The community partners were recruited from four different groups. One group, the Certificate for Contemporary Living Course, was accessed twice.

4.5.2. Certificate for Contemporary Living (CCL) Course

The CCL course is run by an education centre for people with intellectual disability and is associated with Trinity College Dublin. It is a full-time two-year course based within the university, which introduces students to academic life and develops life skills. Modules cover sciences, mathematics, arts, technology, work experience and self-development. At the time of this study, the CCL course was aiming to achieve status as an accredited national course, providing a National Framework of Qualifications Level 5 certificate at the end of the course.

Service-learning has been integrated into the CCL course for many years. CCL students and OT students share the practical element of the Health and Fitness module. This module aims to teach CCL students about healthy living through lectures and practical activities. The CCL students share this module with ten OT students by engaging in sports and activities in the university sports centre on a weekly basis during the academic year. Additionally, CCL students learn coaching skills as a part of their course.
The CCL students lead the activities to practice these skills and meet their course aims of achieving leadership and communication skills.

The CCL students who were recruited in phase one were completing their second year in the CCL course. In phase two, the participants from the CCL course were a new group of students starting their first year in the course. The service-learning element of the CCL course changed between phase one and phase two. In the second phase, half the academic year was dedicated to Irish Sign Language (ISL) classes and the other half was the sports and fitness class.

4.5.3. Independent Living Skills (ILS) Programme

The ILS programme aimed to develop skills that would enable independent living. The skills included: cooking, budgeting, managing relationships, job skills and home management. Four homeless men with an intellectual disability and four first-year occupational therapy students took part in this programme. The ILS programme was jointly established between an advocacy service and an occupational therapist. This was in response to a need within the community for the provision of support to develop independent living skills as a means of assisting applications for government housing.

The presence of students was integrated into the design of the programme as they were also learning to live independently at that time and would need to learn the same skills. The members of the ILS programme designed the course content and structure based on their own identified needs and goals. At the end of the programme, a graduation ceremony was conducted, and all participants received a certificate of completion. The course ran for ten weeks in Trinity College Dublin.

4.5.4. Brain Training Group

The brain training group was a weekly activity group facilitated within a community day service for people with acquired brain injury. The brain training group was created with the intention of improving cognition and developing strategies to improve participation in everyday life. This is completed through different modes of learning such as activities, puzzles, videos and presentations. The brain training group is run on a weekly basis indefinitely and members of the group can attend for as long as they need.

Six occupational therapy students completed their service-learning in the brain training group. The students were introduced into the group by staff as volunteers. The
students paired with the group members on a weekly basis to complete activities and solve puzzles together, providing support to their partner if needed.

4.5.5. Residential Home for Older Adults

Three residents from a home for older adults engaged with three occupational therapy students in service-learning. The residents were approached by an occupational therapist working in the residential home and were asked if they would like to meet with the students.

A knitting group was set up with two residents and two occupational therapy students. The residents chose to engage in a knitting group as it was already a meaningful activity and it became a social event by including the students. The knitting group ran once a week for eleven weeks with the end goal to make sensory blankets for other residents who had dementia.

Another resident met with an OT student individually on a weekly basis. This resident had a visual impairment and spent most of his time in his room as a result. He and the student met each week to go walking in the surrounding area. They met each week for eleven weeks.

4.5.6. Engagement in service-learning

Table 2: The length of time each community partner group engaged in service-learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Partner Group</th>
<th>Length of Service-learning Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCL Course</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILS Programme</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain Training Group</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Home for Older Adults</td>
<td>11 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The amount of time engaged in service-learning as shown in Table 1 refers to the amount of time offered depending on the community organisation each academic year. In some cases, however, community partners can engage in service-learning with two groups of students.
Table 3: The percentage of community partners from each group and the length of engagement in service-learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N=</th>
<th>Engagement in one service-learning module</th>
<th>Engagement in two service-learning modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCL Course</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5 (45%)</td>
<td>6 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILS Programme</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain Training Group</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Home for Older Adults</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total=28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.7. Occupational Therapy Students

Table 4: Total occupational therapy student participants recruited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st Year OT Students</th>
<th>2nd Year OT Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants Recruited</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>N=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>N=62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The occupational therapy students are first- and second-year undergraduate students. They are predominantly female, and most students are between the ages of 18-21. Most students would have begun their first year directly following on from their final year of secondary school education. In each year, there are approximately three mature students.

4.5.8. Engagement in service-learning

First and second-year occupational therapy students engaged in a variety of service-learning experiences. The Study of Occupation module for second-year students provides more structure, meaning there is less variety in the type of service-learning experiences and the length of engagement. Typically, second-year students spend ten weeks with their partner.

As first-year students mostly choose their own service-learning experiences, some students may spend different lengths of time engaging with their partner. Other factors
such as public holidays, the structure of the academic year and unexpected situations such as illness may also influence the length of a service-learning experience. Students engaged with their partners any length between six and nineteen weeks. Most students spent between eight and 13 weeks and the average amount of time students spent with their partner was 10 weeks.

Table 5: The length of time first-year students spent with their partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Engagement</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-9 weeks</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 weeks</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-19 weeks</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6. Phase One of Study

In this study, data were gathered in two phases. The first phase captured students and community partners from the academic year 2015-2016. Both first-year and second-year students were included in this phase. Two groups of community partners were also included.

4.6.1. Participants

This study examined the outcomes and perceptions of a service-learning module for both community partners and OT students. Tables 6 and 7 show the participants of phase one of the study.

Table 6: Occupational therapy students recruited in Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Recruited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year students</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-year students</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7: Community partners recruited in Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Recruited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate for Contemporary Living (CCL) Course</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living Skills (ILS) Programme</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.2. Recruitment

Recruitment was completed through purposive sampling; participants were chosen because of their engagement in the service-learning module. All participants were recruited for this study through a gatekeeper.

There were two gatekeepers used to access the participants:

- The executive officer in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy acted as a gatekeeper for the OT students and the members of the ILS programme.
- The executive officer with the service associated with the CCL course acted as gatekeeper.

To recruit participants, both gatekeepers forwarded the researcher’s invitation letters (See Appendix B).

In the invitation letter, I introduced myself as the researcher and explained the study to the potential participants. A participation information leaflet was attached to the email for further information. The contact details were provided in the email should the potential participants have any questions or if they wished to further discuss their participation in the study. The email contained a link to the online survey which potential participants could use if they wished to participate in the study. Upon accessing the link, participants were directed to an informed consent page which they were required to read and provide consent. If they did not wish to provide consent the potential participant was immediately re-directed to the end page of the survey.

The participants were given a week to consider if they would like to participate in the study. They were informed that after a month’s time, the survey would close, and they would not be able to access it through the link. An email was forwarded by the gatekeepers from the researcher to remind potential participants of the study at the end of the month.
before the survey closed. The process of recruiting participants was replicated at the end of the service-learning module.

The qualitative data were collected from interviews and focus groups. Students and community partners were provided with the opportunity to take part in the focus through the questionnaire. Participants were provided with information at the end of the survey and requested to tick a box if they wished to attend a focus group. Participants were then requested to input their email address, so they could be contacted if they wished to participate.

4.6.3. Ethical Considerations

This study was granted ethical approval by the Trinity College of Dublin, University of Dublin health science ethics committee on 16th August 2015 (See Appendix C) and the medicine research ethics committee on 12th July 2015 (See Appendix C). Amendments were made to the medicine research ethics committee which involved the inclusion of two measures and the addition of the second-year OT students into the study. Amendments were approved by the ethical committee in October 2015 (See Appendix C). Ethical approval from the two ethics committees ensured that the research project’s design was completed under the ethical guidelines of Trinity College Dublin. When designing this study, I used the National Disability Authority (NDA) Guidelines for Including People with Disabilities in Research (2002) as a guide.

4.6.4. Informed consent

To achieve informed consent, participants must be provided with sufficient information to decide if they will participate in a study (Workman & Kielhofner, 2006). The inclusion/exclusion criteria for the study was able to omit some categories of potential vulnerable participants such as; dependent relationships to myself as the researcher, participants under the age of eighteen years. To be included in this study, participants had to be literate and able to provide written consent.

In order to achieve informed consent participants were contacted via email through the use of a gatekeeper. The email contained an introduction of myself as the researcher, a brief outline of the study and contact details for the researcher so that participants could ask questions. The introduction letter designed based on International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability (2003) guidelines for accessible participant
information forms. Participants were also encouraged to take seven days to consider their participation in the study. A participant information leaflet was attached to the email and was written in Plain English. Before sending the introduction letter and the leaflet to potential participants I asked staff working with participants to advise on the accessibility of the layout and language.

All participants were asked to complete an online consent form at the start of the online questionnaire. If students did not give consent, they would be immediately redirected to the end of the survey and thanked for their time. If they agreed to take part in the study, they would be allowed to access and complete the survey. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were informed of the opportunity to take part in a focus group. Participants who wished to take part in the focus group were requested to provide their email address so that the researcher could contact them.

At the beginning of the focus groups and interviews, the researcher reviewed the details of the study including the purpose and methods. Participants were reminded that they were not obliged to answer any questions they did not wish to answer, and they could withdraw at any time, as per the NDA’s guidelines (2009).

4.6.5. Confidentiality

Confidentiality was addressed at several points in the study during the research planning, the data collection, data cleaning and dissemination of research results (Sieber, 1992). During the research planning phase, I considered confidentiality when writing the research proposal and applying for ethical approval.

During data collection the participant information leaflet and the consent provided assurances of confidentiality which is necessary for acquiring informed consent and building trust with the participants (Crow et al., 2006). During the data cleaning phase, I removed any identifying information (Kaiser, 2009). I then replaced the identifying information from focus groups by assigning a number to the participants. I later changed these numbers to pseudonyms in order to confidentiality but also maintain the human quality to the data as it is under-represented in service-learning research. Confidentiality was maintained during dissemination of research through keeping the data anonymised and avoiding using any identifiable information in quotes.

Both during and after the research the I maintained confidentiality by storing and protecting the data to maintain the identities of the participants and the integrity of the research (Workman & Kielfithon, 2006). Electronic data were stored on an encrypted
folder on the researcher’s work computer which was password protected and located within a locked room in the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences in St. James’ Hospital. All hardcopies of the data were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure room. Audio tapes of the interviews were erased immediately after they were transcribed. Transcriptions were made available to participants if they desired, as per the assurance on the participant information leaflet.

4.6.6. sensitivity and vulnerability

The interview and focus group questions were not of a sensitive nature and it was not foreseen that it would cause distress in the participants, however, I took precautions to ensure there would be appropriate supports if necessary. I provided information about supports within the college the participants could use such as the college Student Counselling Services, the College Health Service and the Chaplaincy as well as out of hours support service such as Niteline and Aware. Before the focus groups, I reiterated to participants their right to refuse answering any questions and withdraw at any time. I encouraged participants to keep topics discussed within the group private.

4.6.7. other practical strategies

I chose to conduct the focus groups within the spaces where participants attended their course/programme as it was familiar and convenient for participants. All locations also provided suitable privacy to maintain confidentiality (NDA, 2009). To accommodate participants physical needs, I provided refreshments and offered breaks during the focus groups to ensure participants remained comfortable (NDA, 2009).

4.6.8. Quantitative Sampling and Collection

Quantitative data were collected through two surveys which were held pre- and post- the service-learning module to capture changes that occurred. The surveys were carried out online and were hosted from the Qualtrics web survey software.

An online survey was chosen for this study as it was believed to minimise the inconvenience to the participants. As noted by Llieva, Baron and Healey (2002) and Wright (2006), responses could be stored easily and transmitted to a database file
immediately which allowed for preliminary analyses on collected data while waiting for responses. I was aware that there could be some disadvantages to online surveys, for instance, some studies have challenged that it is difficult to ascertain the non-response rate (Andrews et al., 2003) despite other studies claiming that the response rate is equal to or better than those for traditional post surveys (Thompson, Surface, Martin, Sander, 2003; Markovitch, 2009). It was decided that the advantages of using this method of online surveys could overcome the potential disadvantages.

### 4.6.9. Qualitative Data Sampling and Collection

Qualitative data were collected through focus groups. At the end of the online survey, students and community partners were sent on to a page where they were thanked for their participation and were asked if they would like to be contacted for focus group. The focus group was explained to participants, what would be required of them and where the focus group would likely take place and when. Finally, the basic questions that would be asked were explained. Participants were asked to leave their email if they would like to be involved. It was reiterated to participants that they did not have to take part in the focus group. Participants were provided with my contact details, so they could contact me directly if they had any questions. Participants who requested to be involved in the focus groups were contacted near the end of the service-learning module and a date that suited all participants was arranged. The focus groups took place in the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences for the students and the ILS programme members. The CCL members’ focus group was conducted in the building where the CCL course took place.
4.6.10. Measures

Quantitative and qualitative measures were utilised to answer the research question. Table 5 provides an overview of the measures used to answer the specific research aims of the study for both community partners and students.

Table 8: Quantitative measures included in Phase 1 for community partners and students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Aim</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To examine the nature of the service-learning relationship between community partners and OT students</td>
<td>• Service-Learner Partner Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To investigate the impact of service-learning on the community partners’ and students’ personal and professional development</td>
<td>• The Occupational Therapy Competencies Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Learning Goals Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal Skills Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To explore the impact of service-learning on occupational engagement and participation for community partners and students</td>
<td>• Occupational Self-Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Occupational Participation and Spin-off Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To examine the impact of service-learning module on students’ attitudes towards disability</td>
<td>• Modified Issues in Disability Scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.11. Quantitative Strand

The purpose of survey research is to gather quantitative data from a population to describe the population or to explore correlations (Sapsford, 2007). Questionnaires can be designed by the researchers or pre-existing measures can be used (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004). While there are many advantages to using pre-existing questionnaires (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011), the research question required some measures to be formulated specifically for this study as there were no appropriate pre-existing questionnaires.

4.5.13.1 The Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire

Reciprocity is an essential element of service-learning (Jacoby, 1996). Kendall (1990) states that all stakeholders in service-learning are learners. Both the student and the community partner serve, and both learn. Service-learning encourages students to do things with others rather than for them and all those involved should expect to change in the process (Karasik, 1993). For service-learning to be effective and beneficial for all parties, it must be built of a strong partnership (Jacoby, 2003). The nature of the partnership during the service-learning experience can either benefit both parties when managed well or can result in strengthened biases and prejudices (Koliba, 2004). The service-learning partnership is different from other volunteering relationships as it requires both participants to be active and on an equal standing.

To identify the participants’ understanding of the service-learning partnership, the Service-Learning Questionnaire was given to both community partners and students (See Appendix D.1). The questionnaire contained two questions. Question 1 was ‘do you know what a service-learning partner is?’. Participants were required to tick ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Question 2 was ‘if yes, explain what a service-learning partner means to you’. This question was posed at the beginning and at the end of the module to show what changes, if any, had occurred in the understanding of the service-learning partnership. As this questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the purposes of this study, there are no validity or reliability measures.

Understanding the nature of a service-learning partner relationship is important as it suggests what is expected by the relationship and the actions within it. In true partnerships, all participants will teach, learn, exchange resources, and reap mutual benefits (Torres, 2000). Without an understanding of a true service-learning partnership many of the benefits may not be achieved. As Jacoby (2003) explains; “there can be no recipe or
formula for successful, sustainable, democratic partnerships for service-learning” (p.1). As such, it is difficult to identify what elements should be researched when measuring service-learning partnerships.

4.5.13.2 Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire (PPDQ)

Personal and professional development in service-learning has been widely researched by many studies (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gitlow & Flecky, 2005; Ngai, 2006; Simmons & Cleary 2006). The goals of any service-learning module are dependent on the course objectives where the module is conducted. These objectives can vary widely and can cover such areas of personal development such as attitudinal change (Keen & Hall, 2009; Robb Jones, LePeau, & Robbins, 2013) leadership (Wurr & Hamilton, 2012), ethical development (Seider, Gillmor & Rabinowicz, 2010), spiritual development (Welch & Koth, 2009), critical thinking (Limbach et al., 2008), social justice (Schwartz, 2011), citizen competences (Escorza et al., 2013) and citizenship (Eyler, 2002; Rockenbach, Hudson & Tuchmayer, 2014). Service-learning programmes may also be designed to enable professional development in students to achieve greater knowledge in their discipline (Furco, 1996; Seider et al., 2011) and to assist in the application of real world issues (Furutan, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, the PPDQ (See Appendix D.2) was developed based upon the course goals and competencies of the occupational therapy course in Trinity College Dublin (AOTI, 2008).

The original PPDQ was created to measure the professional and personal development for a group facilitation module run within the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in Trinity College Dublin (Lalor & Lynch, 2009). Lalor and Lynch’s (2009) questionnaire was based off the professional competencies for occupational therapists by Kasar and Clark’s (2000) professional behaviours. This questionnaire was modified for this study to remove any questions specific to the group facilitation module and instead used the skills which were based upon the Association of Occupational Therapists Ireland (AOTI) competencies. In total, there were sixty-six statements in the questionnaire. Participants were requested to rate their level of agreement with the statements from a five-point scale of ‘a lot of the time’, ‘often’, ‘sometimes’, ‘rarely’ and ‘never’. The questionnaire included questions such as; ‘I can be reliable in a collaborative relationship’, ‘I am aware of how my speech patterns (tone, intonation, speed) effect communication’. ‘I
can alter my behaviour on the basis of feedback’, ‘I am not afraid to engage in unfamiliar situations’ and ‘I can demonstrate critical thinking skills’.

The Personal Skills Questionnaire (PSQ) was used with the community partners (See Appendix D.3). This questionnaire was also based on the PPDQ in this study, but the language was simplified, and some questions were omitted as they were not applicable. It was also based on the course objectives from the CCL course. The course objectives for the CCL course were the development of transferable skills as shown in Table 9. An alternative simplified version of the PSQ was also used with participants from the CCL course (See Appendix D.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: CCL Course Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The PSQ contained similar content to the students’ PPDQ. In total, there were twenty-nine statements in the questionnaire. Some examples of statements include; ‘I can be on time’, ‘I can work together with another person’, ‘I am not afraid to do new things’, ‘I know about my body language’ and ‘I make good choices’. Participants were requested to rate their level of agreement with the statements from a five-point scale of ‘a lot of the time’, ‘often’, ‘sometimes’, ‘rarely’ and ‘never’. There was also a sixth point for ‘unsure’. The levels of agreement were also accompanied by an image of a face (See Appendix D.5). These images were used to promote accessibility and reduce the participant burden for participants who might find it tiring to read. Some of the barriers for people with intellectual disabilities for inclusion in research is the lack of a concrete frame of reference, difficulty with abstract concepts, limited literacy and vocabulary and fatigue (Carlsson, Paterson, Scot-Findlay, Ehnfors & Ehrenberg, 2007; Whitehurst, 2006; Wilson et al.,
Visual aids and symbols are considered key strategies to overcome these barriers (Kroll, 2011). While all participants in this study were able to read, it was believed that having a visual aid to accompany the words would make the process of completing the questionnaire easier for participants.

Neither the PPDQ or the PSQ have been tested for validity or internal reliability. This has been noted as a limitation of this study.

4.5.13.3 Learning Goals Questionnaire

The Learning Goals Questionnaire was provided to the OT students pre- and post-the service-learning module (See Appendix D.5). To reduce participant burden for community partners the questionnaire was not used as literature does not typically examine goals for community partners. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. In the first section, OT students were asked to write down three learning goals for the service-learning module. The second section asked students to describe how they aimed to achieve those goals at the beginning of the module. At the end of the service-learning module, students were provided with the same questions, but they were asked whether they had achieved their learning goals and if so, how.

Learning goals are used to improve students’ learning and motivation and to encourage responsibility and ownership of their learning (Zimmerman, 1990). Students who invest in their goals also demonstrate greater persistence, creativity and risk-taking in their achievement of those goals (Dewett, 2007). However, service-learning can open up opportunities for learning that is not expected in traditional learning pedagogies. These opportunities include personal and professional development, changes in perspectives, leadership skills, ethical development, spiritual development, critical thinking and social justice. The rationale for inclusion of the Learning Goals Questionnaire in this study was to identify if students adhered to their learning goals through the year or if they altered their goals.

According to Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (1984), learning is a process which is continuous and is grounded in experience. The theory states that ideas are not fixed but are constantly being formed and re-formed through experience. Kolb also states that students are not ‘blank slates’ and that all learning is in fact re-learning. Students have a wealth of experiences, beliefs and theories before the learning process begins. Students beliefs, therefore, may need to be modified or disposed of in addition to the process.
implanting new ideas through examining, testing and then integrating new and more refined ideas into the person’s belief systems (Kolb, 1984).

A fundamental element of service-learning is reflection (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). Debriefing sessions occurred alongside the practical element of the service-learning module was used to assist the reflective process (Pearson & Smith, 1985). Students were required to attend debriefing sessions to discuss their experiences, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and actions. Students’ ideas were challenged by the debriefing facilitator and are required to critically analyse their beliefs and actions. As such, it was expected that the students would develop their thinking, attitudes and beliefs throughout the year and would begin to formulate new learning goals for themselves as they became aware of more opportunities for learning. By measuring the students’ goals, it was thought that students’ beliefs about their learning and their actual learning could be examined.

4.5.13.4 The Occupational Therapy Competencies Questionnaire

The Occupational Therapy Competencies Questionnaire was developed for the purposes of this study (See Appendix D.6). It is a self-report measure, based on the AOTI entry-level competencies for occupational therapists that are met in the service-learning module (Table 10).

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 10: AOTI Entry Level Competencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> Describe the meaning of occupation for each service user, group or community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2</strong> Describe the person-occupation environment relationship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong> Use effective listening, verbal &amp; nonverbal communication skills, both informally and formally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.2</strong> Give and receive feedback in an open and honest manner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.3</strong> Modify language and/or education for the listener, which is accessible and appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.4</strong> Present oral and written information in a clear, concise and well-structured manner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Occupational Therapy Competencies Questionnaire is a sixteen-statement questionnaire with 5 points of agreement ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. The service-learning module’s aims were developed from the AOTI entry-level competencies and included statements such as; ‘I understand the meaning of the term ‘occupation’, ‘I can describe the occupations of another person based on their values’ and
‘I can give and receive feedback in an honest manner’. This questionnaire was used to show whether the service-learning module is achieving the stated aims. As this questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the purposes of this study, there are no validity or reliability measures.

4.5.13.5 Occupational Self-Assessment (OSA)

To measure the value and competence in occupational performance, the OSA (Baron et al., 2006) was provided to OT students and community partners in order to understand if engaging in shared activity during service-learning impacted occupational engagement and participation. The OSA is based on Kielhofner’s (2002) Model of Human Occupation (MOHO). In MOHO, four factors contribute to the overall occupational behaviour: volition, habituation, performance capacity and the environment. Volition relates to motivation and includes a sense of personal causation, values, interests and self-knowledge. Habituation refers to the completion of daily occupations in an efficient, effective, and routine pattern. Performance capacity includes basic abilities to do tasks. The environment includes objects, other people, cultural context and occupational forms. Each item on the OSA relates to one of the MOHO factors. There are two sections to the OSA, ‘myself’ and ‘my environment’ (Kielhofner & Forsyth, 2001).

The OSA (Baron et al., 2006) is self-assessment tool used to help clients evaluate their occupational competence and value based on 29 statements. Out of those 29 statements, 21 statements concern the individual and eight concern the individual’s environment (Baron et al., 2006). Examples of the statements concerning the individual include; ‘expressing myself to others’, ‘identifying and solving problems’ and ‘having a satisfying routine’. For the purposes of this study, 13 questions from the statements concerning the individual were used (See Appendix D.7). The 13 statements chosen were selected due to their similarities to the identified potential outcomes of service-learning in the literature review. Participants were asked to rate their competence based on the 13 chosen statements, on a four-point scale ranging from “I have a problem doing this” to “I do this extremely well”. Participants were then asked to rate their value for each of the same 13 statements on a four-point scale ranging from “this is not so important to me” to “this is most important to me” (Baron et al., 2006; Kielhofner et al., 2009).

The OSA was chosen for this research as it is a reliable and valid measure of occupational competence and value that has been developed through a rigorous psychometric process (Baron et al., 2006; Kielhofner et al., 2009; Kielhofner, 2010;
Taylor, 2011; Murad, Farnworth & O’Brien, 2012). When examined together, occupational competence and value can provide an insight into the person’s occupational identity (Baron et al., 2006). Measuring occupational competence, value and by extension, their identity, assisted the exploration of the study’s aim to understand community partners’ and students’ occupational engagement and participation.

4.5.13.6 Occupational Participation and Spin-off Questionnaire

Occupational therapists measure and examine the type of occupations an individual engages and participates in. Occupational spin-off was conceptualised by Robeiro and Cook (1999) to describe the process and outcome of occupational engagement in addition to the expected or desired aims. It is the presence of unexpected, positive elements either during or because of an environment of social support and participation. Occupational spin-off requires four elements to be present before it can occur: affirmation, confirmation and actualisation and anticipation. Affirmation is where the person receives positive social feedback and encouragement and confirmation occurs during successful engagement in occupation. Actualisation is the process where the person becomes affected by the social and occupational environment. Finally, anticipation is the person, as an actualised self, looking forward to, taking steps towards, their own desired future (Robeiro and Cook, 1999). It is used to describe both the process and the outcome of an occupational therapy intervention (Rebeiro, 2001). Occupational spin-off was deemed to be relevant to this study as it was that through developing relationships and engaging in meaningful activities together, the community partners and OT students may experience unexpected outcomes.

The Occupational Spin-off Questionnaire was used to measure any new or continuing occupations participants engaged in at the end of the service-learning module. The measure was made specifically for the purposes of this study. The design was influenced the interest checklist, using activities students and community partners may have engaged in during the service-learning module such as sports, social activities, cooking (See Appendix D.8, D.9 & D.10). The goal was to examine if the participants had taken up new occupations because of the service-learning module. To identify whether the occupations completed were new occupations, it was necessary to ask participants if they were already engaged in any of the activities listed (Matsutsuyu, 1969). Because of this, the researcher decided to model the occupational spin-off measure on the Interest Checklist as this made up the desired template.
As seen from the literature review, changing students’ attitudes is a major focus in service-learning research. Student attitudes towards disability are important to measure because it is an aim of the module to encourage students to work with disabled people in a positive way and it widely accepted that attitudes predict behaviours (Bentler & Speckart, 1981; Olson & Zanna, 1993; Rosenthal, Chan & Livenh, 2006).

The MIDS was created to examine attitudes towards disability in a unique way; the MIDS can measure attitudes towards people with disabilities at the same time as measuring knowledge about people with disabilities (Makas, Finnerty-Fried, Sigafoos & Reid, 1988). It does this by assuming that if a respondent knows very little about disabled people then that respondent will respond according to stereotypes. These stereotypes are often negative. The more knowledge the respondent has, the further their responses will be from the negative views and therefore, the statements in the MIDS are posed as factual statements (Makas, 1985, 1987). Antonak and Livney (2000) support this method of judging attitudes by arguing that respondents who know their attitudes are being probed will answer differently than when they perceive the questions to be factual. This scale has been tested for reliability and has shown strong content validity (Makas, 1985, 1991a, 1991b, 1993). Another advantage of the MIDS is that it is a simple instrument to administer and score. In addition, the MIDS is a unique instrument because people with disabilities were actively involved in the scale construction and validation process (Jonas, Asch, McIntosh & Susswein, 2003).

The MIDS is a set of 37 validated statements. The respondents are asked to indicate if they Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Don’t Know/No Opinion, Somewhat Agree, Agree or Strongly Disagree with the statement. The answers are coded from one (Strongly Disagree) to seven (Strongly Agree). Several statements are reverse coded. After allowing for those answers to be transposed, the higher the score, the more the person knows about people with disabilities and the more positive is that person’s attitude. The lowest possible score is 37 and the highest is 259. The higher the score, the more positive the respondent’s attitudes towards disability (See Appendix D.12).
4.6.12. Qualitative Strand

While quantitative data can be useful in providing an overview of service-learning outcomes, qualitative measures from focus groups and interviews can afford information about real-world outcomes for students (Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron & McFarland, 2002). Qualitative data thrives in the complexities of real-world situations and nuances (Dickie, 2003; Rowles, 1991) and allows research to explore the lived experiences of participants in those situations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative data is also particularly relevant to this study as gives participants a voice in the research which has been lost to individual community partners in service-learning literature. Finally, qualitative data is useful due to its inductive nature, whereby data can emerge naturally from the study (Al-Busaidi, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and so a true depiction of participants’ experiences may be gained.

4.5.14.1 focus groups

Focus groups were completed with the OT students. Focus groups are a form of group interview which features organised discussion (Kitzinger, 1994), social events (Goss & Leinbach, 1996), collective activity (Powell, Single & Lloyd, 1996) and interaction which Powell and colleagues define as “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research (1996, p.499). Focus groups provide the opportunity to access and identify respondents’ attitudes, beliefs, feelings, experiences and reactions in a way that other methods of data collection cannot (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups are good for ‘piggybacking’ and building on each other’s ideas which can then provide richer data (Leung & Savithiri, 2009) and can allow the researcher to look beyond the data collected in the surveys (Krueger, 1994). It is a method which the OT students will be familiar with as it will mirror the debriefing sessions they are required to complete as a part of their service-learning module. The community partners would also be familiar with this method as their learning in the CCL course and the ILS programme took place in a group context. As focus groups are intended to be interactive, the students and community partners were a good choice to include in a focus group because they have already established group dynamics which can lead to richer data (McLafferty, 2004).

In Phase one, a total of two focus groups were conducted with the OT students. One group for first-year students and one group for second-year students. The groups were
made up on six to ten people which was kept close to the recommendations by the literature (MacIntosh, 1993). While neutral locations are sometimes recommended to avoid negative or positive associations with a particular site (Powell & Single, 1996), the groups took place within the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences in St. James’ Hospital in order to limit the inconvenience for the participants. These focus groups ran for an hour in length with a break half-way through to minimise the risk of fatigue. Refreshments were provided at the break for the participants.

A total of two focus groups were conducted with community partners in phase one. One focus group for participants of the CCL course and one group for the ILS group participants. Though the numbers in these groups were below the recommended sizes (MacIntosh, 1993), this was inevitable as the population sizes were significantly smaller than the student population.

The focus groups asked a series of open-ended questions based on the participants’ experiences with service-learning. The researcher followed Krueger’s (2002) guidelines for conducting a focus group. This involved a process of welcoming the participants, explaining the topic of the focus group, offering ground rules for the group and beginning with the opening question (Krueger, 2002).

Overall, the prepared questions were a guide for the conversation and not a strict format to fulfil. Some questions were left purposively broad in such as ‘tell me about your experience of service-learning’. This was to explore the participants’ experiences and opinions without excessively influencing how they chose to answer the question. Other questions became more specific to the service-learning module, for example ‘how would you rate service-learning as a learning tool?’. These questions were used to steer the conversation to a specific topic, but prompt questions were created in order to tease out information around the question such as ‘will this effect on how you approach people in future’ or ‘has anything changed in your life since you began service-learning’ (See Appendix E). Semi-structured questions were chosen over structured or unstructured questions because of the flexibility of its structure and the ability to allow the participant to talk around the topic. The success and validity of a focus group relies on the extent the respondent’s opinions are truly reflected (Jones, 1985) and therefore, the questions posed to the participants were open ended with the intention to guide the respondent.

I took on the role of moderator in the group which supplied an environment which is non-threatening and supportive (Basch, 1987). Based on the literature, I ensured that participants were all given a chance to speak and made sure to not show too much approval to avoid favouring particular participants or leading them by providing personal opinions.
so as not to influence the participants’ responses (Gibbs, 1997). I also encouraged participants to keep the information shared within the group confidential.

There are some weaknesses believed to be inherent in the interviewing method. For example, the participants’ perceptions of the interviewer may have an effect on how much information is shared or their honesty (Denscombe, 2007). This issue, however, is dependent on the topic that is due to be discussed such as ethnicity, age and gender (Denscombe, 2007) and these topics were not broached, it is unlikely my role as the researcher affected participants’ responses. Another weakness in the interviewing data collection method is what is described by Gomm (2004) as ‘demand characteristics’, which is when the participant edits their responses based on what they believe the situation requires. While this is not entirely avoidable, the risk was lessened by emphasising at the beginning of the interview that I was looking for the participants’ personal opinions and experiences. I endeavoured to put the participants at ease by introducing the topic and explaining the process of the interview before it began. During the interview I tried to keep questions open-ended, neutral, sensitive and understandable to maintain the participants’ ease, build confidence and develop rapport (Britten, 1999).

The focus groups were completed at the end of the course in April 2016 as the module was coming to an end. The researcher chose this time because it ensured that the experience was still memorable, and it allowed time for participants to reflect on their experience. It was also a time that was convenient for the OT students as it took place during term time. It was also convenient for the community partners as the focus groups took place within a couple of weeks of ending the service-learning experience at the time they would usually be meeting their service-learning partner. This meant the focus groups could take place during a time they had already set aside for service-learning and it did not impact their other routines. The focus groups were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Collectively, these assessment tools provided rich data that enabled the researcher to understand and interpret the stakeholder’s experiences of service-learning (Hecht, 2003).

4.6.13. qualitative trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an essential element of any research project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Multiple researchers have suggested criteria to ensure trustworthiness in research. Kretting (1991) suggested that it can be maintained by four criteria; truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Lincoln and Guba (1985), have suggested that credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability ensure research is accurate.
While Giddings and Grant (2009) list several strategies to maintain or enhance validity in qualitative research. These strategies involve the clear articulation of the research question, triangulation and expert critique.

4.5.5.3.1 credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have outlined several elements to improve trustworthiness. One method of enhancing credibility according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) was to have engagement in the field of study to fully understand the context. As stated in the introduction chapter, I have had experience in service-learning from three different perspectives prior to beginning of this study. As a student, I engaged in the service-learning module in my first and second-year. As an occupational therapist, I worked with students who were completing their service-learning module with clients I was working with. Finally, I also facilitated the debriefing sessions of the service-learning model prior to this study. It is important to state this again here because my experience has allowed me to understand the context of service-learning as a participant, as a facilitator and as an occupational therapist. It is also necessary to highlight these experiences as there may be some biases present as a researcher as my experience of service-learning thus far has been positive. This could potentially influence the data collection and the interpretation of the data. Biases are unavoidable in qualitative research (Sutton & Austin, 2015), however, being aware of this, I have taken steps in order to lessen the impact of any biases. The study design was also implemented to combat any biases. Triangulation was suggested by Lincoln and Guba to improve credibility. Triangulation is the use of more than one method of data collection (Shenton, 2004). This process compensates for the limitations and exploits the benefits of the individual methods used to collect data (Brewer & Hunter, 1989). By using quantitative measures, that provide objective information on outcomes, I could not unintentionally influence the participants responses. When completing the focus groups, as stated previously, I endeavoured to keep the questions open-ended and neutral (Britten, 1999). Furthermore, before beginning the focus groups, I reiterated the purpose of the study to participants and assured them that I was just looking for their experiences and honest opinions.
4.5.5.3.2 *transferability*

Thick description is a way of achieving external validity. By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail, others can evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings and situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There is some debate as to the precise definition of ‘thick description’, however it is agreed that thick description goes beyond superficial depictions of merely the phenomenon which has occurred and considers the cultural and social context it exists within (Ponterotto, 2006). In this study, I endeavoured to do this by examining of the political and cultural context and philosophical concepts behind service-learning and the service-learning module in this study.

4.5.5.3.3 *dependability*

Since a qualitative researcher’s perspective is naturally biased due to their close association with the data, sources and methods, various audit strategies can be used to confirm findings (Bowen, 2009). Dependability can be increased through external auditing. This process involves introducing an individual external to the project to examine the narrative account and attest to its credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The qualitative raw data were searched with the researcher supervisor to ensure the validity of the interpretations in terms of themes and codes.

4.5.5.3.4 *confirmability*

Guba (1981) described auditing as the key strategy for establishing confirmability. The audit trail is the transparent description of the research steps taken throughout the research. The desired outcome of the audit trail is that another researcher could arrive at comparable conclusions given the same data and research context (Krefting, 1991). Trustworthiness of interpretations and findings are dependent on being able to demonstrate how they were reached (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Confirmability in this study, therefore, was completed through the methodology chapter and the appendices included in this dissertation.
4.6.14. Pilot Study

4.5.5.4.1 community partner measures

Questionnaires were piloted with three men with intellectual disability to examine the face validity and reliability of the questions with emphasis on language, abstract thought and clarity of questions asked. Issues that arose from this pilot group were then analysed and the questionnaire was reviewed. For example, the writing font size on the OSA, the PSQ and the Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire was increased to improve legibility. The formatting was also changed to make the questionnaires less cluttered. For the PSQ, the community partners were provided with less writing on the page to make it easier to pick out information. Some questions were refined from the PSQ also, to avoid similar questions being repeated and to reduce participant burden.

The interview questions were piloted with a man with intellectual disability who had been involved in the service-learning module previously. Changes to the interview included the simplification of language and the use of more specific prompt questions in order to facilitate understanding what is being asked of the participants. For example, instead of prompting participants with ‘tell me more about that’ I changed the prompt question to summing up what the person said and ‘so you just spoke about…is there anything else you thought about it?”. I also changed prompt questions to ask participants how their experiences related back to service-learning to ensure that when participants spoke about outcomes, it was in relation to working with the OT students.

4.5.5.4.2 OT student measures

Questionnaires were piloted with four third-year OT students who were previously involved in the service-learning module during their time as first and second-year students. For the most part, students did not report any changes were necessary to the questionnaires. For the PPDQ, however, students suggested making the language less verbose. Therefore, some language was changed for readability such as ‘I can be on time and punctual’ was simplified to ‘I can be punctual’.

The interview questions were piloted in a focus group with the same four third-year OT students. These students were chosen because they were familiar with service-learning and they had engaged in the module recently enough so that they would be able to recall the details of their experiences. There were no changes to the interview questions based on the pilot focus group.
4.7. **Phase Two of Study**

Phase two of this study consisted of a second round of data collection from the academic year 2016-2017. This phase included both first and second-year OT students and community partners.

Upon completion of the data collection in phase one, I reviewed the study design and reflected on elements which worked well and those that required change in order to best answer the research questions. After collecting the data, a preliminary analysis was conducted on the quantitative and qualitative results. A further aim of the study was created to explore students’ growth and learning through reflection. Some measures which were deemed to be unnecessary were removed from the study to limit participant burden. Some measures were also modified slightly for ease of use of participants. The following sections will describe in detail the changes made to the study in phase two.

**4.7.1. Participants**

First and second-year students were chosen again for phase two of the study (Table 11). For community partners, the ILS programme was not included in service-learning in the second year. To further explore the relationship between the community partners and the students, new community partner groups were included. A new set of CCL members were included in the study. In addition, participants were recruited from a nursing home and a brain training group, within a service for people with acquired brain injury (See Table 12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Recruited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(^{st}) year OT students</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(^{nd}) year OT students</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Occupational therapy students recruited in Phase 2
Table 12: Community partners recruited in Phase 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Recruited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate for Contemporary Living Course</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Home for Older Adults</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain Training Group</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7.2. *Sampling and Data Collection*

There were some changes made to the study design for phase two based on the low response from OT students in phase one. In addition, individuals from both the student and community partner groups requested pen and paper questionnaires. Some community partners also contacted me to provide more information on the study in the study. Therefore, based on the feedback by participants in phase one, I aimed to reduce participant burden and improve accessibility for participants in phase two.

4.7.3. *Pen and Paper Questionnaires*

While there had been consideration into using online surveys due to the potential benefits of convenience for participants and the literature which suggested online response rates were as good or better than pen and paper surveys (Thompson et al., 2003; Markovitch, 2009), this appeared to not be the case in this study. The same participant information packages were used in phase two as in phase one. The gatekeepers distributed physical copies of the information packages to OT students and community partners. The gatekeeper in the CCL course also reviewed the information packages verbally with the community partners in order to ensure their questions regarding the study were answered. The gatekeepers for all groups returned after seven days and offered physical copies of the questionnaires and consent forms. Completed consent forms and questionnaires were returned to a locked box in the gatekeepers’ office to maintain confidentiality and security. Upon collection of the completed questionnaires, the box was given to my research supervisor and each questionnaire was given an ID number. Consent letters were separated from the questionnaires to maintain anonymity and I received the anonymised questionnaires.
4.7.4. **Reflective Workbooks**

Students are required to keep reflective journal as part of their service-learning module. Before phase two began I designed a reflective workbook which students could use if they wished during the year (See Appendix F.1). Students were informed at the start of the term that they could use the workbook if they wished, whether they engaged in the study or not. Alternatively, students could use their own reflective journals. Students submitted their reflective workbooks or journals as their final assessment. After corrections, students could choose to allow for their workbooks to be included in the study or not. Students were provided a consent form to hand up with their reflective workbooks if they wished to be included in the study. The workbooks were then provided to my research supervisor, who assigned an ID number and the anonymised workbooks were given to me.

4.7.5. **Interview**

One participant requested an individual interview due to difficulty managing group situations resulting from disability. To ensure accessibility to the research, I agreed to do a short interview. I provided the participant with the same questions posed to the focus groups.
4.7.6. Measures

The measures which were use in phase two of this study can be seen in Table 13.

Table 13: Quantitative measures used in Phase 2 for OT students and community partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Aim</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To examine the nature of the service-learning relationship</td>
<td>• Service-Learner Partner Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To investigate the impact of service-learning on personal and professional development</td>
<td>• The Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal Skills Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To explore the impact of service-learning on occupational engagement and participation</td>
<td>• The Occupational Self-Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To examine the impact of service-learning module on students’ attitudes towards disability</td>
<td>• Modified Issues in Disability Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To examine students’ growth and learning using guided reflection</td>
<td>• Student Reflective Workbooks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7.7. The Personal and Professional Development Scale

In the PPDQ some statements which were similar were omitted in order to minimise participant burden. For example, ‘I can ask for clarification’ was omitted because it was very similar to the statement ‘I can ask questions’ and could be removed from the questionnaire as it didn’t provide significantly different information and in order to reduce participant burden. Some questions were also deemed to not be relevant to the study and were omitted such as ‘I can contribute to the development and knowledge of others’. By refining the questionnaire, the number of statements reduced from 66 to 56 (Appendix F.2).
4.7.8. **Learning Goals Questionnaire**

The learning goals questionnaire merged with the reflective workbooks which students completed through their time in service-learning. The reason for this, was that typically, students make those goals at the beginning of the service-learning module in their reflective workbooks so the burden for participants would be reduced and the data could still be obtained.

4.7.9. **Occupational Therapy Competencies Questionnaire**

The occupational therapy competencies questionnaire was omitted from phase two of this study. It was reasoned that the competencies would emerge from the focus groups and the reflective workbooks if they were present so to reduce participant burden, this questionnaire was omitted.

4.7.10. **Occupational Participation and Spin-off Questionnaire**

The Occupational Participant and Spin-Off Questionnaire was omitted from phase two as it was deemed that if occupational spin-off was present it would be more apparent through the focus groups and reflective workbooks. The focus groups and reflective workbooks, it was reasoned, could provide a deeper, more meaningful understanding into the presence of occupational spin-off. Furthermore, the Occupational Participation and Spin-off Questionnaire.

4.7.11. **Reflective Workbooks**

As a part of the service-learning module, students are required to reflect on their experiences. As part of the research I created a reflective workbook which students could use to structure their reflections if they wished (See Appendix F.1). Alternatively, they could make their own reflective diary as was usual. Students could use the reflective workbooks regardless of whether they chose to take part in the study of not. Reflection is the process of recognising and analysing experiences, using theory and guided thinking to create learning (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985). Reflection is deemed to be an important element of any experiential learning and in service-learning is it a vital
component in the learning process (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983). Reflective journals are a useful tool for students to keep track of their learning in addition to writing a journal being a process through which students learn. Reflective journals can also be useful for service-learning facilitators to understand the learning of the students. Therefore, the OT students’ workbooks were analysed to further deepen the understanding of their learning and to understand the processes of their learning, in keeping with the fifth research question.

The structure of the reflective workbook required students to write down three significant events which occurred each service-learning session. For each significant event students must answer a series of questions. For the first five weeks, in order to acclimatise and encourage students to think reflectively, students were asked to write about why they believed that event to be significant, what were they thinking/feeling and what did they learn. From week six onwards students were asked to describe the significant event, how they felt about it, what they did at the time, what they did afterwards and what was the outcome/learning from that event. This reflective method was based on Brookfield’s (1995) critical incident reflective process.

4.8. Data Analysis

4.8.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were organised using Excel. Responses from the questionnaires were originally stored by Qualtrics in Phase one and were converted into numerical codes which were then directly imported into Excel from the Qualtrics account. In Phase two, as the questionnaires changed from online surveys to pen and paper surveys, the data were directly inputted into Excel. The raw data were scored, and the data cleaning process was started by removing responses with excessive missing data. Negatively scored questions were reversed. Once the data were prepared, it was imported into SPSS where descriptives were obtained and the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was completed. The data were then analysed for factors which may influence the analysis such as outliers. (Van den Broeck, Cunningham, Eeckels & Herbt, 2005).

Descriptive statistics were used to compute the results from the various measures and to answer specific research questions (Pallant, 2010). To test whether service-learning had an impact on the mean scores for participants on any given measure, paired sample T-tests were completed. T-tests were only conducted on data sets which met the criteria for
parametric testing; sufficiently large sample size and relatively normal data distribution. Wilcoxon tests as the non-parametric equivalent to the T-tests were completed with the data sets which did not meet the criteria for parametric testing. Where appropriate, between group Wilcoxon tests were completed to examine difference between the groups. The participant numbers were not high enough to use inferential statistics allow the research to make conclusions about the target population based on the sample in the study (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011).

4.8.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

The focus groups and interview recordings were transcribed and any field notes that were taken were organised. I transcribed the interview and focus groups verbatim; the written words were an exact replication of what was said in the recording (Poland, 1995). This was to reduce the researcher’s interpretation of what was discussed in the interviews. Some researchers have suggested that verbatim transcription is vital to the reliability, validity and veracity of collection qualitative data (Wengraf, 2001; MacLean, Meyer & Estable, 2004) however, according to Britten (1995), many authors do not convincingly demonstrate how this can be achieved. Despite this, as discussed previously in this chapter, transcribing verbatim can be beneficial in maintaining the audit trail which adds to the confirmability of the methodology (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). In this study, in order to minimise errors within the transcript, the transcripts cross-checked by colleagues for any errors. Although transcribing verbatim is a time-consuming and complex process (Britten, 1995), it was worthwhile because it helped with familiarisation of the data (Rapley, 2007).

Once transcribed, the interview and focus groups were organised and categorised. The reflective journals were also analysed with the same process of the focus groups and interview. I used manual data coding instead of analysing software such as NVivo 10 which had been considered by the researcher. Qualitative analysis, as described by Basit (2003) is “a dynamic, intuitive and creative process” (p.1). In light of this, I decided manual coding would benefit this process as it allowed me to become familiar with the data and physically work with it. This allowed for the development of understanding the greater context of the data and responses which held meaning due to that context. An important part of qualitative data analysis is the immersion of data, or the researcher’s familiarity with the data (Saldana, 2009). I achieved this through transcribing the interviews and focus groups verbatim and by reading and re-reading the data which allows themes to emerge (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis
(2006) was used in this study because of its validity and replicability. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis is comprised of six phases which are as follows;

4.8.3. **Familiarisation with the data**

I became familiar with the data through transcribing the interviews verbatim and by re-reading and re-reading the transcriptions.

4.8.4. **Coding**

In Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis, coding involves creating labels for important features of the data of relevance to the research question guiding the analysis. I coded every data item, both semantic and conceptual and ends this phase by collating all their codes relevant data extracts.

4.8.5. **Searching for themes**

A theme is a pattern that emerges from the data which is relevant and meaningful to the research question. I built upon the patterns of codes which emerged from the data to construct the themes and collate all the relevant data.

4.8.6. **Reviewing themes**

I reviewed the themes by reflecting on whether the themes are telling a convincing narrative about the data. I then defined the nature of each theme and the relationship between the themes. As the process evolved, some themes were discarded while others were merged or split into separate themes. The process was continued until the researcher was left with the final, concise set of themes.

4.8.7. **Defining and naming themes**

I wrote a detailed analysis of each theme and related the themes back to the research question and how each individual theme fits into the narrative of the study. The themes were then named by attributing concise, informative labels for each (See Appendix G).

4.8.8. **Writing up**

I merged the narratives of the themes together and weaved the analytic narrative and the data extracts to inform the reader of the ‘coherent and persuasive story about the data’ and placed it within a context of the current literature.
4.8.9. **Mixed Methods Analysis**

Upon the completion of the data analysis for the quantitative and the qualitative strands, I then analysed the results together. I identified areas represented in both data sets and compared, contrasted and synthesised the results. Results from the surveys were linked with focus group data and reflective workbooks to compare the responses from individuals in the questionnaires and in the interviews.

4.9. **Importance**

The importance of this study design derives from its inclusion community partners’ and the OT students’ voices. There is a dearth of literature focusing on enabling community partners to have their opinions and experiences heard in the research. This research adds to the body of knowledge in that it takes a novel approach examining both outcomes and perceptions partners, placing equal importance in the study design on the students’ and community partners’ outcomes and experiences.

4.10. **Limitations**

A potential limitation of this study was the low response rate to the surveys. In phase one, uptake was slow and there were small participant numbers for students. In phase two, the study design was made more accessible to participants to promote participation through physical copies of information packages and questionnaires. In phase two, the participant rate improved which may suggest the changes were effective.

The participant burden in phase one may be another limitation. The study design of accessing the questionnaires and the length of time it took to complete them, particularly for students may have resulted in low response rates. In phase two I refined the measures to lessen participant burden.

Finally, a limitation may be the use of the gatekeepers in phase one of this study. By conducting online surveys and providing information via email, I did not utilise the gatekeepers’ abilities effectively in terms of distributing information. This too was changed in phase two and may explain the higher response rates.
4.11. Conclusion

This chapter stated research question and repeated the research aims. The purpose of the study was explained. The study design was discussed. An overview of the methodology was provided for phase one and phase two, including a description of the sampling strategy, measures used, data collection and analysis procedures, verification procedures and discussion, the pilot study and the ethical considerations were also included.
5. Chapter 5 – Community Partner Results

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, both the quantitative and qualitative results will be explained for the community partners. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test surveys, focus groups and an interview (Table 14).

Table 14: Community partner quantitative and qualitative measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Strand</th>
<th>Qualitative Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Occupational Self-Assessment</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Baron, Kielfhoner, Iyenher, Goldhammer &amp; Wolenski, 2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Personal Skills Questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lalor &amp; Lynch, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this chapter the results from each measure will be explained. First the quantitative results will be explained relating to each measure. The focus group and interview themes and subthemes will be discussed in the following section. The results from these data collection methods will later be analysed together to establish triangulation of data in Chapter 7 – Integration of Results.

5.2. Quantitative Strand – Community Partners

5.2.1. Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire

The Service-Learning partner questionnaire was provided to community partners at the beginning and end of the service-learning module. The questionnaire consisted of two questions; Q.1 ‘do you know what a service-learning partner is’ and Q.2 ‘if yes, what does a service-learning partner mean to you’.
5.2.2. Pre-service-learning module responses

Table 15: Pre-service-learning responses for Q.1 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – community partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1 ‘Do you know what a service-learning partner is?’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 15, most community partners were not familiar with the term ‘service-learning partner’ at the beginning of the service-learning module. For those who answered ‘yes’ to Q.1 (n=9), there appears to be some understanding of the term ‘service-learning partner’. The responses from community partners were categorised into three themes ‘unsure’, ‘providing help’ and ‘working together’ (Table 16).
Table 16: Pre-service-learning responses for Q.1 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – community partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.2 ‘What does the term service-learning partner mean to you?’</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Providing help</th>
<th>Working together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Bacely, it is person talks to another person” (ID 101)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Person to help with sports” (ID 94)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Working with another person. OT student” (ID 114)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In the course, exam, study” (ID 125)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“An occupational therapist who helps people with learning needs” (ID 102)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Partner who is learning with me while she is doing her studies” (ID 133)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That there is somebody here to help with what is going on” (ID 112)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It too help you too problem solve and too teach people what you know too help those with there goals and too teach them household ways and too live on their own” (ID 123)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Someone who will help you thru the course you are on” (ID 113)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses=2</strong></td>
<td>2 (22.22%)</td>
<td>4 (44.44%)</td>
<td>3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N=9</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.1. Unsure

Two responses described their service-learning partner in a way that suggests they are uncertain of its meaning. While one participant’s response in this category suggests had an understanding that the term related to interaction of two people; “It is person talks to another person” (ID 101), it does not suggest an understanding of the characteristics of a service-learning partnership.
5.2.2 Providing help

Though the participant numbers were low, this category marginally contained the highest rate of responses. Most of the responses appear to suggest that community partners viewed their service-learning partner as a person who provides assistance.

5.2.3 Working together

This category represents a relationship which has characteristics nearest to the collaborative relationship which the service-learning module aimed to foster. Three responses were categorised as ‘working together’. These responses suggest an understanding of engaging in activities ‘with’ the each other.

5.2.3 Post-service-learning module responses

In the post-service-learning survey, a slight increase can be seen in the number of participants who answered ‘yes’ for Q.1 (Table 17).

Table 17: Post-service-learning responses for Q.1 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – community partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1 ‘Do you know what a service-learning partner is?’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of those who answered ‘yes’, one participant did not provide a response for Q.2. Therefore, there was a total of ten responses for Q.2. The responses were categorised into three themes ‘unsure’, ‘providing help’ and ‘working together’ (Table 18).
Table 18: Post-service-learning responses for Q.2 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – community partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.2 ‘What does the term service-learning partner mean to you?’</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Providing help</th>
<th>Working together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Service learning partner is the service we get to learn how important it is” (ID 102)</td>
<td>“To help you” (ID 104)</td>
<td>“You work with them too do things together” (ID 93)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It means help to me in a lot of ways” (ID 112)</td>
<td>“The OT student who plays sports with me” (ID 94)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“students come into headway and trinity college to help us.” (ID 114)</td>
<td>“A person who is there to learn things with you as a part of their course” (ID 121)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Volunteering student. Occupational Therapy. Very informative, studious.” (ID 115)</td>
<td>“You work together with them too work on goals and learn too cook and you learn from each other” (ID 123)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“thanks for the help” (ID 116)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A person to help you and give you advice” (ID 118)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses=2 (18.18%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Responses=6 (54.54%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Responses=4 (36.36%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N=12</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.1 Unsure

In the post-service-learning questionnaire, only one response appears to suggest uncertainty. This shows a decrease from two responses categorised as ‘unsure’ in the pre-service-learning questionnaire. Overall there was an increase of three total responses (n=11) for Q.2, therefore, the percentage of responses which were uncertain of the meaning of ‘service-learning partner has decreased slightly from (22.22%) prior to the service-learning module to (54.54%) post the service-learning module.

5.3.2 Providing help

As with the pre-service-learning questionnaire results, most of the overall responses were categorised into ‘providing help’. The participants appear to view their service-learning partner as someone who has assisted them over the course of the service-learning module. This category also showed the highest change in percentage of responses from (44.44%) prior to the service-learning module to (18.18%) in post-service-learning.

5.3.3 Working together

Participants in this category described their partner as someone who does things ‘with’ them, such as learning, playing sports and working together. There was a very slight increase in the responses which were included in this category from 33.33% to 36.36%.

5.2.4. Occupational Self-Assessment

The OSA consisted of 26 questions in total, 13 questions relating to occupational competence and 13 questions relating to occupational value. Before analysing, data were cleaned by omitting participants who had more than three non-responses to avoid skewing the data. Seven responses were omitted from the analysing of competence and six were omitted from the analysis due to excessive non-responses.
5.2.5. Occupational Competence

Table 19: Descriptive statistics for occupational competence – community partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>44.00</td>
<td>26.3077</td>
<td>11.61988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>46.00</td>
<td>28.1538</td>
<td>12.53058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to examine if there was an effect on community partners’ self-reported levels of occupational competence immediately after the service-learning experience. No significant difference was discovered between Time 1 (M=26.31, SD=11.62) and Time 2 (M=28.15, SD=12.53, t(26)= >.0005). The results suggest that the service-learning experience did not have a statistically significant impact on the community partners’ competence in daily occupations. While there is no significant difference shown from the t-tests, it does appear there may be the beginning of a slight positive trend towards occupational competence in most questions (Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Total community partner responses – occupational competence (n=26)](image_url)
Most questions showed an increase in the mean scores from Time 1 to Time 2. Q.8 showed the largest difference between Time 1 and Time 2 (Figure 2).

![Q.8 Being involved as a student, worker or family member](chart)

Figure 2: Community partner responses for Q.8 ‘Being involved as a student, worker or family member’ (n=26)

There were three questions, Q.3 ‘identifying and solving problems’, Q.7 ‘handling my responsibilities’ and Q.11 ‘making decisions on what I think is important’ which scored slightly lower in Time 2 than in Time 1. The reason for these lower scores may be due to increased insight into their ability as service-learning may have offered opportunities where community partners would need to use these skills.

5.2.6. Occupational Value

Data related to occupational value was tested for normality and an initial analysis was completed using descriptive statistics (Table 20).

| Table 20: Descriptive statistics for occupational value – community partners |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
|                      | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean         | Std. Deviation |
| Value Time 1         | 27  | 13.00   | 52.00   | 34.1481      | 14.23350       |
| Value Time 2         | 27  | 13.00   | 52.00   | 41.3704      | 9.94271        |
| Valid N (listwise)   | 26  | (na)    | (na)    | (na)         | (na)           |
While there was no significant change in community partners’ occupational competence, a significant difference was found in the community partners’ value of the occupations between Time 1 (M=34.15, SD=14.23) and Time 2 [M=41.37, SD=9.94, t(27) <.005] The eta squared statistic (.032) showed a moderate significance.

![Figure 3: Total community partner responses – occupational competence (n=26)](image)

As seen from Figure 3, all areas saw an improvement in the perceived value of everyday occupation. The largest difference between Time 1 and Time 2 was seen in Q.11 (Figure 4) and Q.13 (Figure 5).

![Figure 4: Community partner responses for Q.11 ‘Making decisions based on what I think is important’ (n=26)](image)
An important part of this service-learning experience is the emphasis on the community partners’ preferences and values. The service-learning relationship is intended to be equal with an emphasis on activities completed being something that the community partner wants to do. This may be a reason why there was a significant increase in community partners valuing their ability to make decisions based on what they think is important as this would have been an aim for the service-learning relationships and their partners should have been encouraging it.

In addition, the second highest change in perceived importance was ‘effectively using my abilities’. Again, this may have resulted from having opportunities to try out new activities where the participants would need to make use of the skills in order to participate and engage satisfactorily.

5.2.7. Personal Skills Questionnaire

Table 21: Descriptive statistics for personal skills – community partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>174.00</td>
<td>150.2143</td>
<td>19.32635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>116.00</td>
<td>174.00</td>
<td>155.3571</td>
<td>16.39380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(listwise)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Normality was not found and therefore a non-parametric test was used. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used as the alternative to the paired t-test. Results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated that the median post-test scores were not statistically significantly higher than the median pre-test scores $Z=1.677$, $p < .094$. While the non-parametric test showed no significant result, by taking the raw data, there appears overall to be a slight trend of increased post-service-learning scores.

Figure 6: Total community partner responses for personal skills (n=28)

Figure 6 shows there were four points where the scores were lower in Time 2 than in Time 1. These points were; Q4. “I make good choices”, Q6 “I am in charge of myself”, Q7 “I can talk to people about things I like” and Q. 19 “I know what I like and what I don’t like”.

Figure 7: Community partner responses for Q.4 ‘I make good choices’ (n=28)
As seen from Figure 7, the responses for Q.4 are similar between Time 1 and Time 2, however there were two participants who answered ‘don’t know’ for Q.4 which may have reduced the mean score.

**Figure 8: Community partner responses for Q.7 ‘I can talk to people about things I like’ (n=28)**

As seen in Figure 8, participants rated their ability to talk about their interests slightly lower in Time 1 than in Time 2.

**Figure 9: Community partner responses for Q.10 ‘I know what is important to me in my life’ (n=28)**

The statement which showed the greatest change between Time 1 and Time 2 was Q.10 (Figure 9). Participants appeared to score higher in their perception of what they want to achieve for the future. Interestingly, this result appears to compliment the findings from
the OSA where community partners reported to value occupations more at the end of the service-learning module.

Most data appear to have increased slightly in total scores from Time 1 to Time 2. The variance in the data may be due to an increased insight into the participants’ ability based on the opportunity to explore new activities and try new skills. The service-learning experience offers many novel experiences which may offer opportunities trying out new behaviours, activities and developing skills. In this case, it cannot be claimed that there has been a statistically significant difference from Time 1 to Time 2, the data does seem to be suggesting there might be the beginning of a trend in some areas. This area may benefit from further research with a larger population.

5.2.8. Summary

In the Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire, there appears to be an increased understanding of the term service-learning partner based on the response rates in each category. However, there are some participants who responded ‘yes’ in the pre-service-learning questionnaire but reported to not understand the meaning of the term ‘service-learning partner’ in the post-service-learning survey.

The results from the OSA show that there was no statistically significant difference between community partners occupational competence from the beginning of the service-learning module to the end. It appears, however, that the value community partners placed on those occupations increased moderately.

The PSQ did not show a statistically significant difference between Time 1 and Time 2, however there were some areas where there appeared to show slight improvements. The area with the highest change ‘I know what is important in my life’ is compatible with the OSA findings on increased perception of occupational value.
5.3. Qualitative Strand – Community Partners

5.3.1. Participants

For this study, five groups of community partners were examined. Members of the ILS programme (Table 22), the CCL course (Table 23 & Table 24), the residential home (Table 25) and the brain training group (Table 26) and were included in this study. Out of the 29 participants included in the study, 18 participants engaged in focus groups and one interview was conducted with a participant on request as an alternative to the groups setting. For the community partners who took part in the focus groups, pseudonyms were assigned to protect their identity. Names were chosen from a UK database based upon popular names for children at the participants’ date of birth to maintain the authenticity of their voices in relation to their demographics (Hurst, 2008).

Table 22: Community partner focus group participants - Independent Livings Skills programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Member Type</th>
<th>Time spent in group</th>
<th>Time spent with students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Facilitator</td>
<td>24 weeks</td>
<td>24 weeks (2 student groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Facilitator</td>
<td>24 weeks</td>
<td>24 weeks (2 student groups)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23: Community partner focus group participants – Certificate for Contemporary Living course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Member Type</th>
<th>Time spent in group</th>
<th>Time spent with students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member and Coach</td>
<td>40 weeks</td>
<td>40 weeks (2 student groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Group Member and Coach</td>
<td>40 weeks</td>
<td>40 weeks (2 student groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Group Member and Coach</td>
<td>40 weeks</td>
<td>40 weeks (2 student groups)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Community partner focus group participants – Certificate for Contemporary Living course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Member Type</th>
<th>Time spent in group</th>
<th>Time spent with students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Group Member &amp; Coach</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seán</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member and Coach</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member and Coach</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanne</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Group Member and Coach</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member and Coach</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
<td>20 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 25: Community partner focus group participants and interview – Residential home for older adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Member Type</th>
<th>Time Spent in Group</th>
<th>Time spent with students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>11 weeks</td>
<td>11 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>11 weeks</td>
<td>11 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>11 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: Community partner focus group participants and interview- brain training group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Member Type</th>
<th>Time Spent in Group</th>
<th>Time spent with students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Group Member</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.2. Vignettes

This section provides a brief report of the community partner groups and the individual community partners within those groups.

Independent Living Skills Programme

John, Mary, Matthew and Chris participated in a focus group. Mary and Matthew had attended the group for one year at the time of the study. Chris and John were both group facilitators; they had engaged in the ILS programme the previous year and were returning with new goals for learning group facilitation skills. Chris and John helped to design the structure of the programme and the ethos through their actions and vision for the ILS programme. In this sense, the ILS programme was a member-led group with the service-users planning and running the groups themselves. The students who took part in the group were not engaging in service-learning to help the community partners, rather they were learning alongside them.

Each group member had their own goals which the ILS programme aimed to help them achieve. Mary started in the programme with the intention of learning basic living skills such as laundry and cooking. Over time the group became an outlet for her to socialise and express herself outside of her family. At the time of the ILS programme, Mary reported having disagreements at home. The ILS programme was a supportive environment for her to distance herself from the issues with her family.

Matthew’s goal was to ‘get out of the house’ and he attended the ILS programme ‘for something to do’. Previously, Matthew had a job which he enjoyed but after becoming unwell he had not worked and moved back in to his parents’ house. Matthew didn’t believe it would be realistic for him to move outside of the family home or to get another job although he enjoyed going out to work and he missed the camaraderie with his co-workers.

Chris was homeless in his first year of the ILS programme but had moved into his own apartment in the second year. He had learned independent living skills from his first year in the programme and in his second year his goal was to support others to learn the skills he had mastered. Teaching others was a role that was important to Chris. He worked as a cook and was able to share knowledge on cooking with the other group members. As a result of his first year in the course, Chris started going to the gym and engaging in more social events. This led to a personal goal of becoming a personal fitness instructor. Chris’ goal for the ILS programme was to learn skills for mentoring other people.

John’s goals were limited when he initially started to attend the ILS programme. John was already renting his own apartment and had many of the skills necessary for
independent living. John reported having little hope for the future when he started the ILS programme but over time John’s perspective began to shift. By the end of the first year, John’s goals were personal in nature, through learning to manage his mental and physical health. By the second year, John’s goals were to continue to improve in his self-management and he wanted to help other people with his own experiences.

Each of these community partners had different goals when attending the ILS programme and the meaning of the programme for them similarly differed. The OT students’ role was not to directly support the goals of the community partners but to learn alongside them which provided a different social dynamic in the programme.

Certificate for Contemporary Skills Course

In the first year of the study, Jack, Linda and Sarah participated in a focus group. Together with the OT students, the CCL students engaged in sports and activities for two terms in the academic year as a part of their course. The aim of the module was for the CCL students to learn about healthy living. The students attended lectures regarding physical health, nutrition and fitness and were required to put their learning into practice through the service-learning module.

While the CCL course takes place within the grounds of Trinity College Dublin, most of the classes are completed off-campus. This means in the typical academic day, there is less opportunity for the CCL students to interact with other students. In past years, the CCL students also had less opportunity to use campus facilities and were not integrated into the college as a result. To promote inclusion, the CCL course co-ordinators partnered with the Discipline of Occupational Therapy to create the service-learning module. As it was designed, there was less emphasis placed on the CCL students’ personal goals during the health and fitness module. Despite this, the module had different meaning for each student.

Jack was in his early twenties and enjoyed sports and spending time with other socialising. The service-learning element of the course allowed him to engage in his leisure activities and spend time with the OT students.

Linda had family members who were also attending the university. By engaging in the course, in addition to her own learning, Linda could meet up with her family members and share the experience of being a student with them. Linda’s favourite hobby was swimming and she swam competitively. As a CCL student she had access to the swimming facilities within the university which made training easier for her. The service-learning module also was an opportunity for Linda to swim in a social setting.
Sarah joined the CCL course to become more independent. She enjoyed learning and taking part in classes. Overall, the course offered Sarah many opportunities to become more confident and try new things. For Sarah, the relationships she developed with the other CCL students were important to her. Service-learning offered further opportunities to develop friendships with other students within the university as well as engage in leisure occupations such as dancing and badminton.

In the second year of the study, Louise, Seán, Patrick, Leanne and Carl took part in the focus group. In the second year the service-learning module consisted of an Irish Sign Language class for the first term and the health and fitness module in the second term. As with the previous year, the course co-ordinators designed the module to promote inclusion, but the meaning of these classes was dependent on each of the CCL students.

Louise engaged in the course because she wanted to work with computers and the course would help her to develop specific computer skills and transferable skills for employment. Louise enjoyed learning and taking part in the classes. In her spare time, she was active in campaigning for rights for disabled people. Louise was outgoing and outspoken and enjoyed speaking with others about issues such as human rights.

For Seán, sports played a large role in his life. He was heavily involvement in his local boxing community. Seán enrolled in the CCL course to develop skills for employment but the sports and fitness module was particularly relevant to him because of his interest in sports. It also allowed him to share his interest and expertise in boxing with others.

Patrick enjoyed socialising in his spare time. For Patrick, the Irish Sign Language classes offered an opportunity to learn a new skill while interacting with other students and being social. This made the Irish Sign Language classes particularly enjoyable and meaningful for Patrick. The CCL course and the service-learning offered opportunities to meet new groups of people.

For Leanne, the social element of the CCL course was important to her experience. Service-learning offered more opportunities to broaden regular social interaction with other students. For Leanne, the sports and fitness module was a better environment for interacting and developing relationships.

Carl enrolled in the CCL course to learn job skills. He was particularly interested in the work experience element of the course which provided practical experience in local businesses. Carl enjoyed the service-learning modules for the socialisation and the enjoyment of the activities.
The CCL course provided the community partners with opportunities to achieve their academic and professional goals. The OT students learned alongside the community partners during the Irish Sign Language classes and engaged in sports with the community partners. The role of the students again was not to provide expertise in helping the community partners to meet their goals but to socialise and to engage in the classes alongside them.

*Residential Home for Older Adults*

Three participants from the residential home took part in the study. Betty and Joan engaged in a focus group and John took part in an interview. The community partners from the residential home were older adults who had experienced health problems but were currently well.

Betty and Joan engaged in a knitting activity group with the students while Joe met with a student individually to go walking in the surrounding area. As with the other groups, the community partners each had their own reasons for engaging in service-learning. Betty and Joan were asked if they wished to engage with students. It was suggested to them by a staff occupational therapist that they could form a knitting group with the students. The knitting group was created based from Betty and Joan’s mutual desire to engage in knitting in a social context.

Betty had engaged in knitting throughout her life and was an important element in her role as a mother and grandmother as Betty knitted clothes for her family members. For Betty, the knitting group was a continuation of a lifetime leisure occupation and allowed for her to pass on her knowledge to the occupational therapy students.

For Joan, knitting was also an important leisure occupation. Joan continued to knit from the time she was a child up to the time of the study. Due to the stroke, Joan lost strength and range of motion in her arm and hands which left her unable to knit. Joan began knitting again as a means of rehabilitation. She continued to knit in a day-centre she attended on a weekly basis.

Joe went walking with his student. Joe worked for forty years in a job which required to him to be outside and travel around the country-side. Even after he retired, Joe spent his time away from the house until a few years prior to the study when he experienced a stroke. After rehabilitation, Joe was able to re-engage in many occupations and was able to maintain his independence but over time he developed a visual impairment. With the effects of the visual impairment, Joe was no longer able to stay in his own home and moved into the residential home. Joe found it difficult to settle into the
home due to the visual impairment limiting his movements and his ability to engage in social activities. He was often confined to his room because he found the temperature in the main living room area was too hot and he couldn’t walk more than down the corridor because he was unable to see and didn’t know where he was going. Similarly, Joe couldn’t use the garden outside because he couldn’t see the paths and would often fall over items left in the garden and he didn’t want to ask the staff to take him because he felt they were very busy. Joe also reported that the residential home felt like a hospital to him which he found difficult. Over time, Joe reported feeling depressed because of the barriers to engagement. Joe reported that it was because of these reasons, that he agreed to engage in service-learning with a student when asked. Joe and the student met once a week for eleven weeks. Each week they went out walking in the area surrounding the residential home.

**Brain Training Group**

Alex, Brian, Rachel and Harry took part in the focus group. As with the other groups, each member of the brain training group engaged in this group for different reasons. The nature of the brain training group is transient. People come and go as needed. This applies to volunteers and the OT students on service-learning and so it was not a decided upon by all parties in advance of the service-learning commencement.

Alex engaged in the Men’s Shed in his spare time and at the time of the study, himself and some of the other group members had finished a craft project which they had entered in a competition. The social element of the Men’s Shed was what attracted Alex to it originally.

Brian was engaged in the brain training group after receiving a traumatic brain injury some years previously. He was involved with the service in many ways including taking part in different events and activities going on in the service. He and Rachel did horse-riding on a weekly basis. For Brian, the activities in the brain training group helped him to improve his cognitive functioning and develop strategies to gave him more independence in everyday life.

Rachel attended the day service for many different activities and groups including horse-riding which helps her to improve her balance. The brain training group was just one of the activities Rachel took part in with the service.

For Harry, the brain training group was important as it gave him independence. Harry’s life had been impacted by the lasting effects of a stroke. The brain training group was a social outlet and an opportunity to be out of the house on his own. Harry’s family worried about him after his stroke and were hesitant to let him go out on his own. For
Harry found the loss of independence difficult. The day-centre and the brain training group became an important for Harry to re-engage in important occupations and become independent again.

5.3.3. **Focus Groups and Interview**

![Focus group themes and subthemes](image)

**Figure 10: Focus group themes and subthemes**

5.3.4. **Theme One – Relationships**

One of the main aims of the service-learning programme is for community partners and students to establish collaborative relationships. These relationships are forged through continued interaction and engagement in activities which are meaningful to the community partner. The theme ‘relationships’ explores community partners’ experiences of the service-learning relationship.
5.3.5. Importance of relationships to the service-learning experience

5.3.4.1. Relationships as evaluation of the service-learning experience

Community partners evaluated the experience of service-learning through the depth of relationships they experienced. Community partners often used examples from the relationships as a medium to frame and structure their explanations of their experiences of the service-learning programme. For example, one participant noted: “It was a really great experience for me… we all came here as strangers and left as friends.” (Chris)

In this case, the participant, Chris, evaluated the service-learning experience positively because of the relationships developed with the OT students and other group members. Other participants also noted the importance of the relationships to their experience. For example, when asked about his experience of service-learning, Carl reported: “It was brilliant…we talked to the OTs” (Carl), again showing the evaluation of
the programme based on the interaction with the students. Joan from the knitting group reflected on her experience of service-learning:

I'll never forget it. The same way I'll never forget [the students]. They were my first experience...And it's been brilliant... I'm very happy that it worked out....it could have worked out as a bad experience...But it didn't...it worked out great as far as I'm concerned. (Joan)

For some participants, the experience of the relationship was integral to the continued engagement in service-learning. Joe recounted his experience of connecting to the student and stated a positive relationship was vital to service-learning otherwise: “…I wouldn’t have went out with her... Or she wouldn’t have wanted to go out with me, one or the other!” (Joe).

Similarly, when one participant reported shortcomings in his experiences of the group, his opinion was based on the relationships with other people as opposed to an evaluation of the material covered or the learning experienced: “…I think I should have gotten a bit more out of the course, to be honest with you…I didn’t get to know many of the people…” (Matthew)

5.3.4.2 roles within the relationship

Community partners perceived their role and the role of the OT students based on the nature of their interactions. One participant noted that the role of a service-learning partner was “To help us around… By telling each other what to do” (Jack). Similarly, the experience of other community partners appears to suggest collaboration: “If one didn’t know [the answer], the other one would…” (Brian). Louise experienced the service-learning relationship as one of shared-learning: “Well the OT students are… as we learned something different, they're with us, learning something completely different” (Louise).

5.3.4.3 comparing relationships

A small number of the participants from the CCL course and the ILS programme had spent more than one academic year in their service-learning experiences (See Table 22 & 23). These community partners had a unique perspective as their experiences enabled comparison between service-learning partners: "Well, you see this year I'm more happy with [service-learning partner]. Last year I was not happy at all” (Linda). Another participant remarked; “In the end, it worked better, they [OT students] were a lot better than last year’s.” (Chris)
It is suggested from these experiences that the depth of the relationships developed in the service-learning module were important to participants’ overall evaluation and satisfaction with the experience. In addition, it is important to consider the students who are engaging in service-learning each year as this may have an impact on the community partners’ perceptions of the experience.

5.3.6. Respect

5.3.5.1 positive experiences
One participant, Mary, spoke about her experience being accepted into the group:
No one bickered or… no one said: ‘well, you stop talking about this, or you stop talking about that’ and I liked everyone. I really liked everybody here, I really, really did. And normally I don’t click with everyone immediately, but here I clicked with everyone immediately…It’s been fantastic. (Mary)

In this quote, Mary spoke about the culture of respect through camaraderie within the ILS programme. As a result, Mary experienced a sense of inclusion and formed relationships with others.

Other participants reported a mutual respect and students’ willingness to work together: “They were nice in that respect. They were always willing to listen to you and you were willing to listen to them” (Brian)

5.3.5.2 disrespect
The experience of respect was not always positive for community partners. For example, Linda recounted her experiences of respect over the course of two academic years:

…all those OT people from last year had been so rude with [staff member] because they didn't listen…they would continue talking and [staff member] was trying to get them to communicate with her and they didn't listen to her. I think it just…I noticed that last year actually, I wasn't pleased. I felt sorry for [staff member] actually, she was giving up her time to do this badminton with us and the OTs were not listening to her and they didn't even say ‘thank’ you to her. I noticed that. But this year the OTs, they listened to her and we had her again this year and they listened and communicated with her…don't get me wrong, you guys, this is not about [staff member] this is about me and about how I feel about the OT people, students. This year's students are much better than last year's (Linda)
5.3.5.3 commitment

Participants felt the students showed them respect through commitment to the service-learning experience. In contrast, students who did not commit had negative impacts for the community partners. In some cases, students did not come every week or stopped attending after a number of weeks. The community partners were concerned by this: “… I said to [student] that he hadn’t been here enough to attend the graduation” (John).

In this case, John strongly felt that a student should not go to the graduation ceremony at the end of the ILS programme as he had not fully committed his time to the group. Other participants also experienced issues with feeling a lack of respect in their service-learning partnerships due to this lack of commitment: “When we were doing a fitness class my partner didn't show up…I had to be with someone else's partner and I wasn't happy with it” (Jack).

The participants’ experience with the amount of respect they were given had a direct impact on their feelings about the relationship with their partner, on their experience of the service-learning programme and their feelings of inclusion as a result.

... My OT last year…On some days she was gone so I had to get someone else and I didn't like that. My OT this year is miles better. It's fun and funny and there's something nice about it. (Sarah)

5.3.5.4 communication

One participant reported communication difficulties with her partner:

Last year when I had [student], when she was sick she wouldn't tell me. Last year she would tell [lecturer] and [lecturer] would tell me. I wasn't very happy with that, I was furious actually. (Linda)

Open and honest communication for community partners was associated with feeling respected and played an important part of developing the relationships. Participants emphasised the importance of the students being open and honest. One participant praised the OT students: “They were really approachable…” (Brian) and many enjoyed interacting with students: “The chatting was great…” (Joe).

One participant spoke about what she learned about the OT students: “… I learned that the OT students were very friendly, that you'd almost want to bring them wherever you want to go” (Louise).

Louise’s account demonstrates for a successful relationship there needs to be a willingness to share experiences and activities together. Respect was integral to the
service-learning relationship. Respect and commitment in the relationship provided a foundation which a collaborative relationship could be built upon

5.3.7. Acceptance/Appreciation

Community partners reported feeling accepted by, and being accepting of, others in service-learning: “Immediately when I came in here I got a good vibe from everyone…” (Mary). Other participants felt similar about their service-learning experience. They acknowledged each person had different abilities but agreed that it was the aim of the group to develop these skills: “…I think that everybody took something away from it…some people found stuff difficult and they worked on it and came out of their shell over the year” (Chris).

5.3.6.1 value of inexperience

Community partners also enjoyed working with the OT students for their lack of experience:

The OT students couldn’t cook things. (Chris)

No, big time, they were really useless. It was fun. (John)

Another participant spoke about the contribution of the OT students: “They brought the fact that they didn’t know much about it. They had to be told, like, a lot of the time” (Alex). Community partners appeared to place importance on the relationships over achieving a level of competence in the tasks.

5.3.6.2 appreciating abilities

Conversely, when the OT students were skilled at the activities, community partners also showed the appreciation for their skills: “Well, [student]…was brilliant with the Lámh, moving the hands and talking…” (Patrick). In this instance, Patrick was working with an OT student to learn ‘Lámh’, a simplified version of Irish Sign Language. Louise appreciated the OT students’ ability to learn quickly: “… More or less they were learning the same sort of things as we were but…they learned different things much quicker than us” (Louise). Joe showed his appreciation for the skills his partner developed over time; “She learned the way to help me… She was a bit nervy there in the beginning the first time we went out” (Joe).
In the knitting group, the OT students were not able to knit. This was not an issue, however, as the participants appreciated their partners’ input in other areas such as developing ideas for assembling the quilts they were working on each week:

“Like the ideas that they came up with was absolutely brilliant, weren't they?” (Joan)

“Ah, they were marvellous, marvellous” (Betty)

Acceptance and appreciation were vital to the relationship. Both partners would need to accept each other, in their strengths and limitation in order to work together on an equal basis. In addition, when they could appreciate the other person, that allowed for further strengthening of the relationships.

5.3.8. Inclusion

5.3.7.1 inclusion in the service-learning environment

The service-learning environment supported a sense of inclusion for community partners. As Mary recounted: “Every Thursday I was dying to get back here because I knew everybody was here” (Mary).

The participants who had been involved in service-learning in previous years had remarked about the difference in the functioning of the groups and the impact of their feelings of inclusion; “[The OT students] are a lot more open than last year’s ones. They were a lot more approachable” (John).

One participant noted that he would have liked to have developed more relationships with others “I didn’t get to know many of the people…” (Matthew) while in the group but he didn’t have any ideas how to do that but when asked what he thought of the group overall he suggested that “I think we should start it back up again” (Matthew) and that the course was “brilliant” which suggests on some level he connected with others and enjoyed the experience as he reported that he didn’t learn anything but he came back “Just for the excitement” (Matthew).

Community partners in the CCL course remarked that service-learning provided a social opportunity expressed excitement of including new people into their group:

Because we...stay together, we sit together, we eat together, we go to class together and...you're seeing the same people every day and when you get to meet the OT students you're like 'Great, new faces’ (Seán)

Louise also spoke about her experience of inclusion as a result of working with the OT students:
having the OT students working with us in some of the modules is very helpful...it makes us feel less isolated than when we are doing our normal classes, because...there's just six of us doing our classes and then having our lunch and then going back to our classes again, and...it's a very lonely routine but as we get to the sports centre things are very different. After lunch we go to the sports centre and we meet the OT students and we are more talkative than usual. (Louise)

When the OT students left, Louise reported that their absence also had an impact on her; “Well, it just made the class feel like it was small again” (Louise).

5.3.7.2 inclusion in the greater community

Some participants reported a sense of inclusion in their greater community as a result of the service-learning experience. Community partners from the CCL course explored the university campus and made use of the facilities with the OT students: "...all my friends are in college in Trinity and [student] was like 'there's the building of science over there' and I didn't know it was there." (Sarah). In addition, other students in the college helped to provide this experience by creating experiences such as orienteering which was organised by a student who was related to one of the participants: "We did orienteering with [Linda’s] niece" (Sarah).

In the nursing home, Joe experienced inclusion in his environment because he was able to go out into the community with the help of the student:

…it means I can get out and see and hear what's happening...I can say it to [student]... ‘where’s this and that’…and she could help me get my bearings. (Joe)

Joan reported that she had the opportunity to be more involved in the community of the nursing home because of the OT students and the service-learning experience:

…..one of the girls came into me and said 'how are you, we haven't' seen you for a good while and we miss you coming down' and I said em 'oh I'm after being very sick' and she said 'yes, I know’… but she says... 'are you intending to come back to the knitting' and I said 'yes' and I says to her 'when are you starting' and she says 'today' and I said 'I'll be down in half an hour' and I came down and I started straight back in... Now, having said that, I was knitting when I was sick … It's not, it really isn't a good idea to knit when you're sick but I'd just, it kept me occupied, you know. Which I was very, very glad of. (Joan)

Based on the relationships they developed, the community partners appear to have experienced inclusion in two ways: (a) they felt inclusion in the groups/partnerships they
were engaged in and (b) in the greater environment such as their service or the university where they were based.

5.3.9. **Theme Two – Meaningful Activity**

Occupational engagement and participation relate to the level at which a person interacts with meaningful activities in the context of their own lives. A primary aim of the service-learning module was for students and community partners to engage in meaningful activities. This section explores community partners’ experiences with meaningful activities during the service-learning module. Figure 12 shows the theme of ‘meaningful activity’ and its subthemes.
5.3.10. Engaging in Meaningful Activities

The theme of meaningful activity was obtained from participants reporting their experiences of engaging in activities during service-learning. These activities may have been important to the participants before they engaged in service-learning or they may have been discovered because of the experience. The specific activities which participants engaged in was varied because there were many different service-learning opportunities in which participants could engage.

5.3.9.1 meaning of brain training

For some participants, the meaning in these activities came not necessarily from the activity itself but from the improvements they experienced and what the group allowed them to do. The brain training group facilitated an improvement to the community partners’ memory: “I think this place is after helping my memory a good bit” (Alex). Harry reported that attending the service and the brain training group had an impact on his independence: “It’s given me a bit more independence and… that’s what life is about.” (Harry).

5.3.9.2 meaning of walking

In the nursing home, Joe also felt he had more independence. He moved to the nursing home when his visual impairment worsened and was unfamiliar with his new environment, both the nursing home itself and the surrounding area. A student went out walking with him once a week for an hour. Sometimes they went to the shops together and other times they went out just to walk;

Well we started going out. When she came up the first day the weather wasn't that good you know, so we just went down as far as the um...garage it's called. The shops…and it's about a 20 minutes’ walk…(Joe)

This was a meaningful activity for Joe due his past employment where he spent most of his time outdoors working on the roads. He became unable to leave his house after a stroke which left him with a visual impairment: “They couldn't keep me in. Then I had a stroke and that kept me down” (Joe). Joe spoke about how the student would describe the area to him and how he was able to get a picture in his head about the area because of their outings:
I wouldn’t know the area at all… I didn’t even know there was a bridge here until we crossed over it the first time… There’s only one thing I don’t like about here…. [laughing] There’s too many hills (Joe)

This activity was meaningful to Joe because he felt isolated and uncomfortable in the environment: “sometimes in here it feels like a hospital” (Joe). He reported that he would not be able to go for walks on his own because of his visual impairment and that staff were often too busy to take him: “I couldn't get used to being trapped in here all the time. I'm caught, you know, there's no freedom.” (Joe).

5.3.9.4 meaning of knitting

In the same service, two other participants were paired with two students to do a knitting group. The participants, Joan and Betty, were already engaging in knitting as a meaningful occupation before the beginning of the service-learning experience. Betty would knit for her grandchildren: “[Betty] has grandchildren and that, you know, she stitches, you'd want to see what she stitches; little booties and oh, there only about that size, they're tiny...absolutely gorgeous…” (Joan). Joan, meanwhile, knitted as a pastime when she was recovering from a stroke. She also knitted items for a day service she attended once a week: “And now I've started knitting in the wheelchair association” (Joan).

While these two women were both engaging in this activity prior to the experience, the presence of the OT students allowed them to make it a social group where they could knit together and socialise: “Oh, we were chatting away while we were knitting” (Joan). In addition, as a group, they worked together to achieve a common goal. The goal of the group was to create quilts for other residents who were living in the dementia wards. These quilts were sensory quilts that would be used to improve the other residents’ lives:

The Alzheimer’s patients are downstairs. They had decided, [staff member] had said to her that yesterday they were going to stitch it all together but now they decided to give the patients, to give them their own smaller quilt... (Betty)

This enriched the experience and provided deeper meaning for the participants as they were giving back to their community. Joan was proud of their work: “I said, ‘it's a mortal sin to be proud but I'm very proud. I really am very, very proud of it’. I really was” (Joan).

5.3.9.5 meaning of sign language and sports

In other service-learning experiences, participants spoke about other meaningful activities. In the CCL course community partners engaged in a sign language course
followed by a health and fitness module with the OT students. The health and fitness module involved using the university sports centre. They used the gym machines and did various sports each week. Participants reported that this was generally a positive experience though not all found it meaningful. For Seán, the sports centre was meaningful because he was interested in sports in his everyday life: “Which is actually up my alley, as you might say. It's up there with my top things to be doing” (Seán).

The service-learning experience offered Seán and the other participants the opportunity to be coaches to the OT students. Community partners taught the students different elements of sports and fitness while engaging in various sports and games. For example, Seán, taught a boxing class because it was his hobby: “Because I asked to do boxing one day. [Staff member] said yes so that was my session and I had to teach the offensive, defence and psychology almost. The basics” (Seán).

Seán shared his knowledge and expertise and was responsible for teaching the OT students during those sessions.

Similarly, other members of the CCL course attributed meaning to other activities. Louise, enjoyed the Irish Sign Language class, remarking that it was “very interesting”. She enjoyed interacting with the OT students and working with them to improve their sign language:

The OT students were really good with their sign language as well but like I think that sometimes they might have a little brick wall moment and they might need somebody that knows a little bit more about sign language and it turned out that I remembered a lot from it and so, I felt like I was teaching some of the OT students there as well (Louise)

Another participant, Leanne, found swimming meaningful for her as she engaged in swimming outside of her course and competed in competitions. Leanne shared her hobby with students and helped improve their swimming techniques:

…because I do swimming on Wednesday mornings and I swim in competitions…so I know how to do the butterfly, the breast stroke and the back stroke, the front crawl...so that's why I was using the front crawl to give pointers to one of the OTs... (Leanne)

Some members did not find these activities meaningful beyond the fact that it was enjoyable. They spoke enthusiastically about some of the activities such as wall climbing, trampolining and boxing. While this was overall a positive experience for these participants, they reported no intention to continue using the facilities after the module ends. Although not planning to maintain engagement, participants from this group spoke about becoming more confident from using the university facilities;
Well...for some of us using some of the facilities would be different like...like we like to use the same machines nearly every week to get us warmed up. Like for me, I like to use the treadmill because I know that makes me more energetic than I really feel and also that gets me into the fast walk where I go 'here we go again'…

(Louise)

Though it would not be continued, the participation in the sports centre activities had meaning for the community partners at the time of service-learning: “Yeah much more enjoyable than sitting in a class all day, faffing about. Instead of sitting in class all day where they explain what things are, like, you're actually doing it.” (Seán)

Sarah spoke about her experience orienteering around the university with an OT student. The OT student taught Sarah about the uses of specific buildings. Through this, Sarah learned where her friends were taking classes and felt that she would be able to meet them as a result: "It was new to me because I'm...all my friends are in college in Trinity and [OT student] was like 'there's the building of science over there' and I didn't know it was there" (Sarah). By learning to navigate the campus, Sarah had more opportunities to engage in the university beyond her class.

Other activities were meaningful for participants because they had participated in them already in their lives. In the first year of the CCL course, participants spoke about a variety of activities they completed as a part of their sports and fitness module. Some activities had particular meaning for participants: “It was my favourite. I like dancing” (Sarah). Also, Linda, engaged in her favourite leisure activity with her service-learning partners: “Yeah. It’s about my favourite sport…Swimming…sometimes I swam with [students] as well” (Linda).

5.3.11. Working together/ sharing knowledge

Through the collaborative relationships they developed, the community partners and students shared the engagement of occupations with each other: "...Sometimes I swam with [two students] as well...And it was really nice for the company. Definitely"(Linda). Community partners didn’t just share their meaningful activities but also had the opportunity to impart their knowledge and skills. As previously mentioned, participants coached the OT students as a part of their course, providing them with an opportunity to share their knowledge and skills such as with boxing and swimming in the CCL course.

The students from the CCL course were familiar with some of the university facilities such as the sports centre. This meant that they were able to show the OT students
around and help them become familiar with the sports facilities: “We showed them. They didn’t know where [the sports centre] was first but we showed them where it was…” (Linda). In the brain training class Brian praised the OT students for their ability to work together with them in completing their brain training activities: “They were willing to focus… they’d stick with you, you know. It was nice…” (Brian). In addition, community partners shared their knowledge and gave advice to the OT students: “One of the girls was trying to learn how to drive and I gave her the ABCs…” (Chris). Joan and Betty shared life advice with the students as they were closing the relationship:

We said goodbye and we said to make sure to keep on knitting and I said 'ask you to do one thing now, I said, I want you to do something for us. I said, what's that? I said, you keep on with your studies. I said, your studies are very important…” (Joan)

Joan and Betty’s conversation during the focus group suggests how important being able to share knowledge is for these two women:

That makes me feel good, to think that I'm helping them. (Joan)

You are helping them (Betty)

Because they're only young people. (Joan)

[nodding] They're the future (Betty)

5.3.12. Trying New Things

5.3.11.1 making personal changes

In the ILS programme, Chris reported that he had been making changes to his life because of the service-learning experience: “Yeah, I learned a lot actually myself…I’ve really started putting my name down for things I’ve never tried before. Especially going to the gym and things...” (Chris). The ILS programme inspired Chris to find new leisure opportunities and make healthier lifestyle choices based on the material covered in the programme. Other community partners in the ILS programme also began to make changes to their lives. John reported that he had begun to make changes in his life as a result of engaging in service-learning in addition to other support he was receiving:

I’ve been like this, maybe, ten years. I’ve had a chance to start getting out and doing things like this. I’m seeing an occupational therapist next week to start a new course... (John)

Another participant in the ILS programme tried new behaviours during the experience. She was inspired by the students and other group members to make an effort to
develop relationships with them and make an impact in the group: “But I loved coming here every week. I pushed myself to kind of have a personality that everyone else knew” (Mary). In addition, Chris created and performed a rap song for the graduation at the end of the programme, his first time performing in front of an audience: “I remember, like, when I wrote that song about everyone to sing at the graduation...” (Chris)

5.3.11.2 trying new activities

The participants in the CCL course had the opportunity to try various sports “We did all the different sports in the sports centre like basketball, badminton... table tennis...fencing. We did Gaelic, athletics....” (Jack) and getting opportunities to experience things they wouldn’t be able to otherwise: "One of the Gaelic footballers decided to bring in the Sam McGuire cup, from one of his brothers...and everyone got to take pictures" (Jack). In the second year of the CCL course, the participants had similar experiences trying new sports and activities in the sports centre such as wall climbing, basketball, weight training and they also participated in trampolining: “It’s more gymnastics sort of trampolining so like that's going to be something very new and something very nerve wrecking” (Louise).

5.3.13. Finding New Roles

5.3.12.1 personal roles

In the ILS programme, the group members’ search for new roles during and as a result of service-learning showed that how participants associated with the other group members changed: “It was a really great experience for me...we all came here as strangers and left as friends.” (Chris). Participants became friends, and continued those friendships outside of the group, bringing them into their own lives and thereby continuing the support they experienced as a part of the programme. Participants also changed their own views of themselves:

…it’s taken me a long time to actually crawl out of that hole I was in and the thing is, if you see any kind of light start crawling to it and get the hell out of here... I was homeless for ages but the thing is, if you get the chance you can take it. I mean, the thing is, you can live on your own, honestly. It’s easy to live on your own. It’s actually really, really rewarding on your own, it makes you feel responsible. (John to Matthew)
By experiencing a change in personal circumstances as a result of the group, John found himself in an entirely new role as a homeowner and living in a stable environment. John identified personal strengths he had not realised previously such as managing responsibilities and having a rewarding life.

5.3.12.2 peer advocacy

The search for new roles also expressed itself in a desire to help others within the ILS programme which manifested through an interest in advocating for their peers. One participant took over a role a supportive role for others and wished to be as inclusive to others as she had felt:

Well, say if there’s a problem…make them feel that…everyone understands … what I went through after a while it was grand… make them believe in themselves, make them feel that they’re being assertive. Make them feel that because you have a problem, it doesn’t mean that everyone has a problem…that if it’s a serious one, maybe, make them talk about it privately to you or whoever… (Mary)

Many of the group members showed concern for others in the group and for future groups. They shared many suggestions on what they thought should be continued in future groups and what changes that could be made to improve the experience for others. The participants wanted to ensure that others could have their voices heard: “Let them know that we’re all in the same boat…make them feel that they’re important.” (Mary). In addition, they showed instances where they provided support to other group members through sharing advice such as mentioned earlier in the ‘working together’ subtheme: During the focus group, when one of the participants reported that he did not know how to change his circumstances, the other group members showed support and provided advice:

Things will change because you have a chance to move out. When you figure what you’re doing, you’ll realise that you want to move out and all that on your own like I moved out and I’m living on my own. (Chris to Matthew)

These results suggest that there was a transformational effect because of the relationships they developed. Participants moved from strangers availing of a service to a cohesive and connected group, interested in the wellbeing of each other.
5.3.14. **Theme Three – Outcomes**

The theme of outcomes relates to personal outcomes for community partners based on their experiences of service-learning. The theme of ‘outcomes’ and its subthemes can be seen in Figure 13.

![Figure 13: ‘Outcomes’ and Subthemes](image.png)

5.3.15. **Developing New Skills**

Each service-learning experience provided different opportunities for learning skills.

5.3.14.1 **practical skills**

In the ILS programme participants learned skills such as cooking and budgeting; “…there’s lots of questions they’ll ask you… do you know how to budget, do you know how to cook… That’s all the stuff we learned this year” (John). While in the CCL course, participants learned practical sports skills such as trampolining, rock climbing, using gym equipment and various sports skills “we had to partake in a skills challenge” (Seán). The second group of CCL students learned sign language as a skill: “… for the first term we
did our Irish Sign Language with the OT students” (Louise) and Patrick reported he learned to maintain conversations through sign language “… you just had to keep the conversation rolling” (Patrick). In the nursing home, Joe’s physical health through walking: “…I can feel it in my legs in my again in my legs and my breathing and everything” (Joe).

5.3.14.3 transferable skills

Participants also learned a variety of transferable skills. Mary spoke improvements in interpersonal skills: “I learned to let people have their own point of view and just talk…” (Mary). Linda, listed a variety of skills such as timekeeping, organisation and communication skills. “…I learned a lot of new things that I didn’t have and I’m quite good at now” (Linda). In the second CCL course group, Seán spoke about the skills he learned from coaching the OT students in boxing:

Just be more encouraging to people. If they're starting to shake or something. Or notice the signs of them getting kind of tired. Or if they're starting to hit at the wall or fall on the ground [tell them] 'you'll be grand'. (Seán)

Louise in the CCL course spoke about how she learned to transfer the knowledge from the sports centre into her everyday life: “…If I walk in from where I get off the bus to college and back, I actually have something to get more fit and be more sporty” (Louise).

In the ILS programme, John spoke about his role as a group facilitator, a new role for him. He spoke about his experience of learning to be a group facilitator:

I found it very difficult to be put on the spot like that, it was a big challenge and…I was able to rise to it, I was actually able to. I think we all were and it was actually a very good experience. (John)

5.3.16. Personal Development

Many participants reported some instance of personal development from the service-learning.

5.3.15.1 confidence

Community partners reported feeling confident through becoming comfortable in the group: “…I think I came out of my shell a lot” (Matthew) and being more open with other group members: “…when I was leaving this group, I was feeling more assertive” (Mary). Some participants a sense of achievement through participation: “…everybody
took something away from it, like some people found stuff difficult and they worked on it and came out of their shell over the year” (Chris).

In the brain training course, Harry and Alex both reported that they had improved their confidence from attending the brain training classes: “You get a lot more confidence” (Harry). Similarly, in the CCL course, Linda reported feeling “…much more confident” (Linda) when working with an OT student who she had a good relationship with. Both Seán and Louise were given positive feedback on their abilities which improved their confidence: “They were actually surprised at how well I was able to keep going. I was one of the fastest ones in the race” (Seán). Louise reported: “…she thought that I was a professional learning about all the whole gym stuff because as I was doing all the treadmill stuff they knew that I knew what they were doing” (Louise).

5.3.15.2 change in perspective

John from the ILS programme remarked that his outlook on his life and his health had changed because of the influence of the group: “And me, I don’t mind, I have to actually change my life entirely or I’m going to go back to what I was doing and I actually can’t do that anymore” (John). Similarly, Joe from the nursing home reported that his mood had changed drastically since beginning service-learning. He described how he felt before he started going out walking with his service-learning partner: “I was getting melancholy sitting here by myself getting browned off…” (Joe). Joe explained how service-learning change him: “My outlook in the first place… it means I can get out and see and hear what's happening” (Joe).

5.3.17. Empowerment through relationships

The relationships developed in the service-learning programme encouraged feelings of empowerment. For example, John, who had been involved in service-learning twice, said: “Coming to something like this has been very, very rewarding…” (John). The quality of the relationship was an important contributor to empowerment:

This year I'm with [student] and I felt much more confident and I had a great time with her. I loved spending time with her. She was the most fantastic partner I ever had I just had more communication and more in common with her. (Linda)

By coaching students, community partners in the CCL course had the opportunity to share their knowledge and skills with others. Louise reported engaging with the OT
students: “Makes me more social” (Louise) and Leanne agreed: “Yeah, it makes me more sociable also, yeah.” (Leanne).

Through the relationship Joe developed with the OT student, he had consistent social interaction: “Oh god yes, that and the chatting, the conversation about things going on, like you know. Things that I wouldn't have got...” (Joe)

5.3.18. Enjoyment

5.3.17.1 enjoyment of relationships

For many participants enjoyment was heavily linked with their relationships and feelings of inclusion. As Linda from the CCL course described, she enjoyed the experience with her service-learning partner because: "Myself and [student] had great companionship" (Linda). Mary from the ILS programme described the difference between her experience of work and the service-learning experience: “I go to work and I’m with loads of people but this group since I’ve been with it, has been fantastic. I know that everyone has their own personalities. We all got used to one and other” (Mary). Similarly, Joe from the nursing home enjoyed the experience in part because “The chatting was great, you know” (Joe).

Joan and Betty enjoyed the company of their service-learning partners “We thoroughly, we really enjoyed them immensely…” (Joan). Louise from the CCL course described the anticipation each week for service-learning: “Technically we run to the sports centre because we can't wait to get there. We run the whole way” (Louise) and Carl said “It was brilliant” (Carl).

5.3.17.2 enjoyment of activities

While the relationships were mainly how participants expressed their enjoyment, engaging in meaningful activities also made the experience enjoyable: “I liked to meet the OTs and to get to know them better and I also liked when we did the dancing.” (Sarah). Seán enjoyed the experience because it was a break from lectures and it was more practical for him: “Yeah much more enjoyable than sitting in a class all day, faffing about. Instead of sitting in class all day where they explain what things are… you're actually doing it” (Seán).

For Joe, being able to go out walking with his service-learning partner was meaningful for him and he reported “…it's been a great help…I'm going to miss it…” (Joe).
5.3.17.3 evaluation of experience

From the ILS programme, when asked how he felt about the service-learning experience, John reported: “Yeah well, as Mayor Quimby once said; ‘I…couldn’t be … happier with how it went” (John). Other members of the ILS programme also felt that service-learning was an enjoyable experience. Chris said: “It was a really great experience for me.” and Mary described it as: “For me…it was a blast!””. Finally, Matthew suggested: “I think we should start it back up again.”. In the knitting group, Betty described the experience as “marvellous” and Joan reported “It was a terrific experience. And I hope and pray that…other people and other groups got as much out of it as we did” (Joan).

5.3.19. Impact

Just as participants felt they had been affected by the service-learning experience, many participants felt they had in turn had an impact on their service-learning partner. Seán felt that he had impressed his partners with his abilities: “Well, they were actually surprised at how well I was able to keep going. I was one of the fastest ones in the race…” (Seán).

In the brain training group, Alex reported the students had learned about him and the other community partners “…I’d say just from being here alone…they learned something out of it…” (Alex).

Other participants reported students were able to learn things by working with them: “I think they got more confident… to make decisions for themselves and working along with people” (Brian).

Linda from the CCL class reported that the students improved various skills by working together. She reported they learned “Communication with us… and teamwork”. In the nursing home, Joan also reported many skills which she witnessed the students learn during their time together:

Social interaction... Learning how to do things, coming up with ideas that we wouldn’t necessarily thought of…That was very good, that was very important. (Joan)

In the ILS programme, Chris reported that he saw a difference in some of the students’ confidence levels as they spent more time to the group: “They got a lot more confidence as well. [student], she was always very quiet when she was here.” Also in the ILS programme, John reported how they had contributed to the OT students’ enjoyment of
the experience: “It was a stress relief for them, it happened directly after a lecture for them. They always seemed happy when they came in.”

The sense of making an impact on students was important to the community partners. It changed their role from being service-users to contributing to the service-learning relationship. Being able to make an impact on someone and giving back was important to them. For example, Joe reported “It was a great experience… I hope I can repeat it sometime. It was good learning for her too; she learned how to relax around a blind man” (Joe).

In the brain training group, Brian also reported a similar feeling: “…because we were helping them out, it was giving something back. You know, it was nice” (Brian). Finally, Joan summed up the sentiment:

Well so far as I'm concerned, it was brilliant and I'm just bloody sorry that it's finished up [laughter] but as they say, all good things must come to an end. But if it helps them, as we say, we're in a nursing home, we're going nowhere, we're just being looked after and that... But if it helps the girls, that's brilliant. And that makes me feel good. (Joan)

5.3.20. Summary

Three themes were obtained from the community partners’ qualitative data ‘relationships’, ‘meaningful activity’ and ‘outcomes’. Community partners spoke about the importance of the relationship for the overall experience of service-learning. Community partners seemed to rate their experience of service-learning in terms of the relationship they developed with the OT students and other people in the groups. When the relationship was positive for community partners, they rated the experience of service-learning well. Similarly, in the few instances where the relationship was negative or not satisfying, the community partner rated the service-learning experience accordingly. Positive relationships appeared to be based from respect, appreciation and acceptance. The relationships developed during service-learning had the potential to foster a sense of inclusion for community partners.

Each service-learning experience offered different activities for community partners and students. Community partners spoke about engaging in meaningful activities. The meaning attributed to the activity was unique to each community partner. Some community partners found meaning in engaging in new activities while others were able to complete meaningful activities in a more social context. Some community partners found
that the outcomes of the activity are what held meaning for them. Regardless of the specific activities they engaged in, many community partners reported that working together and sharing their knowledge or expertise was meaningful. Community partners shared their activities with the OT students. Some community partners gave advice and imparted their own wisdom with the students. Community partners also tried new things. Some community partners reported trying new activities while others spoke about making changes to their lives or changing their outlook on life. In addition, community partners found new roles within the groups. By becoming coaches and friends and by advocating for others, community partners changed how they interacted with each other and their environments.

Through engaging in service-learning, community partners developed a variety of skills, both specific and transferable. In addition, many community partners reported experiencing an improved mood and feeling more confident as a result of service-learning. Personal feelings of empowerment derived from the service-learning relationship. Community partners spoke about finding the experience rewarding, engaging and transformative in how they saw and interacted with the world in some cases. Furthermore, the overall experience was enjoyable for community partners. Finally, community partners spoke about the impact they had on the OT students. This was an important factor for partners. By sharing their knowledge, working with the students and helping them learn, community partners were able to give back to the students. This made the community partners feel good about the experience and by being able to help the students, allowed for a relationship with reciprocal benefit.

5.3.21. Conclusion

This chapter examined the quantitative and qualitative results for community partners. From the quantitative results it can be suggested that community partners gained a better understanding of the term ‘service-learning partner’ over the course of the module. In addition, service-learning appeared to have an impact on the value community partners placed on occupations. There were no statistically significant changes observed from community partners occupational competence scores or their personal and professional skills.

For the qualitative results, community partners reported three main themes: ‘relationships’, ‘meaningful activity’ and ‘outcomes’. Relationships were important to how community partners experienced the service-learning module and the characteristics
which made for positive relationships were respect and acceptance/appreciation. Positive relationships could result in feelings of inclusion for community partners. Community partners reported engaging meaningful activities as a result of service-learning. The experience also provided community partners with opportunities to share their knowledge/expertise, work together with the student, try new things and take on new roles. As outcomes of service-learning, community partners reported experiencing personal development and developing new skills. Community partners gained a sense of empowerment from the relationships and felt they had made an impact on the OT students. Finally, community partners reported enjoying the experience.
6. Chapter 6 – Occupational Therapy Student Results

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, both the quantitative and qualitative results for the OT students will be discussed. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test surveys, focus groups and reflective workbooks. The quantitative and qualitative data will be presented separately. The main results from each strand will be converged and discussed in Chapter 7 – Integration of Results.

6.2. Quantitative Data – Occupational Therapy Students

In this section, the quantitative data will be presented. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post- surveys, containing four measures as follows:

- The Service-learning Partner Questionnaire created for the purposes of this study
- The Occupational Self-Assessment (Baron, Kielfhoner, Iyenher, Goldhammer & Wolenski, 2006)
- The Modified Issues in Disability Scale (Makas, 1985)
- The Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire (based on Lalor & Lynch, 2009)

6.2.1. The Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire

The service-learning partner questionnaire was provided to the first year and second year OT students pre- and post- the service-learning module. The questionnaire consisted of two questions: Q.1 ‘do you know what a service-learning partner is’ and Q.2 ‘if yes, what does a service-learning partner mean to you’. 
6.2.2. First-Year Students

6.2.2.1 First-year pre-service-learning module responses

The responses for Q.1 of the Service-learning Partner Questionnaire are shown in Table 27.

Table 27: Pre-service-learning responses for Q.1 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – first-year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1 ‘Do you know what a service-learning partner is?’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to 29 students responding ‘yes’ to Q.1, one student responded ‘no’ to Q.1 provided an answer for Q.2. Therefore, in Q.2 there were 30 responses. As Q.2 was an open-ended question: “what does the term service-learning partner mean to you”, responses were analysed for common themes. The responses and were categorised into three themes, ‘relationship without learning purpose’, ‘relationship for the student’s benefit’ and ‘collaborative relationship’. Table 28 contains sample of the responses from the service-learning questionnaire.
### Table 28: Responses for Pre-service-learning responses for Q.2 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – First-year students

Q.2 ‘What does the term service-learning partner mean to you?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship without learning purpose</th>
<th>Relationship for the student’s benefit</th>
<th>Reciprocal relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone to share your experience of service learning with, whom you can get to know and develop a relationship with. (ID 007)</td>
<td>This is the primary figure during your volunteering session, which will guide you through your experience. They will aid you in enhancing your understanding of the patients (ID 202)</td>
<td>A person you do the service-learning with, and you do things together (ID 001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone who I am going to spend time with and someone I will get to know. Hopefully, I will gain an insight into that person's life and learn more about them at the end of the project (ID 220)</td>
<td>Someone you can learn from whether it's about them or yourself (ID 224)</td>
<td>A service learning partner is someone I am in a collaborative relationship with. We're on equal levels in this relationship, and we're here to learn from each other. I help to facilitate the activities that the service learning partner engages in, but should not tell her what to do, and have no obligation to help her complete the task. (ID 004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Responses=8 (26.66%) | Total Responses=13 (43.33%) | Total Responses=9 (30%) |

N=30
6.2.1.1 **Relationship without a specific learning purpose**

In their descriptions of the service-learning partner, eight students did not describe the relationship in a way that would suggest there is a learning purpose for the student attached.

6.2.1.2 **Relationship for the student’s benefit**

There were 13 instances where students described the service-learning partner as a person who was there for the student to learn from or from whom they could benefit. Students expected to learn about ‘disability’, ‘disadvantage’, ‘themselves’ and ‘other people’ from their service-learning partner. In this theme, students describe the service-learning partner as a mechanism for their own learning, thereby assigning their needs with foremost importance in the service-learning partnership.

6.2.1.3 **Reciprocal relationship**

The theme of reciprocity was found often through the use of the term ‘collaboration’. Reciprocity was cited in nine responses. Out of these responses, students mostly appeared to understand the importance of collaboration as an element of the service-learning relationship. Students reported characteristics such as ‘working together’, ‘doing activities’, ‘learning from each other’ and ‘mutual benefit’ as important elements of a collaborative relationship.

It would be expected to see the term ‘collaborative relationship’ in the results as students were provided with two introductory workshops before beginning their service-learning module. In these workshops, service-learning and the collaborative relationship was explained to the students. In addition, an emphasis was placed on developing the collaborative relationship during the service-learning module. While many of the responses appear to show some understanding of the nature of a service-learning partnership, some responses failed to provide insight into collaboration: “The person to which you have a collaborative relationship” (ID 012). Therefore, it is possible some students within this sample may not have fully understood the concept of collaboration by this time.
6.2.3 First-year post-service-learning module responses

The post service-learning module responses for Question 1 of the Service-learning Partner Questionnaire are shown in Table 29.

Table 29: Post-service-learning responses for Q.1 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – First-year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1 ‘Do you know what a service-learning partner is?’</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=43

As with the previous set of results, the responses were categorised into three themes, ‘relationship without learning purpose’, ‘relationship for the student’s benefit’ and ‘reciprocal relationship’. Table 30 contains a sample of the responses from the service-learning questionnaire.
Table 30: Responses for Post-service-learning responses for Q.2 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – first-year students

Q.2 ‘What does the term service-learning partner mean to you?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship without learning purpose</th>
<th>Relationship for the student’s benefit</th>
<th>Reciprocal relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A service-learning partner is a service user that will act as your companion throughout the experience. (ID223)</td>
<td>I had one of the children in the group I was volunteering in as my service-learning partner. I focused on this child in order to learn more about them and understand what was important to them in their life. (ID219)</td>
<td>Through working together, you can learn from this person and they can benefit from your input in terms of occupations. You link back your learning to OT theory (ID011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a person you will be working/spending time with where you volunteer. The person has a certain level of impairment/disability (ID227)</td>
<td>Someone you can learn from whether it's about them or yourself (ID 224)</td>
<td>A service learning partner is the other person in the collaborative relationship. They will learn just as much from you as you learn from them. Both will benefit as it opens my eyes to a person living with a disability living with social difficulties in a disadvantaged area. The partner will gain the confidence in having another social person in their life and it may enable them to get back out into the community enjoying things that are meaningful to them. (ID009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Responses=6 (17.14%) | Total Responses=8 (22.85%) | Total Responses=19 (54.28%) |

6.2.3.1 Relationship without a specific learning purpose

In the post-service-learning module, there were six responses where the student described the service-learning partnership in a way that did not suggest there was a learning purpose attached. This is a decrease of two responses in this category.
6.2.3.2 Relationship for the student’s benefit

In this group, there were eight responses where the student described the service-learning partner as a mechanism within the service-learning context for the learning or the benefit of the student. This is a decrease of six responses within this category which suggests that students’ perceptions of the partnership changed between Time 1 and Time 2.

6.2.3.3 Reciprocal Relationship

There were 19 instances of reciprocity mentioned by students when describing the meaning of a service-learning partner. This is an increase of ten instances between Time 1 and Time 2. Students also appeared to have a deeper understanding of what the term ‘collaboration’ meant, and they were better able to describe in more detail the meaning of a collaborative relationship (Table 30).

6.2.3. Second-Year Students

6.2.3.1 Second-year pre-service-learning module responses

The responses for Q.1 of the Service-learning Partner Questionnaire are shown in Table 31.

Table 31: Pre-service-learning responses for Q.1 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – second-year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1 ‘Do you know what a service-learning partner is?’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the table above, 15 students responded ‘yes’ to Q.1, however, two of those responses did not provide a definition for the term ‘service-learning partner’. Therefore, in Q.2 there were 13 responses. The responses and were categorised into three themes, ‘relationship without learning purpose’, ‘relationship for the student’s benefit’ and ‘collaborative relationship’. Table 32 contains a sample of the responses from the service-learning questionnaire.
Table 32: Pre-service-learning responses for Q.2 of Service-learning Partner Questionnaire – second-year students

Q.2 ‘What does the term service-learning partner mean to you?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship without learning purpose</th>
<th>Relationship for the student’s benefit</th>
<th>Reciprocal relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone you volunteer with (ID303)</td>
<td>A person you are paired with for a particular reason. This paring has a learning goal attached to it. (ID 403)</td>
<td>A service-learning partner is somebody that you volunteer with but it is not like volunteering because you work together with them and you learn from them while doing things that are important to that person (ID 308)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person that you do volunteering with. You do activities together that is meaningful to them (ID304)</td>
<td>A service-learning partner is an individual with whom you engage with when undertaking a particular activity. Engaging with and spending time with a service learning partner can allow for opportunity to learn, reflect and draw connections between course content and real life situations. (ID405)</td>
<td>From the perspective of the OT student as the service learning partner, it is someone who works with another person/people in providing a service who gains skills and knowledge with regards to working and communicating with other people through the direct experience and reflective experience of the service learning (ID400)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 (30.76%)</td>
<td>4 (30.76%)</td>
<td>5 (38.46%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.3.1.1 Relationship without a specific learning purpose

This theme yielded four results from the students prior to the second-year service-learning module. Second-year students recognised there was a purpose for the service-learning partnership. Students reported the purpose was for the community partner to benefit from service-learning through meaningful activities. However, the responses in this category suggest that students did not expect to benefit personally from the partnership and was therefore without a learning purpose.
6.2.3.1.2 Relationship for the student’s benefit

There were four responses in this category which viewed the service-learning partner as a person from whom the student benefits. Learning or achieving learning goals was cited as the benefit of engaging with a service-learning partner.

6.2.3.1.3 Reciprocal relationship

Five students described the service-learning partnership as ‘collaborative’. Responses that fell into this category were more likely to elaborate on the definition of collaboration than first-year students. Students described collaborative relationships as relationships where both parties work together and benefit through that partnership.

6.2.3.2 Second-year post-service-learning module responses

The post service-learning module responses for Q.1 of the Service-learning Partner Questionnaire are shown in Table 33.

Table 33: Responses for Q.1 ‘Do you know what a service-learning partner is?’ second-year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanswered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Unanswered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=19</td>
<td></td>
<td>N=19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventeen responses and were categorised into two themes: ‘relationship for the student’s benefit’ and ‘reciprocal relationship’ (Table 34).
Table 34: Responses for Q.2 ‘What does the term service-learning partner mean to you?’ second-year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship for the student’s benefit</th>
<th>Reciprocal relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is a person who helps you to understand what disability is like in real life. In first year the service-learning partner was someone you just learned to be around but in second year you must have a deeper understanding and apply your knowledge from other aspects of the course to the situation. (ID304)</td>
<td>In my opinion, a service learning partner is a person who works side by side with you, to carry out some kind of occupation together as equals. During this time, you learn about their life, routine, interests and barriers to participation in a natural way, such as through conversation (ID300)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person you are paired with in order to learn something from. They are somebody with a disability or who is from a disadvantaged background. It is linked to learning to develop a therapeutic relationship. (ID403)</td>
<td>You spend time with this person, get to know them, develop a relationship and engage in activities with them. The time spent with this person will enable you understand more about occupational therapy theory and disability studies. It is also useful for learning skills which will help with your professional development. The partner should also benefit from this in some way. (ID 405)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's the person that helps you learn about real practical situations. You learn from them by interacting with them and observing them and the service they're in (ID406)</td>
<td>It is someone who you volunteer with and learn from. You help them to do things that are important to them in the context of a service or their community. (ID 302)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total=3 (17.64%)</td>
<td>Total=14 (82.35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.3.2.1 Relationship without a specific learning purpose

By the end of the service-learning module all students described the service-learning partnership as either for the student’s benefit or collaborative.
6.2.3.2 Relationship for the student’s benefit

There were three responses in this category which view the service-learning partner as a person that is there for the students benefit. Students cited learning or learning goals as the benefit of engaging with a service-learning partner.

6.2.3.2.3 Reciprocal relationship

Fourteen students described the service-learning partnership as ‘collaborative’. In Time 2 students provided a much richer description of collaboration than in any other instance.

6.2.4. The Occupational Self-Assessment

The OSA was used to assess the students’ perceived occupational competence in everyday occupations and the value they place on those occupations. Data were collected from pre- and post- surveys over the course of two years. There were in total two groups of first year students (n=38) [5 participants were omitted for non-responses] and two groups of second year students (n=18) [1 participant was omitted for non-responses].

6.2.5. First-Year Students

Table 35: Descriptive statistics for occupational competence & value responses – first year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>49.00</td>
<td>40.3421</td>
<td>3.65599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>51.00</td>
<td>45.2632</td>
<td>3.55409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>41.3947</td>
<td>5.36021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>44.6842</td>
<td>4.00071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.5.1 Scores for Occupational Competence

A paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on students’ self-reported competency and value of everyday occupations. There was a statistically significant increase in occupational competence from Time 1 (M= 40.32, SD=3.7) to Time 2 [M=45.27, SD=3.6, t(38)=9.74 , p<.0005]. The eta squared statistic (.72) indicated a large effect size.
Q.1 “expressing myself to others” (Figure 15) and Q.12 “accomplishing what I set out to do” (Figure 16) showed the greatest change between Time 1 and Time 2.
These areas may have shown the largest improvement for students as the service-learning module provides opportunities for students to practice these skills. To develop a collaborative relationship with another person, as is an aim of the service-learning module, students would be required to practice their communication skills. Students are also required to set out learning goals at the beginning of their service-learning module which they are then supposed to work on achieving throughout the module. Therefore, in both these instances, the students may have had opportunities to practice and develop these skills.

6.2.5.2 Scores for Occupational Value

A second t-test was conducted on self-reported values of everyday occupations which showed a statistically significant increase from Time 1 (M=41.39, SD=5.25) to Time 2 [M=44.68, SD=4.72, t(38) =4.29, p<.0005]. The eta squared statistic (.33) indicated a large effect size.
Figure 17: Total first-year student responses – occupational value (n=38)

Most questions showed an increase from Time 1 to Time 2 except Q.2 “getting on with others” and Q.12 “accomplishing what I sent out to do”, both of which remained the same. The question with the highest change between Time 1 and Time 2 was Q.6 “having a satisfying routine” (Figure 18).

Figure 18: First-year student responses Q.6 ‘Having a satisfying routine’ (n=38)

Figure 18 shows an overall increase in scores from Time 1 to Time 2, however students were less likely to rate a satisfying routine as ‘most important’ in Time 2 than in Time 1.
6.2.6. Second-Year Students

The data were tested for normality and analysed using descriptive statistics and t-tests to test the null hypothesis that the groups were equal between Time 1 and Time 2. Table 36 shows the descriptive information

### Table 36: Descriptive statistics for occupational competence & value – second year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39.556</td>
<td>4.46189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43.4444</td>
<td>5.05525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41.3333</td>
<td>5.02933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43.1667</td>
<td>5.03225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.6.1 Scores for Occupational Competence

Due to the smaller sample size, data were analysed using the Wilcoxon Test as the non-parametric equivalent to the paired samples t-test. Results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated that the median post-test scores were statistically significantly higher than the median pre-test scores $Z=2.875$, $p < .004$. 


As seen from the above graph second year students scored higher overall on the OSA between Time 1 and Time 2, indicating that there has been a difference between the students’ perceived competence in daily occupations. The largest differences in results between Time 1 and Time 2 included Q.3 and Q.9, showing the greatest improvement in perceived competence. Q.3 is related to the measure ‘identifying and solving problems’ and Q.9 is related to ‘doing activities I like’.

Figure 19: Total second-year student responses for occupational competence (n=18)

Figure 20: Second-year student responses for Q.3 ‘Identifying and solving problems’ (n=18)
The increase in competence for ‘doing activities I like’ was the highest difference between Time 1 and Time 2. The increase may have resulted from engaging in meaningful activities with community partners and being exposed to the benefits of engaging in those activities. Also, it is likely students would have had to practice their problem-solving skills during the service-learning module which may explain the increase in scores from Time 1 to Time 2.

6.2.6.2 Scores for Occupational Value

Scores for occupational value were analysed using the Wilcoxon test. Results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated that the median post-test scores were statistically significantly higher than the median pre-test scores $Z=2.464$, $p<.014$. This result suggests that overall, second-year OT students valued everyday occupations more after their service-learning experience.
Figure 22: Total second-year student responses for occupational value (n=18)

Though the differences between scores are not as significant as the results of occupational competence, as seen from the graph above there is an improvement in all scores in value between Time 1 and Time 2. The largest differences between Time 1 and Time 2 is with Q.3 which is ‘identifying and solving problems’ (Figure 23) and Q.8 which is ‘being involved as a student’ (Figure 24).

Figure 23: Total second-year responses for Q.3 ‘Identifying and solving problems’ (n=18)
Students’ responses show an increase in ‘identifying and solving problems’. Again, this may be because of exposure to situations where it is important to be able to be aware of and find solutions to problems which arise when working with people. The value may have increased with the realisation of the importance of being able to find solutions.

![Figure 24: Total second-year student responses for Q.8 ‘Being involved as a student’ (n=18)](image)

The students’ results from Figure 24 show an increase in the value for engaging in the student role. As the role of the student is the main role for students, perhaps being exposed to other roles or lack of roles may have had an impact on students’ self-conception of their occupations and roles.

6.2.7. Modified Issues in Disability Scale

The MIDS (Makas, 1989) is an instrument used to measure attitudes towards disabled people. A person scoring high on this measure is seen as having a positive attitude towards disability while a low score is interpreted as a negative attitude.
6.2.8. First-year students

Table 37: Descriptive statistics for Modified Issues in Disability Scale –first year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>123.00</td>
<td>197.00</td>
<td>169.7105</td>
<td>14.50452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>131.00</td>
<td>211.00</td>
<td>183.3158</td>
<td>17.06602</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having established that a normal distribution was present in the data, the overall attitude scores were analysed using a paired sample t-test. The null hypothesis posited there would be no significant change between Time 1 and Time 2. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on students’ scores on the MIDS. The results show a statistically significant increase in MIDS scores from Time 1 (M=169.71, SD=14.50) to Time 2 [M=183.31, SD=17.06, t(38)= 7.790, p<.0005]. The eta squared statistic (.62) indicated a large effect size.

![Figure 25: First-year students totals responses for attitudes towards disability (n=38)](image)

The data generally retained a similar shape between Time 1 and Time 2 although Time 2 shows higher scores. Based on the results, the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the results suggest that first and second year OT students showed an improvement in their
attitudes towards disability. However, while there is a statistically significant difference between Time 1 and Time 2, it cannot be claimed that the service-learning module is categorically responsible for this shift as there are other factors that may account for this change. These factors may include; the impact of other modules within the course increased life experiences and increased familiarity with the outcome measure between Time 1 and Time 2.

Examining the questions separately, all but Q.3 “disabled children should not have to compete academically with non-disabled students” (Figure 26) showed an improvement in scores. Q.3 showed a minor reduction, meaning that students agreed more strongly with the statement after completing the service-learning module.

![Figure 26: First-year student responses for Q.3 ‘Disabled children should not have to compete academically with non-disabled students’ (n=38)](image)

The graph above shows the responses were more spread out among all response types in Time 2. It appears that students were more uncertain overall when responding to this question in Time 2. However, students were more inclined to answer ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘strongly agree’. There are a few possible reasons to explain this. One reason may be due to the wording of the question itself which requires some interpretation on the reader’s behalf. It is possible that students misread or misinterpreted the question. Additionally, many students did not have experience in a school environment and may be relying on stereotypes or biases as they lack the knowledge as suggested by Makas and colleagues (1988). Alternatively, the question only references ‘disabled children’ without identifying the nature of the disability. Depending on their service-learning experience students may have interpreted the question based on their experience, for example, a
student who completed their service-learning with an intellectually disabled person may have assumed ‘disabled children’ meant intellectually disabled children.

The questions with the largest changes in responses were Q.21 “Disabled people are generally no more anxious or tense than non-disabled people” (Figure 27), Q.35 “Disabled people should be expected to fit into our competitive society” (Figure 28), and Q.37 “It is logical for a woman who uses a wheelchair to consider having a baby” Figure 30).

Figure 27: First-year student responses for Q.21 ‘Disabled people are generally no more anxious or tense than non-disabled people’ (n=38)

Figure 28: First-year student responses for Q.35 ‘Disabled people should be expected to fit into our competitive society’ (n=38)
The above three questions had the largest increase in positive attitudes between Time 1 and Time 2. These questions may have improved due to a greater understanding of these issues through direct experiences in service-learning. Additionally, students may have improved their attitudes based on experiences during placement or other modules such as the Disability Studies module.

### 6.2.9. Second Year Students

**Table 38: Descriptive statistics for Modified Issues in Disability Scale –second-year students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>131.00</td>
<td>210.00</td>
<td>176.556</td>
<td>23.08354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>169.00</td>
<td>224.00</td>
<td>199.500</td>
<td>16.32483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the participant numbers were low, a Wilcoxon Ranked Test was conducted. Results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated that the median post-test scores were statistically significantly higher than the median pre-test scores $Z=3.463$, $p < .001$. Figure 30 shows this trend in results for second year students.
All areas of attitude showed some improvement between Time 1 and Time 2. The questions which saw the largest change were Q.4 “Most people who have physical disabilities expect no more love and reassurance than anyone else” (Figure 31) and Q.35 “Disabled people should be expected to fit into our competitive society” (Figure 32).
As seen from Figure 32, student responses in Time 1 were skewed towards the right side of the graph, hence agreeing with the statement. In Time 2 there shows a shift in responses, emphasising disagreement with the statement. It may be the case that spending time with disabled people provided students with more understanding of the experience of disability and students were better able to understand the situation.

6.2.10. Between group scores

In addition to analysing the data within the first- and second-year groups, a between group analysis was completed for the MIDS to track changes between groups. The between group analysis was completed only with the MIDS as the other measures are self-reported measures and carry too many variables to be compared between the group. First and second year students were compared at two points:

- First year students’ responses at Time 2 were compared to second year students’ response at Time 1
- Time 2 responses for both first- and second-year students were compared

Initially, results were analysed between Time 2 for first-year students and Time 1 for second-year students. Results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated that the median post-test scores were not statistically significantly higher than the median pre-test scores $Z= .457, p < .647$. The results show there was no statistically significant difference in results between the two groups from the end of the first-year service-learning module to
the beginning of the second-year service-learning module. This suggests that second year students did not improve attitudes between ending their first-year module and beginning their second-year service-learning module.

Next, Time 2 for both groups was analysed. Results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated that the median post-test scores were statistically significantly higher than the median pre-test scores $Z=2.867$, $p <.004$. Therefore, the data suggests that both first and second-year students have continued to improve in their attitudes towards disability throughout both service-learning modules. Furthermore, it appears that students’ attitudes to disability did not change between the time their first-year service-learning module ended and their second-year service-learning module began. This may suggest that service-learning has impacted OT students’ attitudes towards disability.

6.2.11. Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire

The PPDQ was conducted with the first- and second-year students before and after the service-learning module. The PPDQ consists of 56 self-report questions, requiring students to rate from 1 to 6 how often they demonstrate ability in areas of personal and professional development which they may encounter from their service-learning module. The questions were adapted from the Professional Skills Questionnaire by Lynch and Lalor (2009).

6.2.12. First Year Students

In the PPDQ, five responses were excluded due to the omission of responses in more than three questions. Therefore, the total responses were $n=38$. Data were tested for normality and descriptive statistics were first completed (Table 39).
Table 39: Total descriptive statistics for Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire – first-year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>251.00</td>
<td>319.00</td>
<td>278.1842</td>
<td>16.37377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>257.00</td>
<td>320.00</td>
<td>293.5000</td>
<td>16.13415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having established the data had a normal distribution, the overall attitude scores were analysed using a paired sample t-test. The null hypothesis posited there would be no significant change between Time 1 and Time 2. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on students’ scores on the PPDQ. The results show a statistically significant increase in PPDQ scores from Time 1 ($M=278.18$, $SD=16.37$) to Time 2 [$M=293.50$, $SD=16.13$, $t(38)=6.97$, $p<.0005$]. The eta squared statistic (.57) indicated a large effect size.

One question, Q22 “I show consideration for the needs of the other person and/or the group” which stayed the same between Time 1 and Time 2, while Q 16 “I can consider the ideas and opinions of another person” scored lower in Time 1 than in Time 2.
The results between Time 1 and Time 2 are similar. The lower results in Time 2, however, may be due to increased insight in the students as they may not have had to practice this skill before beginning the service-learning module. The question which showed the largest difference between Time 1 and Time 2 was Q.46 “I can communicate complex subject matter”.

Figure 34: Responses – ‘I can consider the ideas and opinions of another person’ (n=38)

Figure 35: First-year student responses for Q.46 ‘I can communicate complex subject matter’ (n=38)
6.2.13. Second Year Students

One participant was omitted for excessive non-responses. The data were tested for normality and analysed using descriptive statistics (Table 40).

### Table 40: Descriptive statistics for Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire – second-year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>243.00</td>
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<td>Time 2</td>
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<td>260.00</td>
<td>326.00</td>
<td>298.667</td>
<td>14.54809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data were distributed normally, however the sample size n=18 was below the threshold for statistical significance. Therefore, a Wilcoxon test was used to test the null hypothesis. Results indicated the median post-test scores were statistically significantly higher than the median pre-test scores Z=3.520, p <.000.

From the PPDQ results, Q.5 “I acknowledge responsibility for myself” and Q.51 “I enjoy learning new things” showed no difference between Time 1 and Time 2. The question which yielded the highest change between Time 1 and Time 2 was Q.37 “I confront others as to where things stand between myself and them”.

Figure 36: Second-year student total responses for personal and professional development (n=18)
The second-year students’ results showed a large difference in responses to this question between Time 1 and Time 2 this may be because they are expected to have developed skills in managing relationships.

6.2.14. Summary

In the Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire, the first and second-year students were more likely to describe the partnership as ‘reciprocal’ by the end of the service-learning module. The OSA saw a statistically significant improvement in occupational competence and value for both first- and second-year students. There was a statistically significant improvement in attitudes towards disability for both first and second-year students in the MIDS. A between group Wilcoxon test showed a statistically significant difference between the end of the first-year students’ service-learning module and the end of the second-year students’ service-learning module. There was no significant difference between the end of first-year and the beginning of the second-year module. The PPDQ saw statistically significant difference in scores for both first- and second-year students.
6.3. Qualitative Results – Occupational Therapy Students

The qualitative results were collected through focus groups from first- and second-year students and reflective workbooks which first-year students completed throughout the module.

- Six focus groups were conducted, four of which comprised of first-year students (n=28) and two comprised of second-year students (n=13).
- Thirty-eight first year student reflective reports were analysed

In this section, the focus group results will be analysed first, followed by the reflective workbooks.

6.3.1. Focus Groups

![Figure 38: Focus group themes and subthemes](image)

The focus groups were analysed using Braun & Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis. Three themes were obtained. These themes were shared with the community partner focus group themes: ‘relationships’, ‘meaningful activity’ and ‘outcomes’, each with several subthemes.
subthemes (Figure 38). Themes and subthemes will be discussed for both first and second-year students in this section.

6.3.2. Theme One – Relationships

When students spoke about relationships, it was in relation to four sub-themes ‘acceptance/appreciation’, ‘connectedness’, ‘roles, boundaries and managing expectations’ and ‘group v. individual relationships’. The greater theme of ‘relationships’ pertains to the process and challenges of students developing a relationship with their service-learning partner through becoming aware of their partner and developing a working relationship.

![Figure 39: Focus group theme ‘Relationships’ and its subthemes](image-url)
6.3.3. Acceptance/Appreciation

As with the community partner results, the subtheme of acceptance and appreciation was obtained from the student focus groups. A significant aspect of the service-learning partnership appears to be an appreciation of the other person. Students gained an understanding of their service-learning partners through continuous interaction and activity. Through this interaction, students learned about community partners’ abilities, skills and life experiences. The process of appreciation began with students learning about their community partner, accepting their partner as they are, and appreciating them as people. As one student learned:

Just to not judge a book by its cover, like. A ninety-year-old woman who's had a stroke doesn't sound like the most fun ever, but like, she was a force of nature, you know, ……and she used to be a nurse herself so she knew the ins and outs of it all and she had her environment set up perfectly (Student 13, Year 2)

As seen from the quote above, the student’s initial focus was her service-learning partner’s disability, however, as the student learned about her partner as a person she began to appreciate and admire her.

‘….I went in once and I’m like ‘oh, I’m a volunteer and I’m here to help’. But, like, then you realise like, you’re not doing anything for them and they’re doing everything for you so…you’re not that great like, they’re far more adept than you are. (Student 6, Year 1)

Through interacting with their service-learning partners, by learning about them and engaging in activities together, students’ attitudes towards disability were challenged:

I was with a girl em, she’s a ten-year-old girl, …all I was told at the start was that she was paralysed from the waist down so I didn’t know what to expect at all. Like I thought that would limit her in ways but then I got to know her and I learned that it didn’t limit her at all. ….like she does everything, the same things I used to do at her age; ….I just learned it doesn’t have to limit you like, in a wheelchair she could do the same things as any other child really. Like, I found that really inspiring. (Student 15, Year 1)

Students often focused on how they perceived they would have to manage their community partners’ disability. Initially, students were concerned about the role they would have to undertake during service-learning. Through recognising the strength and value of the other person, students could make sense of their experiences. Students could examine and compare themselves to their partner and re-evaluate their role in service-
learning. This experience enabled students to examine their own attitudes and preconceptions.

Becoming familiar with their service-learning partners presented opportunities for students to learn from their partners’ life experiences. One student spoke about the difficulties her service-learning partner faced while living in a nursing home with a visual impairment: “…like he can’t read, he can’t see, he can’t watch the telly like, it’s just…the things you take for granted kind of…with your sight” (Student 9, Year 1). Recognising the difficulties her partner faced, the student valued her partner’s resilience, prompting her introspection: “And he’s still happy, like he…nothing phases him like he’s really inspiring like. That’s just…it makes you think.” (Student 9, Year 1).

As seen above, through the service-learning experience, students learned to accept and appreciate their service-learning partner. This is an important basis for a collaborative relationship; as the students value their community partners, they are acknowledging their skills and expertise which places the students and their partners on an equal level where both can contribute to the relationship.

6.3.4. Connectedness

In this theme connectedness pertains to the sense of closeness and emotional connection experienced by students with their community partners. This may present itself in the form of empathising, connecting with their partners’ successes and emotionally sharing experiences. As a theme, it can be seen expressed in stories that students recount about their service-learning.

6.3.4.1 Connection through similarities

One student told the story of when she learned about her partner’s circumstance:

Before she started in the course she was working part-time in a post office, packing boxes and she said it was really boring; she was on her own, packing boxes, no social interaction… and em, I was asking her about the difference like, between her life before studying and…she's really missing the money...which is what I'm missing the most (laughter) but she was then saying like, you know when she thinks back to being on her own, you know packing the boxes, she's made so many friends in her course and she feels really excited for the future, and she thinks she'll go on and study...eh, specialise in computers and it was just, in relation to OT
theory like, how her identity changed and she...I don't know she just seemed really...empowered and it was just lovely to see. (Student 19, Year 1)

In the quote above, connectedness was expressed through the common experience of the student role. Another student showed connectedness when describing her service-learning partner:

.. The woman I was with was basically like me in 70 years (laughter)....she used to be a florist and I work in a florist, she like...draws, she writes poetry, she bakes, she was like the most active ninety-year-old I've ever met and...she doesn't really have any struggle to walk around or anything. ...she's really enthusiastic she'd do anything she asked me to do. It was nice because when I originally got assigned to her, I was told she was a ninety-year old woman who'd had a stroke and I was thinking …what am I going to do with this lady, …but she could talk for Ireland and she was lovely to sit with and by the end I was actually really sad leaving her.... (Student 13, Year 2)

Recognising the differences or similarities between the students’ own lives and that of their partners was important. Through the self, students learn about others:

…we were in a group and I wouldn’t have known anything about my lady… and when I found out she was in her mid-nineties I was surprised. You find out where they come from and you start to see things differently and you put the person together when you realise they’re similar or different to you. (Student 7, Year 2)

6.3.4.2 alternative perspectives on connection

The element of reciprocity was also important for connectedness. Some students had trouble with reciprocity. One student spoke about her experience working with people with dementia:

I was in a nursing home in a dementia care unit so I found that I would get to know them on quite a deep level but then on the next week I would come back and they would have forgotten that I was talking with them before....So that was a bit disheartening…to want to go back to the very start as though you were just meeting so it was kind of like every week you had to kind of restart your relationship. But then there was one or two that would remember me so those ones I got to know really well. (Student 11, Year 1)

Other students working with people with dementia had similar experiences. One second year student spoke about her experience with her service-learning partner:
…the woman wouldn’t remember me from week to week so it was…up to me to build that kind of relationship with her. So, even though she didn’t remember me from week to week I felt as though I was getting more out of it in the latter part because I knew her. I’d know what way she’d like to be spoke to…what things she reacted well too, and when I started implementing things that I knew she’d like, I got a better response from her, so I suppose it’s a bit different from when the client knows a bit about you and your back story and who you are versus ‘who’s this lady coming in here to me know’. But I think…you knowing someone’s name and calling out to them, they recognise…someone that’s trying to form a relationship with them… (Student 3, Year 2)

6.3.5. Roles, Boundaries and Expectations

For a service-learning partnership to be successful, students are required to learn acceptable behaviours, actions and expectations of themselves and other people. One student spoke of her experiences learning about boundaries by working with her service-learning partner, a teenage boy with ASD. In this service-learning experience, the student was helping her partner with academic work:

... But then like after a few weeks when we started to become more friendly and we started talking about other stuff, like we did on the weekend or what we were going to do with friends and all that, so like it was nice, like I kind of realised that you can't expect to be someone's friend just straight away’, you have to like, build up confidence with people and stuff like that… (Student 17, Year 1).

6.3.5.1 positive vs. negative outlooks

Some students experienced the roles and boundaries as positive while others had negative perceptions the nature of the service-learning relationship. For example, one student spoke about her experiences forming relationships with children with ASD:

At times, I felt really passive. But as time went on the kids got to know you and it got easier. So...as time went on they got to know you and they'd try to come over to you and get you to play the games with them...you could kind of see a relationship forming at the end, when time went on. Like it's kind of hard when they have different needs...you’re in there and you’re just supposed to be facilitating anyways and you...have to let go and just let them form the relationship with you. (Student 6, Year 2)
Students learned that relationships are not immediate and must be developed over time. One student spoke about how herself and other students managed this:

We were trying to get a feel for what their interests were so, because we didn’t know where to go with it, um and we just kept talking and suddenly the brainstorms started coming out and they got more comfortable with us and suddenly they started opening up. (Student 1, Year 2)

Students had to develop relationships within acceptable boundaries which met the roles of both themselves and their partners. These boundaries and roles were also guided by the nature of the service-learning module. Students and community partners are expected to work together for the duration of the module with the desired outcome that both parties benefit from the experience. Some students reported finding the nature of the partnership difficult, however: “…I feel bad because we’ve engaged with them and then suddenly we move on… I would hate to think that they feel used… I just feel very bad about that actually” (Student 4, Year 2).

Other students also found the service-learning partnership difficult:

… I almost feel like I’m using people because I’m going in and I’m like ‘this is for my grade and I’m getting my grade because I’m doing a presentation on you. You don’t know I’m doing a presentation on you but I’m going to go in and talk to a whole classroom full of people and talk to them about all your struggles and… yeah, like it’s just…it feels to me like I am using people like that… I feel… not wrong, but I feel a bit… not morally 110% there. (Student 5, Year 2)

Both students found it difficult in managing service-learning partnership. Being open and transparent about the nature of service-learning is an important foundation of the service-learning partnership which some students appeared to struggle with. Other students provided insight into how they managed concluded their relationships:

…I wanted to continue on with the woman. I felt terrible like, I really enjoyed my time with her as well. And I suppose… I handed it over then. I wanted to hand it over because in my mind if I continued it on then it’s kind of getting past that relationship and like, if I was in practice and I was an OT, I couldn’t get attached to each of my clients that way… so the best I could do was hope…like handover services and hope that someone could pick them up. That was a struggle… for the last few weeks I was like ‘will I, won’t I stay’. But obviously the practicalities are… with our new placement coming up, it’s not feasible. (Student 3, Year 2)

Another student also reported a positive outlook on her experience of leaving the group of children she worked with:
I think it’s kind of comforting with mine because next year there’s going to be other students, there’s going to be somebody else there but in the end, they’ll still have this chance; sure I interacted with them and I really feel I enjoyed it and they’ve gotten to know me and they’ve gotten to trust me…. it’s not just going to be that they’re going to be dropped and there will be nobody there for them…And I’d love to keep doing it, but I doubt I'll have the same time next year... (Student 2, Year 2)

6.3.5.2 managing student expectations

Managing expectations was a significant element of the service-learning experience for students. Students managing their own expectations of the skills, abilities and values is one example of this:

I don't think I really felt as if I was needed… because like all I did was play... it was a short amount of time so they probably wouldn't remember me... I didn't think it made much of a significant difference to their life…

(Student 25, Year 1)

Managing expectations of their own role was experienced by both first and second-year students:

I went in with one mind frame, saying like, ‘oh there's this person needing a bit of help, going to the swimming pool’ but then it was more like...me, it wasn't really about me helping her, it was just me going and keeping company to someone…having a chat with someone. (Student 12, Year 2)

In addition, another student reported:

It's just the actual doing and thinking are a big problem...you do want to go in …you have this stuff you want to apply but it about controlling yourself. (Student 1, Year 2)

Another student spoke about the freedom of having no expectations on them as a student during service-learning:

… because we go in as people not as occupational therapists…we go in on the same level as them and so we can look at them that way instead of looking at what we need to do for them…you're just getting to know them. (Student 2, Year 2)
6.3.5.3 managing others’ expectations

It was a common experience among students to deal with their partner’s expectations. Two second-year students spoke about their experience in their first year of service-learning with their community partners from a group for people with intellectual disabilities “…we were supposed to be on the same level with them…we were always pushing them or encouraging them or explaining how to do stuff…” (Student 7, Year 2). Another student agreed saying “…they always put us in a position of teaching them.” (Student 10, Year 2). In this case, the students felt their community partners were expecting them to take on the role of a teacher.

Other students spoke about how their community partners has expectations of them because they were OT students:

The service user I was with quite a bit said to me 'oh you're a student OT, you tell me' kinda, like if something was up with her or if there was something she needed…she'd like expect me to solve…everything that's going on because I'm an OT--even though I'm not. (Student 13, Year 2).

Another student reported a similar experience:

I think that… people saw us as OT students and almost thought like 'oh you're on placement and you should be making a difference'…whereas that's not really what we're there for. I think, there's a bit of a misunderstanding between services and the college and the student as to what the role of the student is. People see OT and think 'oh you should be doing OT things'. (Student 5, Year 2)

Students sometimes must manage the expectations of others such as staff or other people in the community partners’ lives. One second-year student spoke about a teacher in the school that she was doing her service-learning in

He… wanted to use our skills as well, to his advantage, so like, after every class, he’d be like ‘so what did you see? What are your observations and what are your recommendations?’ and…you’re not experienced and qualified to give that information (Student 9, Year 2)

Another first-year student had a similar experience while doing service-learning in a school in an under-privileged area:

I was… in a homework club and like the teachers would ask me questions…and like, I was able to give them a vague answer, she was like oh that's really interesting and…don't take that for… fact because we haven't really done that yet. (Student 18, Year 1)
Some students reported others’ expectations was a positive experience. One student spoke about how her experience in a youth club changed after staff learned that she was an OT student:

…you would think about it more because they know you're an OT…they have certain expectations of you...like even just developing professionally, even though it might not be a professional situation necessarily like, I just thought even emailing back and forth and stuff like that, like I developed loads because I ...felt an expectation on me to do it... (Student 7, Year 2)

6.3.6. Group vs. Individual Experiences

Students reported differences in experiencing the development of relationships if they were in a group or were working with an individual. Some students felt that engaging with an individual was more difficult but provided a richer learning experience. As one student reported “I suppose the longer you're with them, the more you can build a relationship, you can trust and bond.” (Student 17, Year 1). Another student spoke about the benefits of spending time with one person;

When you're only…with somebody for a couple of weeks you only see one aspect to them but if they…change, you can really see the change because you've seen them so steadily for the length of time. (Student 16, Year 1).

In addition, students reported it could be difficult to develop relationship with others when they were in a group “…last year we were kind of paired with a person so I kind of felt like this year was harder to get to know people because you weren’t kind of with one person all the time” (Student 2, Year 2). Other students mirrored this sentiment:

I feel like I was in the group with a lot of kids so I didn’t really get to connect with one particular person… it was just kind of friendships with a lot of people. (Student 6, Year 1)

Some students who worked individually with their community partner expressed an interest in group work “it was good to get to know over a long time because it built up the rapport, but I was…nearly jealous when I was listening to what other people were talking about” (Student 15, Year 1). For some students, group work was a good method of acclimatising students to the idea of working with others; “I think I'm glad I had the group though this year to ease you in to service-learning…And then, to go to an individual now I would feel a lot more confident” (Student 2, Year 1).
6.3.7. **Theme Two – Meaningful Activity**

Figure 40 shows a list of subthemes for the theme of ‘meaningful activity’.

![Diagram of subthemes for meaningful activity]

6.3.8. **Facilitating Meaningful Activities**

Students experienced meaningful activities in service-learning in two ways; through activities being meaningful for themselves and through engaging in activities which are meaningful for their community partner.

6.3.8.1 **Impact of meaningful activity**

Students engaged in a variety of activities with their community partners. One student worked in a residential home for people with intellectual disabilities and dementia. This student engaged with her community partners in a way that was meaningful to them “We were supposed to do a life story project with them. Document their life and stuff and I just like the idea of it, the whole concept is good” (Student 11, Year 2).
A first-year student spoke about her experience in a nursing home working individually with a man who was visually impaired. Together, they went walking each week:

…he loved the walk, that was what he missed the most so I think that had a good impact… he even lost weight… he was so happy with himself, just from going out… he was really grateful for that. (Student 14, Year 1)

In the same nursing home, two students engaged in a knitting group with two other women and spoke about the importance of knitting for their partners;

… I learned how important knitting is to the women because they used to knit everything and that used to be really important to them, whereas to us, we were kind of like 'oh look we're knitting' kind of laughing... But actually, it means so much more to them, to be able to still knit… it's kind of something they all have in common as well. (Student 24, Year 1)

6.3.8.2 barriers to meaningful activity

When students were unable to facilitate meaningful activities due to external influence, they expressed frustration such as with one student who was in a school setting, helping teenagers academically;

…like I found it really important that [community partner] made a decision about what he was reading because like, they’re getting really… frustrated… and it’s not just the condition they have… it’s that they have no interest in the reading so…there’s no point to this… and they’re not learning anything from it… (Student 9, Year 2)

The student experienced the impact of activity that was not meaningful. Students taking part in an Irish Sign Language class felt that the activity had no meaning for them:

…I was trying not to be focused on getting good at it because I knew that wasn’t the point. At the same time, you didn’t really get to engage with them, so… it was like there was no point… (Student 19, Year 1)

The sign language class proved to be a barrier to students’ engagement and ability to develop relationships with their community partners as they lacked the ability to communicate to a meaningful extent. In contrast, students who were able to work with their partners to engage in meaningful activities engaged in novel experiences:

Well I was down in [service for Deaf people] so there was a good group, there was five of us down there and we were asked to facilitate a group so we had two
different groups and we just left it open with them, so we ended up doing loads….it was really great fun. (Student 1, Year 2)

6.3.9. Service-Learning vs. Traditional Coursework

Students spoke about the differences between engaging in placement to engaging in service-learning. Both first and second-year students had the same amount of placement experience by the time they had completed the focus groups due to the term structure.

6.3.9.1 Service-learning as a unique learning experience

Students reported that the service-learning experience was vastly different to other elements of the course, including the placement experience:

Placement was really structured by compared to service-learning. So look, on placement I was in paediatrics, it wasn't pointless but I didn't really get to know the kids…. But then for service-learning, they could actually pick what they wanted to do… I would just do it with them. (Student 2, Year 2)

Students reported interacting with people in a different way during service-learning than on placement, by developing relationships and learning more about people “I was in acute and you were just there, you did what you did and you moved on to another person. You never really sat down and talked” (Student 26, Year 1). This was a similar sentiment with many students “we’d see patients for maybe one or two sessions and they’d be gone so you couldn’t form a relationship at all. So this experience has been really good to teach me how to communicate with people. (Student 3, Year 1). Service-learning offered students a learning experience with a different focus to placement:

I would almost say that service-learning is, not more helpful than placement but like, almost, like almost as helpful or more helpful but in a different way. Like for me it helped develop empathy and…looking at someone else as a person and as an occupational being, rather than, looking at people as a big junk of paper, which I probably would have seen the patients as before. (Student 5, Year 2)

For students, the service-learning experience appears to be more person-focused than many traditional methods as the focus is explicitly on another person. As one student explained: “…it was difficult because I was looking at some one. But in a way it was nice because it meant that you learnt the person’s story before you made any pre-judgements.” (Student 5, Year 2).

Overall, most students found the service-learning environment to be a unique experience:
I suppose that's always at the start but I suppose from day one it was…there's always this craic…anything they said…it was really nice to have that experience…you meet new people but like in a casual setting. (Student 1, Year 2)

Students spoke often about service-learning as casual or less stressful “I thought it gave the service-users a really good to chance to be a part of a group and to learn new skills in a really casual setting” (Student 1 Year 1). Another student reported on her own nervousness prior to service-learning:

I think the first day I was really nervous. The second week I was like, okay, this is going to stay casual, it's not going to get like, really intense. And then by the third week it was just really easy. (Student 3, Year 1)

Some of the enjoyment of the service-learning experience appears to come from the lack of pressure to achieve and the freedom to learn from, and be with, other people:

…I just sat around for an hour which was great… it was just so nice to just go in and be with people rather than be like, this is my grade, if I don’t get this grade I have to repeat placement and I have to do this. So, it was really nice in that regard, I really enjoyed it that way. (Student 5, Year 2)

6.3.9.2 the informality of the service-learning environment

Students spoke about how it offered freedom for them to learn at their own pace “I think on placement you can't be yourself and you have to…watch what you're saying but… volunteering is different. You have to…relax. So it's nice that way.” (Student 24, Year 1). Service-learning provided students with time to discover and learn on their own:

It’s good, like, as well because you’re not under that pressure…You know in placement you’re under that pressure to achieve. You know you have to either pass or fail, but… in service-learning, you’re just there... you know you could go in there and enjoy it and not feel that pressure. (Student 6, Year 2)

Service-learning also provided students with the opportunity to explore another element of the student role and learn in a different way to other academic methods:

It can get you out of a rut as well… when you're in college it's like PBL, PBL, another lecture, oh how exciting (laughter), you go out to service-learning and you're actually using it, you get to apply your knowledge and that way it actually sticks in your head rather than going in one ear and out the other (Student 6, Year 2)

Some students felt that service-learning did not provide them with an adequate learning experience:
I think it really depends on where you were, who you were with, because... some people got so much out of the experience and then some people didn’t get that much like I think I got a good bit out of the experience but I wouldn’t say I go so much out of it... (Student 14, Year 1)

Overall, however, most students reported service-learning to be a unique, enjoyable and meaningful experience for them:

It's one of those things that whenever I tell anybody else about it they're like 'oh my god that's such a good experience to have' and I'm like 'yeah it really is, it really, really is' (Student 5, Year 2)

6.3.10. Working with Staff

Some students had the opportunity to interact with staff during service-learning which gave students another opportunity to learn. Staff imparted knowledge which students could benefit from:

...He went through all, like a lot of the conditions as to why...why they're like that and he kind of got us to observe a lot of the time. Why are they sitting in a certain position... it was helpful with the OT theory... (Student 17, Year 1)

In addition, students sometimes worked alongside staff members. One student reported that with the help of a staff member went from assisting in sessions to planning and running them:

We built up to it so when we started we were just kind of there to help [staff member] out with the group. So we'd take one part of the obstacle course and he'd take the rest so as we progressed through it we got into planning the groups and then running the groups. (Student 16, Year 1)

Students also learned skills from working with staff. One student spoke about providing feedback for staff:

We had to give them feedback at the end of the session to the...this nurse we had to chat because this was her project so she was like, over and like ‘oh what have you got this week. What stories have you got?’... (Student 11, Year 2)

Students mostly found working with staff to be a meaningful learning experience though it was not always a positive experience. Some students reported that staff were obstructive to their service-learning experience. For example, one student recounted how a staff members’ behaviour was obstructive to the student interacting with their community partner:
…you can never really like, be prepared for it…you just have to, kind of…work around (laughter) what he says to like, not make it obvious that you’re being like, ‘just go away’… (Student 9, Year 2)

This provided a valuable learning opportunity for managing professional relationships. In contrast, other students reported that staff were supportive to their learning and were overall a positive, facilitating factor:

Yeah it was because [service-learning partners] would tell us about their own personal lives and it was quite deep and stuff. [staff member] would…just tell us how we shouldn’t be worried about it and it’s not our problem to be dealing with. (Student 24, Year 1)

In this case, availability of support meant this student could approach staff members were there as a support and someone she could go to onsite if she needed to discuss something instead of waiting for the debriefing session in the university.

6.3.11. Overcoming Discomfort

Service-learning provided many opportunities for new experiences and learning. As such, students were often uncertain or unsure at the beginning of the service-learning module.

6.3.11.1 new experiences

Feelings of discomfort such as nervousness, uncertainty and feeling challenged are a naturally occurring element of the service-learning module. Student encountered entirely new experiences and must learn that they can overcome them: “I’d never really had any experience of working with people with intellectual disabilities like so that was a whole new experience…” (Student 9, Year 1). As working with people was new for many students, it could lead to nervousness on the students’ part prior to beginning service-learning:

…at first I was kind of nervous like, about going to her house, just because I’d never met her and that the first time I was meeting her was in her house. I was there for two hours just talking and we were just…talking to each other…but it was fine like, it wasn’t as bad as I thought it was going to be. (Student 10, Year 2)

Overcoming their initial discomfort and adapting to the environments were a large part of the service-learning experience for many students:
…it took me a while to get used to the stuff but like [service-learning partner] was just always coming over to you and just standing in your face and just like, ‘look at me, look at me’ and I was so overwhelmed when I first went in and it was just hectic it was crazy like but now, I'm used to it and I'm enjoying it. I started to spend time with [another community partner] and just seeing the difference between the two it was just nice like. (Student 28, Year 1).

This student had been doing her service-learning in a day centre for adults with mental health issues. Initially, she had been very overwhelmed by the actions of her service-learning partner but over time she learned what to expect and how to manage it herself. As she adapted she began to enjoy the experience. Similarly, another student spoke about being challenged by her experience in a nursing home dementia ward:

…it was challenging...I won't lie it wasn't extremely rewarding because you walk and were like 'oh they've forgotten me already' but it was nice like when you could see, like when I was talking you could see a big different…sometimes they'd be asleep when I'd walk in and I'd go over and start talking to them and …they'd be like full of life again so that was kind of nice. (Student 21, Year 1)

6.3.11.2 adapting and overcoming

By facing the situations that make students nervous, they grew on a personal level and as students which may lead to positive outcomes such as improving confidence and learning skills. As one student put it:

Just like, the mindset you’re in…the chaos that is reality (laughter) basically. Just being comfortable in yourself is something that is a huge deal. Like I remember the first week, sitting in my volunteering, like sing these songs… and I just go ‘oh god, I don’t sing, this is horrible!’ but I think I really learned to just have a laugh at myself…and that’s the thing just to throw yourself in there. If you’re uncomfortable that’s good because that means you’re learning. (Student 3, Year 2)

By facing uncomfortable situations, students learned that they could cope with those situations and gave them confidence in other circumstances:

…in primary care…it was like ‘oh you’re the OT you’re here to help me and fix everything in my house’ whereas here it was like ‘you’re exactly the same as everyone else so deal with it. And I found that I learned to be able to deal with that, which is nice. (Student 5, Year 2)
Predominantly, students reported experiencing meaningful activity through their partners’ occupations, however, as students, the service-learning experience had meaning. The impact of service-learning for the students will be discussed more later in the chapter.

6.3.12. Theme Three – Outcomes

The final theme relates to the reported outcomes of students from participation in the service-learning module. There are four subthemes which students reported to be outcomes of service-learning: ‘change in attitudes’, ‘learning skills’, ‘occupational therapy theory and real-world learning’ and ‘personal/professional development’. This theme and subthemes are seen in Figure 41:

![Figure 41: Focus group theme ‘Outcomes’ and its subthemes](image-url)
6.3.13. Change in Attitudes

Service-learning requires the student to work with a disabled person and develop a relationship with that person. As such, students are faced with disability and become aware of their own opinions and attitudes.

6.3.13.1 challenging students’ preconceptions about disability

Students reported their attitudes had changed significantly towards disability and services because of their participation in the service-learning module:

…I think I learned a lot…about my own …prejudices that I didn’t even know I had … even how I was like speaking to people…especially with disability studies I started… questioning then, how you’re treating people…all of them were just so full of life, like, they’re far more motivated than I am…I dunno, there’s just kind of lot a stuff that’s embarrassing to admit that I learned but, that just what I learned like; this is what I was doing wrong… (Student 6, Year 1)

While first year students experienced many of these interactions for the first time, second-year students also spoke about changing attitudes. One participant noted how service-learning provides a very different perspective on disability and occupational therapy theory;

I found that, in [service-learning] it was more like ‘here’s a person and work your way back’ which I found really difficult because I’d been taught to ‘go from step one and here’s step two and here’s step three’ and I was like; ‘here’s step six and I have to get back to step one’. But…in a way it was nice because it meant that you learnt the person’s story before you made any pre-judgements. (Student 5, Year 2)

6.3.13.2 recognising partner’s humanness

One student was in a mental health service for her first-year practice education placement and completed her service-learning in a similar service. The student spoke about how service-learning impacted her attitudes;

“… I would have said ‘oh this guy I’m looking at has schizophrenia and I would have spent the whole time matching up symptoms… and I was just able to sit down and say, so, what’s your life story? …And I learned more about him as an occupational being than as a case… I found that benefitted me an awful lot more than on placement when you’re given the file and told, ‘there, off you go’. (Student 5, Year 2)
Most students appeared to see a change in how they viewed the person. Over time, the person was not a problem to be fixed but just as another person;

I don’t mean this literally but you’re trying to fix them in a way [during placement] … yeah, we were trying to help them improve their social skills but it was really about letting them have fun... And it was all about letting them play, letting them be kids. You saw them as people…just as people, like. (Student 2, Year 2)

Some students also showed a deeper understanding of the impact of negative attitudes towards disability for disabled people:

…I look at people differently now….if someone said to me ‘oh I have schizophrenia’ before…I wouldn’t see them as a person and schizophrenia is just a part of that…I never would have pictured someone with mental health as someone with a family and a story… that sounds so stupid but… it was very much… ‘this is you and this is your diagnosis and this is the little box you fit in’ whereas now, it’s like, you have a life, you have a story, you have a family, you do things other than your mental health which I found really interesting. (Student 5, Year 2)

Some students who had reported working with disabled people previously, however, also reported that they had changed their attitudes because of this experience:

…I’d…worked with people a lot before but…I picked up on a lot more than in the past…I think I mostly picked up on …how I reacted to people… sometimes there was someone in particular who was quite attention seeking and …only really wanted me to speak to them and… for a while I was holding all sorts of guilt about this and I was like, why? I wouldn’t feel guilty if it was anyone else… (Student 6, Year 1)

Another student reported that spending time and completing activities with people with visual impairments changed her attitudes, from thinking about the disability to thinking about the person:

Yeah, so, I had a lot of experience with people with like a visual kind of thing, like I worked in Specsavers and things like that but I never had the person interaction of that, so I wanted to link the person with my experience and I feel I did do that, I feel like I understand it. I understand visual impairment now, rather than just the broad idea of visual impairment with all the conditions and getting used to the barriers and that, I actually have the person on top of that now. (Student 1, Year 2)
6.3.14. Learning Skills

6.3.14.1 learning skills over time

Students learned practical skills such as in the areas of communication, presentation and facilitation over the two years of service-learning:

I think this year it’s been good to link things back to theory while in first year we were still kind of finding our feet. This year, it was… way more structured and I found it…easier to kind of look and apply my theories and apply my… these are the skills I learned in college…. (Student 5, Year 2)

One student reported that her service-learning environment required her to develop skills on her own as there were often disruptions to plans made by staff because of frequent absences;

…I’d have to come up with an activity to do, like on the spot, so I did a lot of reminiscence…therapy and we did… folding the washing and that kind of thing so it was kind of really impromptu and I kind of had to learn a lot of skills to communicate with people with a cognitive disability which I wouldn’t have had. (Student 3, Year 2)

It appears many second-year students had the experience of learning to be more active with their community partners in their second service-learning experience:

Loads. So facilitating groups, we had to em, communication because there was so much to do with so little time. Our biggest problem was that we thought we had more time than we did. Their Easter (holidays), we didn’t realise they finished up earlier and we couldn’t go back after, it was, we finish up. We ended up squashing a lot into the few weeks at the end. (Student 1, Year 2)

Learning to facilitate occupation was a theme that other students had to develop as well. The following quote is from a first-year student who worked with children in swimming lessons:

…there was one helper per child so sometimes they'd be so afraid to swim on their back or whatever and so you'd do something else to distract them like tell them to look up at the ceiling and see what's there…sometimes that kind of helped. (Student 20, Year 1)

Some second-year students felt their service-learning module allowed them to learn facilitation skills because they already developed interpersonal skills from their previous service-learning experience:
It was like a big deal for us... we were like, oh my god, we have to get to know this person really well and like, learn everything about them specifically whereas now, it's just kind of like...we have those skills so its more thinking on a higher level this year...about like, their occupations and about more than just for the project. (Student 9, Year 2)

6.3.14.2 interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills were a large element of learning for students. One student reported learning communication skills in situations where she didn’t understand her service-learning partner:

I didn't want to be kind of just nodding saying, yeah, yeah I kind of...sometimes I'd just go 'oh wait do you mean this'... Just rather than… just smiling. (Student 27, Year 1)

Another student learned to interact with people in different ways and manage differences in people’s personality or behaviours:

Just to be prepared for different personalities….one of the guys he was real...in your face wanting to be the real centre of attention whereas the guy sort of liked doing his own thing and he didn't like people hanging around disrupting him and doing his own thing. (Student 28, Year 1)

While another student had the valuable learning experience of understanding communication when her service-learning partner had dementia:

… beforehand I didn't really know a lot about dementia. I used to think it was just forgetfulness but I realised that a lot of people are no longer able to walk, a lot of them can't speak any more and I just realised that there were a lot more elements than I knew beforehand…I found that like, really frightened and really uncomfortable because I really didn't know what to do. But then as time went on I discovered… one lady really likes just sitting and holding her hand and realised that communication wasn't always just about speaking. And I feel that learning was really valuable and it helped me a lot. (Student 11, Year 1)

Other students also experienced this element of communication when verbal communication was not possible. The following quote is from a second-year student who, for the first time, was working with people with profound physical disabilities:

…it’s kind of tough that you just sit there and… talk to them and… they don’t respond so you don’t really know how... you had to remember… that they’re conscious of everything that is going on around them. So sometimes…I would go
around and…ask the nurses, or the key worker there, about them; ‘are they like conscious’, …I can’t talk in front of them… some like, small things that they do keep reminding me that they are conscious…you don’t sometimes… it’s difficult to see them like that. (Student 11, Year 2)

6.3.14.3 communicating with staff

Some second-year students spoke about learning skills around communicating with staff: One student spoke about giving feedback to a staff member about the activities she witnessed during service-learning:

…I was able to say ‘well I think that they should be reading things that they’re interested in because that will help them’ and I don’t think I’d have been able to have done that last year in volunteering… (Student 9, Year 2)

Another student spoke about learning to give feedback to staff based on learning about their partner’s needs:

I think it's up to us to mention if they need support as well… Like the service I go to there's a lot of chairs and people sit all day in the chairs but em, these people get lost because everyone's saying 'oh all these people do all day is sit in a chair' whereas, like if they had one activity in the day that got them up out of the chair might make a huge difference to their life... (Student 5, Year 2)

In this instance, the student spoke about approaching staff on behalf of her service-learning partner and was able to link the activity to occupational therapy theory. Another student was working with a staff member to help improve the service through completing life story journals with her service-learning partners:

Also, at the end of it we had to give them feedback at the end of the session… we had to give (staff nurse) feedback and say like, say like ‘oh, stuff isn’t working out’ …so that was something else I kind of learned to do as well. (Student 11, Year 2)

6.3.15. Occupational Therapy Theory and Real-World Learning

6.3.15.1 partners as occupational beings

Many students rated service-learning highly as a learning tool for understanding occupational therapy theory. Students reported that the experience allowed them to learn about occupation and people as occupational beings:

You also saw people as…just as people like, you weren’t looking at…in pain…you weren’t saying okay we have to get these able to dress…they were just kids, and
you were letting them be kids, you didn’t have to worry about whether they were able to dress independently or whether they were to do this or that, it’s just really letting them be kids and have fun and sure, we were looking at the occupations and I really noticed that how much it meant to them. But you also saw about their occupations rather than what you think they should be doing, just letting them…live and be kids and letting the do what they want to do and in the end, they don’t really care if they’re able to do this, they just want to be kids and have fun.

(Student 2, Year 2)

As seen in the quote above, service-learning provided students with the opportunity to learn about people in the context of their own lives. By learning about people, students were better able to understand what was important to their partner and the cultural context in which they were situated, thereby becoming better able to make connections:

…I learned about different cultures like the children in [service] have a lot of that. They don't really seem much different to the way we speak to each other and the way that the adults speak to the children they seem to talk down on them and I think that’s really important. (Student 28, Year 1)

In addition, service-learning allowed students to witness and appreciate the different experiences other people might have in similar situations to their own:

…it was good to see how…someone else can just live really differently to you….you’re all just people, but like it's just completely different with teens and things like that. Because I was doing mine with a young teen and I kept like comparing them to how I was when I was his age…and everything he does would have been a lot different to everything I would have done.. he has Autism…he likes to do specific things and like he loves to stack cups and like, he has his things that he loves to do and that's it, he doesn't really like to change it that much (Student 26, Year 1)

Students often spoke of learning about disability:

I was doing [service-learning] with acquired brain injury and like, it, you could kind of see the variation of everyone's story and loads of people, some people kind of liked to share their stories and, I think it's kind of the variation of how people like to deal with it and how vast like, one diagnosis can be across the board…But it was really nice to…learn that there's a certain amount of…acceptance.. you can't just have one thing that someone has their own aspects (Student 27, Year 1)

While for other students, service-learning brought tangible meaning to her understanding of occupational balance:
…I was kind of thinking about balance in your life. It sounds weird but he was so focused on school he never did anything…Like he used to meet up with his friends like once a month or once every two or three weeks and I was... I really thought you can't focus on one thing all the time. And like, keeping focused on one thing is going to affect you a lot, because he was really stressed and anxious the whole time because he was only focused on his school work... (Student 17, Year 1)

6.3.15.2 deeper understanding
Some students also appeared to have a deeper understanding of what it might mean for some families:

…I learned how difficult it can be …like these people that I work with they get about two hours of social interaction a week and the rest of the time they’re generally with their families and I found it really tiring, those two hours. I can’t imagine…you know, the whole time. it just seems like such a challenge to have a person that’s so different in your family… I know it’s very rewarding and stuff but… it will never end like, you know? … you need so much patience. (Student 9, Year 1)

Students were also able to contrast this to services and understanding services, allowing them to think at a higher level:

I think that you realise how… bad services can be, and how… inefficient they are and how the tiniest things could make a difference and how it’s almost frustrating…even the OTs obviously in the practice are aware of these things and it seems like it’s at a higher level, at a national level and at a civic level and you’re kind of like ‘well why is it this way?’ and you kind of get somewhat frustrated that this person could have a slightly better life if someone just got their act together and you know, changed something.

(Student 3, Year 2)

6.3.15.3 understanding the environment
Students learnt how an environment or service can impact a person and the complexities of those systems:

When I leave the activities will still be going on with that lady but I don't know if she'll... have her glasses... people aren't sitting her close to the CD player. Things I would have picked up on that no one else would of. Well, the OT would have picked up on but she's off doing her physical and maybe the activities coordinators
maybe don't have that experience or knowledge, or maybe they're just under stress for resources like there's one lady per fifteen people...she can't equally spread out her time... (Student 3, Year 2)

A student witnessed the impact of a specific intervention had on the lives of the people living in the dementia ward she was doing her service-learning in:

…if you're running out of things to say or running out of things to talk about or you could see that they were kind of losing interest if you played some music that they used to listen to you know, that they were familiar with from their past, they would start talking about these memories that they had because they kind of connected that with music and one day they were doing...its called the Sonas group and all the carers and everyone was just sitting around singing songs and I thought it was unreal the way they could remember all the words to the songs but they couldn't remember what happened yesterday… (Student 21, Year 1)

Another student spoke about her experience of the social environment between members of a brain training group:

but I did love the fact that there was like, a community in the group so like if some people were doing a word search or... if there was a quiz, if someone didn't get something people would be just like... 'oh grand, okay, you'll get it next time' … (Student 27, Year 1)

Another student was able to place activity in the context of occupational therapy theory:

You could sort of just think how to put in things in the PEO, the children, their occupations were playing, the environment was the sports hall and they need space to run around and let loose and parents they were interested in the game they liked to play so it was sort of all, connected. (Student 16, Year 1)

### 6.3.16. Personal/Professional Development

#### 6.3.16.1 confidence

Confidence was an element of personal and professional development experienced by students. For some students, they gained confidence in relation to working with specific client groups or settings:

I wanted to…not feel daunted going into a setting where there was a lot of people that I didn’t know and I just didn’t want to feel overwhelmed, I wanted to start getting used to… client interaction. So that’s why I put myself into this hospital so I
would be dealing with a lot of patients all the time... I don’t think I’ve conquered everything, I still feel nervous walking in that door but... it certainly helped so hopefully I won’t feel completely daunted when I go on my next placement. (Student 4, Year 2)

While for other students, confidence came from being able to practice working with people and overcoming fear of not knowing what to do:

It was good for confidence in what you were doing, so you weren’t saying I don’t know what I’m doing, I’m not so sure, but it kind of made you more like, ‘okay, I’m doing something right it might not be...know exactly what I’m doing but I’m still doing something’ (Student 2, Year 2)

Some students also reported that service-learning provided them with opportunities for becoming more comfortable in situations:

I think I really learned to just have a laugh at myself as well and that’s the thing; just to throw yourself in there. If you’re uncomfortable that’s good because that means you’re learning. (Student 3, Year 2)

Another student spoke about her experience learning to overcome her shyness in a group situation where she was the only new person in an already established group:

It was very hard adapting to it like, in mine we sort of had to not be afraid to axe in and...in the start in felt kind of awkward and you just didn't really know what to do with yourself so it took time and after a while you kind of got more relaxed and comfortable. (Student 20, Year 1)

6.3.16.2 managing emotions

Other students found that service-learning provided an opportunity for them to experience emotions such as sadness, fear or of being overwhelmed in an environment that was supportive. The students reported that this was helpful because they felt that they would be better able to cope with the stress of placements by dealing with these feelings through service-leaning;

…it helped me...deal with upsetting situations like, at first... my lady had no visitors and she didn’t have much family and she really strived with, you know, social interaction...she loved gossip and then (laughter), I came to realise over a few weeks... all she wants to do is have a chat. ...I’m like, like that, things were upsetting, like how she hadn’t got much social support but I suppose I just wanted to make sure that when I left, that I left something behind to make sure...like I left behind a folder, I just wanted to
make sure that maybe even carers could take over the role that I was doing because I feel like she really thrived from that and I could see it on her face. But you, but you do in certain situations, like you do want to cry but you need a thick skin for practice and I think that’s definitely helped me. (Student 3, Year 2)

6.3.16.3 personal responsibility for learning

Students also spoke about learning to recognise and take responsibility for their learning needs and work towards them using service-learning:

This year… I really want to push myself… push my boundaries because I know, if I end up in a placement in mental health but I have no experience with mental health I’m going to end up… completely in over my head… I was looking at the women’s prison… I really want to get something out of this semester whereas last year… I was just doing this for college (Student 5, Year 2)

6.4. Reflective Workbooks

First-year OT students’ workbooks were analysed to further deepen the understanding of their learning and to understand the processes of their learning. The structure of the reflective workbook required students to write down three significant events which occurred each service-learning session. For each significant event, students described the event, how they felt about it, what they did at the time, what they did afterwards and what was the outcome/learning from that event. These journals were analysed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis. The results will be discussed in the following order:

- Significant events as catalysts for learning
- Emotions resulting from significant events
- Learning outcomes
- Student focus and connectedness

These four sections provide different insights into the process of students’ learning and therefore will be discussed separately.
6.4.1. Significant events as catalysts for learning

Significant events are incidents from the service-learning experience which are memorable or notable to the student during their reflection. These were analysed to discover when learning was occurring during the service-learning module.

Table 41: Reflective journal significant events and rate of occurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Event</th>
<th>Rate of Occurrence</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner Action</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>(27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>(25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>(19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected Event</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Staff</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts/Feelings</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Dynamics</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closure</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Mistakes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=39

The occurrence of the significant events provides a broad picture of the when learning is occurring for students. These codes were then categorised into three themes: ‘partner as catalyst for learning, ‘activity as catalyst for learning’ and ‘self as catalyst for learning.’
Table 42: Significant events categorised into three themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner as catalyst</th>
<th>Activity as catalyst</th>
<th>Self as catalyst</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner action (243)</td>
<td>Engaging in Activity (225)</td>
<td>Thoughts/Feelings (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication (167)</td>
<td>Unexpected Incident (84)</td>
<td>Making Mistakes (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group dynamics (34)</td>
<td>Closure (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with staff (51)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total = 495 (55%)</td>
<td>Total=336 (38%)</td>
<td>Total= 65 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.2. **Partner as Catalyst**

As seen from Table 42, ‘partner action’ was the most frequently occurring catalyst for learning. In addition, ‘communication’, ‘group dynamics’ and ‘working with staff’ were also related to interactions with other people. Therefore, the reflective workbooks show that the students experienced most of their learning from the other person/people with whom they were completing their service-learning.

6.4.3. **Partner Action**

The code of partner action appeared in many situations and was highly varied within the workbooks. This code relates to something the community partner did during the service-learning experience. It includes any behaviour or action which the student believed to be significant. For example, one student wrote about her experiences with her service-learning partner, a teenage boy with a diagnosis of ASD. The learning experience occurred when her service-learning partner became overwhelmed when he had to decide whether to use a green note book or a black notebook for an activity.

I got very flustered and took longer than usual to decide if he was going to use a green or black notebook. It seemed like such a simple choice and like I noted last week he seems to take a couple more seconds than usual to decide on some things which seems unnecessary (Student 33-Week 9.1)

While this appears to be an inconsequential event, in this case the student is learning about their partner through interacting with them. The student goes on to describe her feelings about the incident which were uncomfortable, “I felt a bit annoyed in a way because I just wanted to get on with it”. However, she provides useful support in helping
her community partner make the choice and in her learning section she reflected on her feelings and became aware that her emotions are not always visible to others. This was important learning in self-awareness that resulted from her service-learning partner’s actions. Another instance of students learning from partner actions came from one student’s experience in a dementia unit in a nursing home:

This week I was in the dementia unit again. When we went down a lady was wandering around as we began talking to her she felt my hands were cold so she held onto them and began warming them for me (Student 36-Week8.1)

The partner’s actions in this instance made the student feel appreciated and “very special” because the student felt her partner was concerned about her. From this event, the student became aware of her partner’s own pleasure from being able to provide help to her and it further deepened her understanding of dementia as she realised that just because the woman had dementia she wasn’t “detached to the world” and “still felt great compassion”.

6.4.4. Communication

This code relates to incidences where students were speaking with their service-learning partner or were given specific information by them. One student reflected on a conversation between herself and her service-learning partner, an elderly woman in her community:

My neighbour expressed to me how her garden was beginning to look overgrown and how she wanted the two of us to do some weeding and clearing of branches that were lying about. I noticed that my neighbour found bending down for the weeds and branches to be quite straining on her back. We stopped gardening for a while to take a small break but my neighbour never admitted that it was because her back was in pain. (Student 22-Week 5.1)

Although there was an activity involved in this event, it is the communication element which the student is focusing upon, or rather the lack of communication and the dissonance between what the student knew, ie: her service-learning partners’ back pain, and the fact that she didn’t communicate this to the student. The student felt worried from this event and uncertain as to what to do because she was concerned for her partner’s health. The student ultimately shared her own experience of weeding, saying that it was difficult and suggesting they do small bouts of weeding and take breaks and offered to continue the weeding on her own if her neighbour became too tired. This lead to a shared activity which helped the student develop skills around activity analysis and breaking
down activities to manageable chunks. In addition, the student learned about the value of this occupation for her neighbour as the garden was something her partner took pride in, so she learned that her neighbour was motivated to complete the activity despite the physical demands.

### 6.4.5. Group Dynamics

This code refers to incidences when other people in the environment had an effect on the service-learning experience either through coming into the group, leaving it or through relationships or actions which have affected other group members. This occurred when another person in the group had an effect on the social environment in some way. One student noticed this occurring in her service-learning experience in a day service for wheelchair users:

> There are a few people in the group who seem to be the cornerstones of the group and the natural leaders. This week, three out of the five or so leaders were missing and it seemed to have quite an impact on the group. There was a lot less noise in the group and engagement in every activity (Student 7—Week 10.3)

In this case, the student noticed the difference in the environment with the lesser presence of group leaders. The student noticed the “profound effect on the group in terms of engagement as they tend to be the people who start things or who are willing to do silly things, so others will join in the activity”. This was something the student didn’t notice until she reflected on it after the group. The student reflected that she would not have realised the effect of different people on the group had she not had this opportunity to witness it. In addition, the student realised that the people who had the most impact on the group were not necessarily “the loudest but they’re confident” which encouraged others to engage. The student then goes on to reflect that she will endeavour to connect more with quieter members of the group as she realised she tended to stay near more confident members because they were easier to interact with. Thus, the student in this instance has undergone significant self-awareness and personal development through group dynamics presenting a learning opportunity.
6.4.6. Working with Staff/Family

Students occasionally had the opportunity to interact with staff or family members while completing their service-learning. These interactions often provided more insight into services or provided information about their service-learning partner. In addition, sometimes staff or family members would share expertise with the students. For example, one student who was doing service-learning in a play group for children with physical disabilities reported that she learned from a staff member there: “I spoke to [staff member] about play being a child’s main occupation” (Student 24—Week 4.1). This was important to the student as “I hadn’t realised that the most important occupation to a child is playing”. The student reported previous believing that “children’s main occupations were learning a being a friend”, thereby challenging her assumptions of children. The student then goes on to linking this event to OT theory “If a child cannot perform their main occupation, play, to maximum capacity then they miss out. Not being able to play with others impairs their social skills and their physical motor skill development” (Student 24—Week 4.1). By interacting with staff, the student was able to learn an important part of OT theory for working with children. Staff provided students with valuable insight into their own experiences which were either new learning for students or corroborated with information students gained from academic sources.

6.4.7. Activity as a Catalyst for Learning

Most of the interaction between the student and their service-learning partner is framed around activity and therefore, activity was the second most frequently occurring catalyst for learning. The theme of activity as a catalyst for learning included several subthemes; ‘engaging in activity’, ‘unexpected events’ and ‘closure’.

6.4.8. Engaging in Activity

The code of activity occurred when students learned as a direct result of the activity or task in which they were partaking. This may have included learning as a result of doing an activity, planning an activity or learning that occurred during an activity. For example, one student wrote about her experience in a dementia unit of a nursing home. She experienced learning through activity by listening with music to the residents there: “I
listened to the music that another lady wanted to listen to with her. I allowed her to choose the songs and sing along” (Student 36-Week 10.2). The student reported to have enjoyed sharing the activity with her partner and sang along with her. The student then “observed the change in mood of the lady as she happily sat” and from this activity, the student learned about: “the importance of music. After listening to a particular song, the lady told me about her first dance in which one of the songs was played again, showing the power of music to arouse memories” (Student 36-Week 10.2). From this experience of engaging in activity, the student was able to witness the effect of meaningful activity on a person. She also learned about using music as a means to connect with people with dementia

6.4.9. Unexpected Events

At times different situations would arise that students were unprepared for or were situation that had unforeseen consequences. This often resulted in learning for students, particularly learning around how to manage these situations. For example, one student was completing service-learning in a nursing home when an unexpected event occurred: “A resident always put his clothes in other residents’ rooms and stole other people’s clothes. The family blamed the workers saying they were misplacing his clothing.” (Student 34, Week 12.2). The student reported understanding the perspective of the family but was “annoyed that they would put the blame on others before they would investigate the problem”. The student spoke to staff members about possible solutions to the problem. From this incident the student learned:

rather than getting angry at a them problem you have to listen and come up with a solution that would benefit two parties. Being angry can only make the situation worse and have an affect on the caregiving you give someone (Student 34, Week 12.2)

From this experience, the student learned valuable problem-solving skills and showed personal development and wisdom to her approach of the situation. The student was able to understand why the family felt the way they did but was able to see the greater picture of why their reaction was not helpful. In addition, by discussing the situation with the staff member, the student was able to learn how to handle situations similar to that one in such settings.
6.4.10. Closure

Closure as a catalyst for learning occurred at the end of the service-learning module. It relates to the learning which students gained from ending their relationship with their service-learning partner. Students either provided good closure or poor closure to their relationship. Students who gave good closure provided ample time and information for the service-learning partner to prepare for their leaving. Students who did not manage closure well often did not provide adequate time for their service-learning partner to be informed of their leaving or on some occasions, the student did not inform their service-learning partner that they would not be coming back. One student wrote about her experience of closure within the group she was doing service-learning with: “We told the group that it was our last week with them. They were all shocked and upset by this, telling us how much they would miss us and asking us not to go” (Student 27, Week 10). The student reported feeling bad at the reaction of their service-learning partners as they had not been given notice. The student also noted happiness at having made a positive impact on the group “the fact that they were sad to see me go meant that I really engaged with the group and made a good impression on them”. The student spent the rest of the group making sure to “engage with everybody during this club and to participate in every activity to the best of my ability and enjoy the final club” in order to make up for the last-minute closure. From this experience the student reported:

I learned that despite what I sometimes thought, I did make an impression within the club and they did enjoy my company. I think that this will apply in practice too—sometimes I may feel as though I am not being taken seriously and my work is going unnoticed but really it is valued and appreciated (Student 27-Week 10.1)

The student learned about the impact they had in the service and also learned about how they may not always know how their actions have impacted others. While the student did not report learning any skills around closure, they gained personal development and self-awareness. Another student helped give closure prior to her last week. The student wrote: “I told P that I would be finishing my service-learning next week and he seemed sad to hear that”. The student wrote that she “felt sad and nervous” but following on from initially telling her partner that she would be leaving, she discussed the situation with him:

I sat down with him after our walk was finished and I told him next week would be our last week. I asked him if he would miss our walks and whether or not he has enjoyed the past few months and our time spent together

From this experience the student reported learning:
I learned how to deal with preparing to say goodbye to a client/person after spending a long time with them, getting to know them. But, it made me realise that it is something that you will have to be accustomed to, whilst practicing OT (Student 15-Week 9.3)

In this case the student learned to face the discomfort of telling her partner that she would be leaving and talked it through with her partner. The student learned the skill of saying closing a relationship was able to link the experience to practice.

6.4.11. Self as a Catalyst for Learning

The final theme of ‘self as a catalyst for learning’ had the fewest number of incidences out of the three. It included subthemes of ‘thoughts/feelings’ and ‘making mistakes’. Both subthemes involved situations where the student’s learning was sparked from a specific thought or feeling they noticed within themselves that was deemed significant enough to reflect and learn from.

6.4.12. Thoughts/Feelings

This subtheme relates to students’ thoughts or feelings being the platform for learning. While these thoughts and feelings occur in relation to external sources such as partner actions, or activities, students in this subtheme wrote about their internal processes as the starting point for the reflective process. For example, one of the students who were completing an Irish Sign Language course wrote her perception of the course as a significant event one week: “I didn’t pay much attention in class this week” (Student 29, Week 7.1). The student reported that this was because she ‘felt disinterested’ and couldn’t focus on the class. The student reflected on her experience:

I realised that it can be difficult to focus on simple tasks when the mind is take up by other things: I was pre-occupied with my Christmas exams that are coming up soon. I learned that I need to try and divide my mind space so that I can focus on the present without being influenced too much by my worries (Student 29, Week 7.1)
6.4.13. Making Mistakes

As students are engaging in new experiences and trying new behaviours, it is natural that they will make mistakes. Some students found these mistakes to be beneficial for learning. One student wrote about an event where she was helping children do gymnastics in a play group: “We were practicing tumble turns at the end of the sessions I forgot that X couldn’t do tumble turns because of his epilepsy” (Student 5, Week 5.3). The student “felt bad” that she had forgotten and then “felt flustered to come up with an alternative activity”. The student learned from this experience the importance of planning and activity analysis and real-world learning in relation to “how easy it is to forget hidden disabilities”, in addition, the student reported “just because a task is easy for you doesn’t mean it’s easy for someone else” therefore this student learned a great deal about facilitating activities and applying them with real world considerations.

6.4.14. Emotions resulting from significant events

This section will briefly show the feelings experienced by students during their service-learning module in response to the significant events. Table 43 shows the emotions experienced by students because of significant events:

Table 43: Emotions experienced by students and rate of occurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th>Rate of Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=39
6.4.15. Discomfort

Discomfort is the emotion which saw the highest rate of occurrence, meaning that most learning occurred for students with incidences of discomfort. Discomfort, as described by Dewey is the basis of all learning. Discomfort is any feeling or moment which is disruptive to a person’s expectations or beliefs and may result in a learning experience. Discomfort in this study may include a variety of emotions such as fear, worry, nervousness, anger or surprise. For example, one student when reflected on an event which caused her discomfort when meeting her service-learning partner, a boy with a diagnosis ASD, for the first time:

He didn’t pay much attention to the fact that I was there. He was completely focused on whatever tasks he wanted to do and rarely made eye contact with me. It didn’t bother him that someone new was there (Student 31, Week 1.2)

The student felt discomfort in this situation due to being “unsure how to act around him because he wasn’t interacting with me in the way I had expected and I couldn’t tell how he was feeling about me”. From this event, the student learned about some of the potential characteristics of ASD. Another student reflected on her experience of feeling discomfort when witnessing a staff member of a play group scold one of the children. The student observed this incident and reflected afterwards that sometimes it is necessary to chastise children in certain environments. From this experience the student learned “it is important to realise it is okay to be uncomfortable in situations like that as it is a new experience for me” (Student 16, Week 7.2). Similarly, one student reflected on the experience of witnessing her partner becoming anxious when partaking in a rock-climbing activity. The students reported that “I was worried for him he was very agitated. It was upsetting to watch” (Student 17, Week 10.1). The student realised “there was nothing I could do as I had no control over the incident” (Student 17, Week 10.1) but as the students’ partner completed the activity, the other group members clapped for him. The student learned “he was happy he had climbed even though it was a stressful situation for him. The support he received from the class made his effort worth it for him”.

6.4.16. Uncertainty

Uncertainty is similar to discomfort and is often seen appearing together, however, while discomfort may come from many different sources, uncertainty derives specifically from students needing to act in a given situation but not knowing what to do. For example,
one student who was working in a group for people with intellectual disability wrote about her experience of uncertainty: “A service user made a card for a deceased parent during arts and crafts” (Student 28, Week 7.1). The student described her feelings as “awkward. I did not want to just pass over it but I was unsure what to say”. The student then reflected on this incident. At the time she “just said ‘that’s nice’ and moved on” and later reflected that she had “over-thought my reaction, it may not have been correct to dismiss it straight away and move on”. From this incident the student learned “People’s situations are often tough and it is good to judge the situation. Observe and assess would they like to discuss it or do they just want to leave it and say nothing” (Student 28-Week 7.1).

6.4.17. Positive Emotions

Positive emotions included any feeling that is generally seen as pleasant. These emotions may include such things as: curiosity, interest, enjoyment, happiness, excitement. One such example of students experiencing positive emotions was from one student completing an Irish Sign Language course. The student described that she was paired up with her service-learning partner for the first time to work on their sign language together. The student reported that she was “excited—an opportunity to get to know someone”. Another student spoke about her enjoyment of an activity shared with her service-learning partners in a group watching a movie together; “I was enjoying the movie and so were the service-users. It was a relaxed experience and a lovely way to spend 2 hours. I like seeing that the service-users were finding it funny”. The student enjoyed the experience of sharing the activity with the community partners and took enjoyment from the fact that they too were enjoying themselves.

6.4.18. Inclusion

Occasionally students experienced feelings of inclusion with their service-learning partner or within a service. Feelings of inclusion resulted from interactions with community partners or staff members. For example, one student wrote about their first week in a playgroup for children: “When the parachute game was played at the stat, myself and the other student, were included in this. The leader made us feel very welcome” (Student 13, Week 1.2). By feeling included in the group, the student reported that “it allowed myself and the other student to engage more fully in the activities and as a result
encourage the children to do so also” this in turn allowed the student to learn more about interacting with children and take away from the experience that “it’s okay to be silly” when playing with children.

In addition, students spoke about feeling included because of their service-learning partner’s actions. One student spoke about coming into the service for the first time.

The second thing that struck me was how friendly and open some of the service users were. I was approached by one man who told me where I could find a cup for tea and then immediately began to chat openly, asking me questions, explaining about his injury and when it happened. How long he has been coming to the classes at [service for acquired brain injury], the other activities he is involved in etc. His friendliness was very welcoming. (Student 18-Week 1.2)

The student felt included and welcomed by this event and because of the community partner’s inclusion and openness with the student, the student learned a bit about his life and his brain injury. In addition, it encouraged the student reflect on professional skills and how the student should manage boundaries. The student also gained self-awareness for her own behaviours in these situations and learned that she often over thinks issues:

I know about myself that I tend to over think things and I can worry when it’s unnecessary sometimes. I learned that if I relax and go with the flow that my instincts in a situation will probably be right. I know I need to work on staying calm and staying in the moment. This I think will come with time and experience and I’m very open to getting better at this. (Student 18-Week 1.2)

These examples show that by feeling included, students can gain valuable learning outcomes.

6.4.19. Appreciation

Students felt appreciation for their community partners, whether that be through their skills, behaviours or the relationship itself. For example, one student experienced appreciation of her service-learning partner’s successes: “A significant event that happened this week was when P1 told us how significant this year is in her life. She told us that it is the year she gave up smoking and has started losing weight” (Student 12 – Week 3.1). The student reported that the significance of this event for her partner made the student emotional and she was proud to hear about this woman’s successes. From this, the student learned that:}
no matter what age you are, if you have the will power you can change your life. I learned the only persona stopping you from changing your life is yourself. It gave me inspiration that if she can change her life at her age I should never say that I can’t do something (Student 12-Week3.1)

Another student noticed her new partner was finding it difficult to complete an exercise around money management. The student helped her service-learning partner who was delighted to be able to finish the task. This made the student feel:

so happy for her, it was very encouraging to see her believing in herself and progressing through the problems using this method. It was inspiring to see her complete these problems mainly on her own. I couldn’t help smile and laugh with happiness when she said, after successfully solving a problem and I was saying well done, ‘I am amazing. It was very rewarding (Student 4-Week 5.1)

From this, the student learned skills around helping people completing tasks and the value of enabling them without completing the activity for them. As the students wrote:

I learned the importance of guidance. The difference between doing most of the work for someone and helping and letting them engage in the activity is what can encourage a person to continue learning and developing, rather than letting them feel unmotivated and not able to do the activity. The coin sheet was a good help for her, getting her encouraged that she does have the capacity to solve problems independently. Her pride and feeling of success and empowerment said it all (Student 4 -Week 5.1)

6.4.20. Pride

Students found pride in their own abilities and skills and performance. This code tended to occur later in the service-learning experience for students when they had started to become comfortable and feel effective with their service-learning partners. One student spoke about feeling pride after she gave a presentation to the group she was doing her service-learning with about occupational therapy. The student reported “having completed the presentation along with the other volunteers I felt a sense of achievement having communicated well and effectively provided an interesting way of teaching what occupational therapy is”. The student reported that this event gave her “confidence to be able to take to a group about what occupational therapy is and also gave confirmation and clarity of knowledge learnt in my first year of college” (Student 10-Week7.2).
6.4.21. Learning Outcomes

Students reported many learning outcomes from their service-learning experience including an increased understanding of occupational therapy theory, real world learning, deeper understanding and reflection skills. In addition, they write about environmental awareness, linking their experiences to practice or themselves, wisdom.

The learning outcomes for students covered a vast amount of information. The learning outcomes have been categorised into three areas ‘knowledge’, ‘skills’ and ‘self-development’, as seen from Table 44:

Table 44: Themes of learning outcomes and rate of occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acquiring Knowledge (rate of occurrence)</th>
<th>Skills for Practice (rate of occurrence)</th>
<th>Self-Development (rate of occurrence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real World Learning (356)</td>
<td>Developing Skills (355)</td>
<td>Personal and Professional Development (296)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT theory (160)</td>
<td>Reflection (210)</td>
<td>Impact (120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning re: disability (136)</td>
<td>Boundaries (54)</td>
<td>Changing Attitudes (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeper Understanding (75)</td>
<td>Communication Skills (38)</td>
<td>Confidence (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking to practice (26)</td>
<td>Activity Analysis (36)</td>
<td>Wisdom (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total=653</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total=693</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total=592</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=39

6.4.22. Knowledge

There were many learning outcomes for students in terms of knowledge accrual; learning about disability, linking their experiences to relevant practice, occupational therapy theory and gaining a deeper understanding of systems, occupation and disability. Learning about real-world situations was the highest knowledge outcome. It encompasses the chaos of the real world and the complications and nuances of practicing within these
contexts. Students learned from service-learning what it means to experience life in the context they are placed, this includes barriers and facilitators to occupation and the impact of systems on people as occupational beings. In addition, students gained an insight into the realities of working in specific services.

For example, one student demonstrated real-world learning when a child she was working with “kept snapping the nib of his pencil” during a drawing activity. The student wrote that the child became “very frustrated and annoyed” because the pencil kept breaking. From this even the student learned “how something small that doesn’t bother you could be a very big deal to someone else” (Student 5-Week 4.2).

6.4.23. Skills for Practice

Students either improved already existing skills or developed new skills. These skills were based on the students’ own learning and learning opportunities. The skills may have been interpersonal skills, practical skills such as organisation, facilitation, time management, professional behaviour, managing their role, learning to be flexible. Alternatively, the skills may be in relation to specific situations such as learning to end a relationship, learning how to use public transport, learning to manage failure, problem solving, fixing issues, learning to react appropriately to events. For example, one student wrote about his experience working with children in an activity group. The student wrote “one of the kids consistently tried to touch the instructor’s watch” which made the student feel “frustrated as the instructor would tell him not to do it and two minutes later he would be straight over to it again”. From this event, the student learned skills for interacting and communicating with children; “you must have patience when working with kids on a regular basis. You must explain things clearly and in a way they understand” (Student 9-Week 5.2).

6.4.24. Self-Development

The final element of student learning was self-development. Students grew from the experience on a personal level. The largest change was professional and personal development, but many other areas saw an improvement such as attitudes, confidence, feelings of impact and wisdom. Feelings of impact were often linked with competence as
when students felt that they had made an impact on another person, they often became more confident in their skills. For example, one student wrote about her experience working with her service-learning partner in a life skills class. The student and her partner were practicing maths skills. The student wrote:

I brought in counters to help my partner with his maths. These worked really well for him along with the number line. He was able to count the counters when adding the sums, and then he was able to recognise the shape of the numbers by looking on the number line (Student 19-Week 6.1)

The student reported feeling “proud of myself for finding a way that worked for me and my service-learning partner. I wasn’t frustrated trying to teach him something he didn’t understand”. From this experience, the student felt she had made an impact on her partner and reported the results were great, I was able to teach him using the counters and he understood what I was teaching him. I learned that once you find an effective way that someone can learn, it will be easier on myself and himself (Student 19-Week 6.1)

6.4.25. Student focus and connectedness

A final finding emerged from the reflective workbook analysis. It was discovered that students appeared to write in one of two styles; self-focused or other-focused. Students who exhibited self-focused writing, reflected on events with a perspective of how those events affected themselves. Students who wrote in a self-focused style, appeared to rarely consider the greater implications of an event in terms of other people. These students focused on their own emotions or the implications of events for them and they rarely exhibit connectedness with their partner in their reflections. In contrast, students who were other-focused reflected wrote more about emotional connection, events and how those events affect not only themselves but also their partner. These students appear to focus on the greater implication of how the events affect others.

Table 45: Occurrence of reflective journals where students are self-focused or other-focused

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occurrence of Self-Focused Student Reflections</th>
<th>Occurrence of Other-Focused Student Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To show the difference between the two types of student focus, two students who had similar service-learning experiences will be discussed. One student has a self-focus while the other is other-focused. Both students were completing their service-learning with children with ASD. Both students were in the same group and both of them observed the similar event where they learned about group dynamics. The first student described the significant event: “I observed the children socially interacting with each other. Watching how calm the session was with two of the six children not being present” (Student 38 - Week 11.3). The student then described her feelings of the event “I had a feeling of total relaxation and ease about me as the energy in the room was one of calm”. The student did not engage in the group and instead observed the children playing. Upon reflection, the student learned that “the number of children in a group can change the group dynamic and the energy levels that occur. Smaller numbers are much more relaxing”. In this event, the student learned about group dynamics in relation to herself and how it made her feel.

In contrast, another student in the same setting observed the same incident and responded differently. The student wrote about her interaction with the children as a result of two members being absent from the group “The children kept asking me about what happened or why 2 of their classmates were no here in the session today” (Student 2 - Week 15.1). The student shows emotional investment by writing “I felt really happy to know that the children are aware of missing friends in the session”. In previous weeks, the student had learned about the social impact ASD had on children and had been working to engage the children in meaningful games. The student was happy that the other children were interested in learning about the missing group members as she had been working to help the children play together in a group, suggesting that she had become emotionally invested in the children. The student interacted with the children in this event and worked to “help the children get over the fact that they had missing friends today. Helped to facilitate interaction with the rest of the children”. From this student learned:

I was able to successfully get them to move on with the fact that not all friends are here today, so that the rest of the children could still continue to enjoy the session. This has also reinforced the importance of social environment to an individual, as seen that the dynamics of the class changed when 2 of the children were not there (Student 2-Week 15.1)

The student was engaged with the children in this event, she felt happy at the fact that the group was cohesive and that group members were valued by the children. From
that perspective on other people, the student not only learned practical skills working with children in this situation but also learned about group dynamics and was able to link it back to theory about the social environment, hence strengthening her learning. It is important to note, however, his student had four weeks more experience in the group than that first student as they had attended a different amount of sessions which may have had an effect on the learning.

There are also missed opportunities for learning that have been identified within the workbooks. These missed opportunities arise in a response to a situation where a student derives an incorrect or odd conclusion based on the situation which may have been a valuable learning experience. It is interesting to note that there are 61 documented missed opportunities for learning within the results and the majority of these incidences occurred for students who were self-focused. For example, one student wrote about his experience socialising with a group of men: “I was in a group of 3/4 men and we were laughing and joking. It was hard to establish a professional relationship” (Student 23-Week7.1). The student reported being unsure of what was appropriate to say and purposefully avoided sharing any information about himself. His learning from this situation was: “I learned how easy it can be to fall into a very personal, informal relationship rather than a professional one” (Student 23-Week7.1). From this experience the student seemed to conclude that he needed to avoid reciprocity and keep his service-learning partner at a distance in order to maintain a professional relationship. This learning is antipathic to the service-learning aims. Instead of connecting to his partners or learning about them, the student was focused on how he failed to be appropriately distant.

Interestingly, as with the development in understanding of partnerships seen from the service-learning partner questionnaire, there were some students who started service-learning with a self-focus began to shift the emphasis in their writing to other-focused towards the end of the module. In addition, students who change from self-focused to other-focused begin to exhibit more instances of connectedness as they begin to shift their focus. Table 46 shows the number of students who were self-focused and those who were other focused at the beginning and end of the service-learning module.
Table 46: Comparison of student focus at the beginning and end of service-learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-Focused</th>
<th>Other-Focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of Service-</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Service-Learning</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=39

As seen from Table 46, five student reflective workbooks which were self-focused at the beginning of the service-learning module started to shift to other-focused by the end of the module. The shift from self-focused to other-focused appears to start occurring around week nine of the service-learning module with some starting slight earlier and some starting slightly later. It is important to note that out of the 14 remaining self-focused workbooks, only four workbooks had detailed attending more than ten weeks of service-learning, with the remaining ten workbooks comprising of less than ten weeks. As the change in focus starts around week nine of the workbooks that shifted, it may be suggested from the data that some students may have changed perspective had they attending more sessions of service-learning.

6.4.27. Connectedness

As mentioned above, a sense of connectedness appears to be linked with students who are ‘other-focused’. This connectedness allows students to learn more in-depth and to develop further as students focused on more than just themselves. In addition, feelings of connectedness are also linked to several outcomes:

Table 47: Theme of ‘Connectedness – Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>Rate of Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful activity</td>
<td>32 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing relationships</td>
<td>240 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences v. similarities</td>
<td>41(10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>91(23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>404 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though many of these outcomes appear in both self- and other- focused workbooks, there is a much greater emphasis on these outcomes in students who were emotionally connected to their community partners.

6.4.27.1 Meaningful activity

Though there were many instances of meaningful activity experienced throughout service-learning. Students who were emotionally connected to their service-learning partner were better able to identify what activities were meaningful to their partner and why those activities held meaning. For example, one student wrote about her experience of working with the students from the CSL course. She wrote about how, at the end of their first session they were saying goodbye and the community partners appeared to have enjoyed their first session together:

I am happy that the class were excited to see us again next week and felt happy overall with the class as we had had good fun together. They also seem to get along with each other really well, which I feel is definitely an important thing in college as it makes the experience more meaningful (Student 30-Week1.3)

The student recognised the importance of having a good relationship with the students from the CCL course and noted how it was important to the experience that they have fun together for it to be meaningful.

6.4.27.2 Developing Relationships

Developing relationships was the largest learning outcome. This theme relates to the steps students took towards developing relationships and the process by which they gained these relationships. The theme of developing relationships was present in both self- and other- focused workbooks, however it was much more prevalent in other focused workbooks and the relationships appeared to have been further developed and become deeper relationships. The exact process of relationship development is unique to every partnership however, there are certain similarities. These steps encompass meeting their partner for the first time, getting to know their partner, working together, feedback from the partner about the relationship, reciprocity and ending the relationship. The process of developing relationships take place over time through interaction, activity, communication and mutual understanding.

The relationship between a particular student and their service-learning partners will be used as an example, taken from a few points in time: introduction, midway and end.
In this example the student was working with the students from the CCL course. She wrote about their initial meeting on the first day:

When everyone had arrived and settled themselves our co-ordinator welcomed us all and proceeded to introduce the class to us. She introduced us as the OT students who as part of their course would be learning from them. She explained the collaborative situation to them just as she had to us in clear terms making sure to let them know that we were their peers rather than their assistants or care workers (Student 37–Week 1.2)

This was an important introduction for the students as she felt it “provided a platform upon which boundaries were built”. The student reported being surprised by the openness of the co-ordinator explaining the purpose of the service-learning as she thought the co-ordinator wouldn’t tell the truth of why the students were there. This was due to past experiences of volunteering with people with intellectual disabilities where “co-ordinators had been much more protective of information”. From realising this difference, the student reported that she learned:

I hold too many assumptions and preconceived notions about the cognitive ability of people with intellectual disabilities and that I was foolish to come into this experience wanting to sugar coat our presence. I learned to accept my position as a person of equal standing as a person with an intellectual disability (Student 37-Week1.2)

The introduction to her community partner was a good experience for the student as it helped her understand how she should continue the relationship with her community partners. Over the weeks, the student came to learn about the service-learning partners through speaking with them and completing activities together. At the midway point there was a change in location from a classroom to a sports centre. The activity also changed from sign language classes to sports classes. The student writes about approaching two of the community partners from the group who were speaking together. She wrote about how, when she sat down and started speaking with them, they did not “look that pleased to see me sitting down new to them attempting to chat to them about how their Christmas went.” The student noted that this was out of character and felt “slightly annoyed that they were ignoring me as I was anxious to talk to them”. Upon watching the interaction between the two community partners, however, the student realised that they were actively engaging in the conversation and interested in each other. From this the student learned “that I should be patient in this kind of situation and not force my conversation onto people who would clearly rather be speaking to each other”. From this experience the student learned about
the boundaries of her own relationship with her partners and that she should not expect her partners to always be there for her. The student learned from this experience that the community partners had relationships with each other in addition to having a relationship with her and that it was important for her to respect those relationships.

At the end of the service-learning module, the relationships with the student’s community partners had developed further. In their final week, a new instructor’s attitudes towards disability resulted in a learning opportunity. The student reported feeling:

quite uncomfortable when he insinuated that I was in charge of the ID class as I have accepted them as my peers and would now, after spending time with them since the start of the year, never see them as people who needed to be looked after or taken in charge. I was similarly uncomfortable when he was attempting to get out of the ID class a performance beyond their capacity. I realise that we cannot baby the class and it is food to challenge them however, I felt he was going too far with this and was causing some distress to the members of the ID class, this in turn made me slightly upset. (Student 37 – Week 14.3)

From this experience the student learned:

that I have accepted the members of the ID class as my peers and equals and when someone tried to contradict that I defended my position with them. I also learned that I care for the well-being of the ID class more than I thought by my feelings when they were being treated unfairly. I also learned to handle other people’s questions about people with ID appropriately and in a manner that is not patronising towards them (Student 37 – Week 14.3)

Throughout the service-learning experience the student learned about developing relationships. From these three events it can be seen how the student learned to be honest with her partners about her role, to manage the boundaries and be respectful of her partners’ own relationships. Finally, she learnt the extent of her own feelings towards her partners when a new person entered the service-learning experience.

6.4.27.3 Differences v. similarities

Another important element of learning was from students recognising the differences and similarities between the student and their partner. Being able to recognise how they are similar or different to each other enable the students to empathise with and learn about their service-learning partner. Recognising similarities allows for connection through common ground. For example, one student, while learning sign language with the CCL students noticed how one of the community partners fell asleep during class. She was
amused by this and her learning from the situation was: “I learned that we are not the only ones that find sign language boring. The people with ID find it boring too. I am now able to identify with people with ID and have a broader understanding of them” (Student 35-Week 7.1). As a result of this situation, the student felt that she had common ground with her community partner and felt better able to relate to her partner as a result.

Recognising differences allow students to explore how different people live and act and accept those differences as legitimate ways of being. One student wrote about her experience in nursing home, knitting with her service-learning partner. She learned about some of the differences between herself and her partner through knitting. As a group, herself and two women were discussing knitting. The student knew very little about knitting but reported: “I learnt that something that seems insignificant to one may mean a lot to another. Such trivial details about knitting a blanket would never have had as much importance to me as it did for the ladies” (Student 3-Week 7.3). From this the student learned about values of other people and witnessed the effect occupational engagement had on other’s values.

### 6.4.27.4 Values

Through connecting with the other person, students were easier able to see and understand their partner’s values. One student wrote about her experience of learning the values of her service-learning partner. She noticed that one of the community partners were not engaged in a Pilates class. By this point in the service-learning module, the student had gotten to know her service-learning partner and found the behaviour to be unusual as her partner was “usually very polite and diligent not matter what we do in class” (Student 6 – Week 8.3). Through speaking with her service-learning partner the student learned that he was “very anxious to leave class on time today as he had planned to go swimming with his friend and was worried that his friends would start without him”. The student learned from this interaction that her partner loved to swim and from this she learned “he is very engaged in other forms of exercise and so something about Pilates and cored focused work did not fit with him” (Student 6-Week8.3). By developing a connection with her service-learning partner, the student knew the behaviour was not typical and was able to learn more about her partner, understanding that while he valued sports, he valued his own sports activities more than the one offered during that week of service-learning. This experience provided the student with a more in-depth understanding of her service-learning partner.
7. Chapter 7 – Integration of Results

7.1. Main Findings

The results from the quantitative and qualitative strands were combined and categorised into three themes for discussion; (i) ‘the service-learning relationship’, (ii) ‘service-learning partners as occupational beings’ and (iii) ‘outcomes of service-learning’. These themes are shared for both community partners and students.

7.2. The nature of the service-learning relationship

This theme incorporates the findings from the Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire and the theme of ‘Relationships’ in the focus groups. The reflective workbooks the findings include significant events related to ‘other as a catalyst for learning’ and ‘connectedness’.

7.2.1. Community Partners

The Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire results showed that most community partners did not understand the term ‘service-learning partner’. There appeared to be a slight change in understanding from the beginning and the end of the service-learning module. By the end of the module, community partners were more likely to describe the service-learning partnership in a way which suggested a reciprocal relationship. This may suggest a slight shift towards a deeper understanding of the service-learning partnership. While there appears to be slight trend towards improving the understanding of the service-learning partnership, it is difficult to draw conclusions from this data as the number of responses was low. In addition, some participants appeared to have less of an understanding of the term ‘service-learning partner’ after the service-learning module. This result may suggest that the importance of the relationship is not being communicated to the community partners by staff or OT students. It is possible that since OT students learn about their own role and boundaries as service-learning continues, they may not be able to communicate and reiterate the partnership to the community partners. By the end of the second year of service-learning, the students appear to be much more aware of this relationship and may be in a better position to communicate it with their partners.
From the focus groups, community partners rated the experience of service-learning based on their relationships with the OT students. Community partners spoke about the importance of respect and appreciation as a foundation for the relationship and through continued interaction and communication, they developed positive relationships with the students. When community partners worked together with the students, felt respected and accepted by them, they experienced a sense of inclusion within the service-learning experience and sometimes within their communities. In turn, community partners accepted and respected the students they were working with, developing connections with, and becoming emotionally invested in, the OT students.

7.2.2. Students

From the Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire there is a clear trend towards a deeper understanding of the service-learning partnership. Over the course of the two service-learning modules, students increasingly described the relationship in terms of reciprocity and mutual benefit and moved away from a purposeless or one-sided relationship.

In the focus groups the service-learning relationship for students was based on acceptance and appreciation of the person. Students were able to learn from their partners once they accepted and appreciated their partner’s similarities and differences, their abilities and their life experiences. As students began to connect with their partners they saw beyond the person’s disability. Reciprocity was important; when the students did not feel their efforts were being reciprocated, they initially struggled until they found meaning in the relationship. The relationships were integral to students’ learning; through learning interpersonal and communication skills while learning about disability and meaningful occupation. Furthermore, students found being in a group or working with individuals to be meaningful in different ways. Students reported working individually with someone facilitated a deeper relationship, but the experience was more intense. In the group settings, students had less time with one person but felt it was more casual.

In the reflective workbooks, the service-learning partner was the most common catalyst for learning. Students predominantly learned through interacting with their partner, through their actions and communication. Through the experience of connectedness, students learned about relationships, boundaries, managing expectations and became aware of their partner as social being beyond the students’ own relationship with them.
7.3. **Occupational engagement and participation**

The OSA and the focus group results contribute the theme of meaningful activity for both community partners and students. For the students, the themes of ‘activity as a catalyst for learning’ and ‘emotions resulting from the significant’ in the reflective workbooks also contribute to this section.

### 7.3.1. Community Partners

For community partners there was no difference in their level of occupational competence over the service-learning module, however the value attributed to those occupations changed over time. In particular, the questions relating to ‘making decisions based on what I think is important’ and ‘effectively using my abilities’ showed the greatest change.

From the focus groups, community partners reported engaging in meaningful activities which were either important to the participants before service-learning or were discovered during the experience. Many community partners reported a sense of independence by engaging in the activities. Additionally, service-learning offered community partners opportunities to help others. In some cases, due to the community partners’ already existing interest, the community partner was able to share their knowledge and expertise of the activity with the OT students which made community partners feel that they had made an impact on the students. Many community partners reported the importance of being able to reciprocate and help students, while for other community partners, the experience was meaningful for the enjoyment they received from participation. For the community partners engaging in the sports module, they found service-learning enjoyable and more relevant than traditional classroom. In addition, community partner tried new activities as a result of the experience and found new roles in and out of service-learning.

### 7.3.2. Students

Results from the OSA suggest that first and second-year students felt more competent in the measured daily occupations and also attributed greater value overall. The results which showed the greatest change in competence were in ‘expressing myself to others’ and ‘accomplishing what I set out to do’ for first-year students. First-year students’ scores for value saw the largest change in ‘having a satisfying routine’. Second-year
students reported the largest change in competence in the areas of ‘identifying and solving problems’ and ‘doing activities I like’. The greatest change in value was regarding ‘identifying and solving problems’ and ‘being involved as a student’.

In the focus groups students reported experiencing meaningful activity through sharing occupation with their service-learning partners. Through this co-occupation, students witnessed the impact and importance of meaningful activity for the partners and learning to appreciate others’ values. Students reflected on how they value occupation and their own engagement in meaningful activity. In addition, the service-learning module was meaningful as it gave students the space to learn in their own time and to develop meaningful relationships with others. Finally, students spoke about overcoming discomfort as a part of service-learning. This was meaningful for students as they learned that they could cope with new experiences and work through them, thereby gaining confidence and feelings of efficacy.

In the reflective workbooks, discomfort and uncertainty were the primary emotions that occurred alongside significant events, which suggests the validity of discomfort as a mechanism for learning. In addition, activity was a catalyst for learning. Students learned from engaging in meaningful activity, by dealing with unexpected incidences and by learning to close the service-learning relationship.

7.4. Outcomes of service-learning

‘Outcomes of service-learning’ includes results from the PSQ for the community partners and the PPDQ for the OT students. It includes the results from the MIDS and the theme of outcomes from the focus groups. The theme of ‘learning outcomes’ from the reflective workbooks is also included.

7.4.1. Community Partners

For community partners, there was no significant difference in their personal skills after the service-learning module, though there appears to be a slight increase in various areas such as ‘I know what’s important to me in my life’.

In the focus groups there were five subthemes in the outcome theme for community partners: ‘developing skills’, ‘personal development’, ‘empowerment through relationships’, ‘enjoyment’ and ‘impact’. By taking part in the experiences, community partners reported learning practical skills such as cooking and budging from the
Independent Living Skills programme, from the CCL course students learned practical skills relating to sports and Irish Sign Language. In the nursing home, Joe reported gaining strength in his legs. In the brain training group participants reported improving their memory. In addition, participants learned many transferable skills; some participants reported learning to be independent by learning skills like using trains and learning how to navigate their way in the city or learning coaching skills or how to transfer learning about sports into their own lives.

Community partners reported gaining confidence, feelings of achievement and gaining independence as a result of the service-learning module. Some participants reported that their outlook on life had changed as a result of engagement in service-learning and many participants reported feeling empowered through the relationships they experienced. The relationships directly affected how the partners engaged in service-learning and how they felt about the experience. Community partners shared their knowledge and skills. They reported that the relationships changed them personally through becoming more social and confident and experienced a sense of social inclusion. Community partners enjoyed the experience overall and were happy to engage in the experience as a result. Again, this enjoyment often was a result from the relationship with the OT students and the meaning in the activities experienced. Community partners reported feelings of making an impact on their service-learning partner by sharing their expertise and knowledge and allowing students to learn from them and their experiences. Community partners also felt that students became more confident and better able to work with others as a part of the experience and could provide an enjoyable experience for the students. For community partners, sharing the enjoyment and the value of the experience was an important consideration. While partners did not improve in the measured personal development skills, they reported many outcomes particularly emotional outcomes.

7.4.2. Students

First year students showed an overall improvement in their personal and professional development scores. In particular, students learned to consider the ideas and opinions of another person. Second-year students also showed an overall improvement. Their highest result came from the ability to ‘confront others as to where things stand’.

In the service-learning experience many students met with disabled people for the first time. Through interaction and learning about their partner, students learn about the similarities or differences the student has to the other person. Over time, their beliefs about disability changed and in particular students began to see the person before they considered their disability. From that interaction, students learned skills such as communication,
facilitation, flexibility, problem solving, organisational skills and time management. Interpersonal skills were a large part of the learning, such as learning to manage working with different types of people and exploring different forms of communication. Students learned to apply and make sense of occupational therapy theory and encountered real-world learning. Learning about occupation and it’s meaning for others and an appreciation of different experiences in life was also an outcome. In addition, students learned about the complexities of real life that often effects disabled people’s ability to engage in occupation such as the institutional and social environment. Students gained many self-development outcomes such as confidence and ability to overcome discomfort. Importantly, students reported that service-learning helped them to learn how to cope with negative emotions and take responsibility for their own learning.

The learning outcomes from the reflective workbooks mirror the outcomes from the focus groups. The learning outcomes were categorised into three themes: ‘acquiring knowledge’, ‘skills for practice’ and ‘self-development’. In the theme of acquiring knowledge, students predominantly learned ‘real-world learning’, and ‘occupational therapy theory’. Students learned about disability and gained a deeper understanding through reflection of all of these topics, finally, some students found that they were able to directly link their learning to practice and make sense of it in terms of their practice as OT students. Students improved reflection skills and learned interpersonal and communication skills. Students reported making an impact during service-learning. Students reported changing their attitudes and gained confidence. Finally, some students were able to take their learning and the things they experienced and applied them to their own lives, learning from them and gaining wisdom.

In addition, in the MIDS, first and second-year students showed a significant improvement in attitudes towards disability. Interestingly, there is no significant difference between the results from Time 2 of the first-year students’ scores and Time 1 of the second-year students’ scores. This is a notable finding because first-year students finish their service-learning module at the end of their first year and second-year students don’t begin their service-learning module until the start of their second term. This suggests that students’ attitudes did not change between these two times. Following on from that, first-year students’ results from Time 2 and second-year students results from Time 2 show a significant difference. This suggests that the service-learning module was responsible for the change in students’ attitudes.
7.5. Conclusion

Both community partners and occupational therapy students appeared to benefit from the service-learning experience. It was discovered that the relationship, or the service-learning partnership, was an important element for both community partners and OT students. Students and community partners showed an overall improvement in OSA scores for both occupational competence and value. The scores for the professional development questionnaire on behalf of the community partners and the PPDQ for the OT students showed an increase in various self-development areas. The student results also showed an improvement in results for attitudes towards disability. These findings were triangulated within the results with the qualitative data which will be discussed in the next chapter in three sections: ‘the nature of the service-learning relationship’, ‘occupational engagement and participation’ and ‘outcomes of service-learning’.
8. Chapter 8 – Discussion

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the main findings will be discussed in relation to the relevant literature. The findings will be discussed in relation to the relevant literature and context using the three categories obtained from the integrated results (Table 48).

Table 48: Result themes relating to research aims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result Themes</th>
<th>Research aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The nature of the service-learning</td>
<td>1. To explore the understanding of the term ‘service-learning partner’ and the nature of the service-learning relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational engagement and participation</td>
<td>3. To understand the effect of the service-learning module on the occupational engagement and participation for community partners and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes of service-learning</td>
<td>2. To examine the impact of the service-learning module on personal and professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. To measure changes to students’ attitudes towards disability as a result of the service-learning module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. To explore OT students’ growth and learning using guided reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings of this study will also be discussed in relation to the larger context of service-learning in terms of social justice and social inclusion, and Dewey’s theories. There will be a conclusion at the end of this section and finally the chapter will cover the limitations of the study and areas for future research.

8.2. The nature of service-learning relationship

The aim of the service-learning module is for students to learn about people as occupational beings which means possessing the ability and the need to participate in activities as an expression of their humanness (Yerxa et al., 1989). Students are expected to learn about people as occupational beings through developing a collaborative relationship and completing meaningful activities with another person. By creating a collaborative relationship, students can learn about their partner, their values and their occupations. To understand the meaning of activity for the other person, that partnership is vital. In addition, developing a collaborative relationship builds the foundation of a therapeutic relationship. The therapeutic relationship and the therapeutic use of self is fundamental to occupational therapy interventions (Taylor, Lee, Kielhofner & Ketkar, 2009). The ability to create and maintain working relationships with clients is a skill which students are expected to develop.

8.2.1. Defining the service-learning relationship for students and community partners

Mitchell (2008) writes that it is necessary to pay attention to how relationships are developed and managed in service-learning. In addition, Jacoby (1996) stressed the importance of reciprocity, citing the nature of the relationship as one where both service provision and learning is shared among all parties involved. Yet there is a dearth of literature into the partnership between students and individual community partners and in particular the “transformative, reciprocal relationship” (Carson & Domangue, 2013, p.151). According to Bringle and colleagues (2009) a service-learning relationship has the potential to provide better focus to the experience if it is well defined.

In this current study, the understanding of the service-learning relationship changed over time. As seen from the Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire, the change in the OT students’ understanding of the service-learning partnership was shown through the
descriptions they used. Over the course of the two service-learning modules, students showed a shift from describing the relationship as one without a specific learning purpose to a relationship where one person benefits or where both parties benefit. Students who wrote about the service-learning relationship as mutually beneficial described the relationship in terms of collaboration; shared contribution and shared outcomes. Both first and second-year students were more likely to describe the service-learning partnership in terms of reciprocity and provide greater depth and understanding by the end of the service-learning module.

In contrast, most community partners did not appear to understand the term ‘service-learning partner’. Community partners’ responses were sorted into three categories: (a) ‘unsure’, (b) ‘providing help’ and (c) ‘working together’. Before the service-learning module, the majority of responses in the service-learning partnership were described as (a) ‘providing help’. After the module, community partners showed a slight trend towards describing the partnership as ‘working together’.

It appears, as suggested by Bringle and colleagues (2009), the service-learning relationship is open to re-negotiation throughout the experience. In this study, the meaning of the relationship changed for both students and community partners over time. The relationship continuum model (Bringle et al., 2009) describes service-learning relationships in three ways: exploitative, transactional or transformational. Furthermore, a partnership is a higher form of a relationship, categorised by the presence of three characteristics: closeness, equity and integrity. These features are also present in a transformational relationship which can promote growth and development (Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009). The definition of the relationship in the current study appeared for both sides to shift positively towards reciprocity and working together. It may be suggested that the student-community partner relationship developed some of the characteristics of a transformational relationship.

8.2.2. Relationships as perceived by community partners

The experience of relationships for individual community partners in the literature is notably sparse. Though the very nature of service-learning suggests relationships between individuals and students must exist, this vital element has not been satisfactorily explored. There are some studies which have examined relationships from the perspective of the community organisations (Hayward & Li, 2017; Kirby et al., 2018; Tinkler et al., 2014). These studies originate from a relatively recent movement of utilising the
partnership as a unit of measurement in the evaluation of service-learning programmes (Bringle et al., 2009; Hosman, 2014; Hosman & Fife, 2012 Tinkler et al., 2014). By only evaluating the partnership between the university and the organisation, however, this form of inquiry appears to be ultimately self-serving. A partnership between a university and a community organisation may be enduring provided the circumstances are correct (Hosman, 2014; Jones et al., 2017) which potentially means lasting benefits for the university through continued interaction. In contrast, a relationship between an individual community partner and a student will almost always end with the completion of the programme module. Considering the inherent burden and effort which faculty expend to facilitate service-learning (Lambright & Alden, 2012; Tyron et al., 2008) it is hardly surprising that such a transient element has been overlooked. Yet, though they are inherently impermanent, the relationships are potentially powerful to the learning and growth of both student and individual community partner. If the relationship is transformative, the outcomes can potentially endure beyond the scope of the service-learning programme.

Service-learning has been criticised for a lack of focus in this area (Carson & Domangue, 2013; Crabtree, 2008; Hammersley, 2012; Morton & Bergbauer, 2015; Pompa, 2002; Steinman, 2011; Stoecker, 2009), however, little has been done to rectify the imbalance. If the philosophy of reciprocity in service-learning is to be preserved, it is necessary to evaluate the quality of interaction between community partners and students. Moreover, it is not sufficient to examine only community organisation’s perspectives or to use staff’s perspectives on individual community partners’ outcomes. While a partnership may be beneficial overall for a service, it is difficult to claim that it is automatically good or satisfying for the individuals within that service.

In more recent years, there have been a small number of studies which have started to consider the experience of partnerships for individual community partners. Several of these studies appear to suggest that the relationship is important for community partners. Bialka and Havlik (2016) found community partners wanted to connect to the university students on a personal level as the relationship made the service-learning experience more rewarding. However, as students took on the role of tutors or counsellors, the hierarchical nature of the relationships acted as a barrier (Bialka & Havlik, 2016).

In this current study, community partners similarly attributed importance to the relationship. The experience of service-learning was evaluated based on the relationships their relationships with the OT students. In contrast to the other studies, in the focus groups, community partners generally did not report inequalities or hierarchies in their relationships. Community partners reported accepting the OT students and feeling accepted
in their partnership, resulting in a sense of inclusion within the relationships. By working together with the OT students on an equal basis, community partners and students became familiar, learning about each other and experiencing a sense of connectedness. Through these relationships some community partners reported feeling empowered, changing their perspective and engaging in new behaviours and activities. The sense of connectedness and growth is similarly seen in Gates and colleagues’ (2014) findings from their study on the experiences of community partners from a Nicaraguan village. Though this study was not intended as an examination of relationships, the results suggest the importance of connectedness and the development of relationships despite differences between students and community partners. Another study found that over time, when university students interacted with immigrants in a foreign language class, community partners started to trust and feel close to the students who were willing to work with them. Similarly, they developed distrust for students who did not make efforts to interact (d’Arlach, Sánchez and Feuer, 2009).

Both Steinman (2011) and Morton and Bergbauer (2015) suggested placing the relationship in a position of importance. Steinman (2011) used the relationship as method of bridging gaps between communities, using the relationship as a form of service by providing space for meaningful interaction.

Steinman (2011) concludes that service-learning should look towards building authentic relationships instead of focusing on the power inequalities to combat the hierarchical structures that can arise from service-learning. Steinman, however, notes that there has been no clear path towards creating those relationships. Morton and Bergbauer (2015) emphasised the fostering of relationships as a method of promoting democratic discourse.

Steinman (2011) and Morton and Bergbaeur (2015) used relationships as a catalyst for their goals. In the current study, the relationship is pivotal to understanding and engaging in meaningful occupation. Taylor’s Intentional Relationship model (2008), states a poorly managed relationship can have a negative impact on outcomes. In this current study, when the relationships were positive, community partners spoke about their experiences of respect as a central characteristic. Community partners felt respected when students communicated openly, showed enthusiasm for the process and focused on developing relationships. From these experiences of community partners, we can see the presence of equity, integrity and connectedness (Bringle et al., 2009). The relationship experienced by community partners was reciprocal. The experience of acceptance and appreciation featured prominently both for community partners and for the OT students.
and appears to be the foundation of the relationship. Collaboration derived from mutual acceptance. Through mutual appreciation, the interaction between students and community partners yielded learning and personal growth. As community partners and students had mutual respect, they worked together, shared knowledge and contributed to the relationship. These are important elements for a transformational relationship, the product of which can be seen in the theme of ‘outcomes’ in this chapter.

8.2.3. Relationships as perceived by students

There is a lack of focus on the formulation, management or outcomes of individual partnerships (Bringle et al., 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Clayton et al., 2010; Crabtree, 2008; Giles & Eyler, 1998; Hammersley, 2012; Hosman, 2014; Jacoby, 2003). Studies that reference relationships do not explicitly examine the relationship or examine its nature (August-Brady & Adamshick, 2013; Schofield et al., 2013). A common outcome of service-learning for students is the development of interpersonal and communication skills (Celio et al., 2011; Eyler, 2000; Gefter et al., 2015; Maloney & Griffith, 2013; McMenamin et al., 2014; Peterson, Wardwell, Will & Campana, 2014). Though these outcomes suggest interaction with others, it does not speak to the quality of the relationships. It is important from an educational perspective to understand how students develop and manage relationships particularly in courses where working with others is an essential element of service provision (Taylor et al., 2009). In addition, as occupational therapy practice is increasingly community-oriented, collaboration with communities is fast becoming a requirement for occupational therapy graduates on entry to the profession (AOTI, 2008; Wilcock, 2006).

Just as with Bialka and Havlik’s (2016) findings, the OT students in this current study learned about the similarities and differences between themselves and their community partners. Similarly, OT students felt a sense of connectedness which provided meaning for students in the experience. The current study differs from Bialka and Havlik’s (2016) findings in how students experienced managing roles. For Bialka and Havlik (2016), students expressed frustration and confusion when their role and aims were not consistent throughout the experience. For the OT students in this current study, learning to manage relationships, roles and expectations was a valuable learning experience. Taylor (2008) writes that as a therapist, if personal or client expectations are poorly managed there can be negative outcomes. By setting boundaries, both therapist and client know what to expect from the experience and both know how to act within the context of the relationship.
(Taylor, 2008). Students in the service-learning module are not expected to act as a therapist or treat their partner as a client. Learning to develop an equal partnership without the power factors of a client-therapist relationship may help students learn about themselves in a relationship context. The dissimilarities in these findings may be due to the aims of the course. The relationship was not a course objective in Bialka and Havlik’s (2016) study but in the service-learning module in the current study, the relationship was emphasised.

Vroman and colleagues (2010) found OT students learned about the mutual respect of a client-centred relationship through service-learning. The experience of shared respect removed the role of providing help for their partner and thus helped to reduce power differentials (Vroman et al., 2010). In the current study, through continued interaction and activity, OT students accepted and appreciated their partners’ competence, expertise, knowledge and skills. Students’ preconceptions were challenged, and they learned about their partners as occupational beings rather than as someone to be ‘fixed’. By recognising the value of their partners through developing relationships, students understood their role as equal partners, thereby lessening power disparities which have otherwise been present.

Hansen (2013) found that through developing relationships with intellectually disabled people, OT students gained a rich understanding of the experience of occupational deprivation from their partners’ perspectives. Students learned how discrimination affected their partners and their ability to engage. By developing positive relationships, students became committed to advocating for intellectually disabled people (Hansen, 2013). The current study did not find that students were motivated to advocate from their experiences. They did however, gain a deeper understanding of occupational justice and facilitators and barriers to occupational engagement as seen from the MIDS, the focus groups and the reflective workbooks. In addition, student’s assumptions that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ were challenged. The community partners in this study are not seeking service from the students, instead the students are granted permission to be a part of the community partners’ lives and share in their occupations. As Shakespeare and Kleine (2013) found, few educational experiences for health-care students provide the experience of interacting with healthy disabled people and only 16% of studies in the review placed the disabled person in the position of ‘expert’. In the current study, community partners are experts in their own lives. To meet their course goals of understanding meaningful activity, students needed to see their partner in this way, which may be why students did not experience a significant ambition for advocacy.
Students’ experiences of inclusion and acceptance in an individual relationship is not discussed within the literature. Students appear into to take on the role of the service-provider other studies which can potentially create issues of portraying community partners as consumers of service and not as partners (Ward & Wolf-Wendell, 2000). This may cause further imbalances in power (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Eby, 1998). The students in this study were not seen as experts or required to provide help to their partners; their goal was to work together with their community partner to achieve common goals in a reciprocal relationship (Bringle et al., 2009). As such, students focused on relationships. Feelings of inclusion may have been important to students as being accepted by their partner was crucial to the service-learning partnership.

The findings of the current study suggest that connectedness, integrity and equity are present (Bringle et al., 2009). Students reported feelings of connectedness because of interacting with their partner in an accepting and appreciative manner. Students’ focus on reciprocity suggests the presence of equity. Moreover, to create meaning with their partners, students may have been influenced by their partners’ characteristics and have changed their own interpretations as suggested from the OSA results. Reciprocity in relationships is often considered to be the individual’s ability to relate to others in a psychologically healthy and developmentally appropriate way (Seidler, 1999 in Taylor, 2008). As students learn to relate to others, it is a natural desire to wish to have that understanding returned. For students who could not receive typical reciprocity, perhaps due to age or communication with their partner, they re-examined their expectations and interpretation of the interaction with their partner. For example, in one student’s reflection, she felt encouraged when a child with ASD chose to sit beside her. Another student learned to recognise and find satisfaction in using preferred, relevant modes of communication for her partner who had dementia. From these instances and the other, more traditional reciprocal relationships, students showed connection with their partner and understanding of their needs. These findings appear to be in line with Eyler and Giles (1999) statement that students are more likely to feel connected to the communities they work with during service-learning.

Finally, students spoke of the difference developing relationships between working with an individual or a group during service-learning. Students generally reported that working on a one-to-one basis with their partner could be intense, but it facilitated deep relationships. Working with groups was more accessible for students but could present difficulty to development of relationships. There is a dearth of literature focusing on the difference between individual and group contexts for partnerships. The three relationship
characteristics of closeness, equity and integrity (Bringle et al., 2009) suggest that a group setting may reduce the amount of interaction between a student and the community partner. While this is not to claim that a group setting is incompatible with developing a partnership—as many students appear to have done so successfully—it may be a consideration for facilitators when designing service-learning modules.

8.2.4. The nature of the service-learning partnership

The service-learning relationship in this study appears to meet the criteria to be identified as a partnership through the shared experience of connectedness, equity and integrity. In addition, these relationships appear to be transformational in their ability to foster personal growth for both. For Dewey (1916), all learning is ultimately social. It is through awareness of others’ lived experiences, individuals can engage in introspection and re-evaluate their own beliefs and values (Dewey, 1916). By interacting with others, the individual can grow as a person and assist in the growth of their partner (Dewey, 1916), therefore, to promote democratic growth, attention should be paid to the nature and quality of relationships.

8.3. Occupational engagement and participation

Activity is the means through which any service-learning experience is conducted. In this study, meaningful activity acts as the service element to service-learning. The service-learning partners are encouraged to engage in meaningful activity for the community partner. As meaning is unique to every person (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2017) students cannot know what is meaningful to their partner until a relationship is developed. Occupational therapy theory highlights the importance and transformative quality of meaningful activity, or occupation. Occupational justice is the appreciation of, and the commitment to, the various occupational needs, strengths and potential of individuals and groups (Stadnyk, Townsend & Wilcock, 2010). Therefore, in this study, from an occupational therapy perspective for people where occupation is disrupted, finding meaningful occupation can be considered service.
8.3.1. **Community partners engagement and participation**

Wilcock’s (1999) conceptualisation of ‘doing, being and becoming’ states that through engaging in meaningful occupation, people can express themselves spiritually and transform from that expression. The sense of being and becoming is linked to humanistic philosophies (Wilcock, 1999). Furthermore, Kielhofner (2009) states occupational narratives establish meaning through the communication and application of a person’s values, habits, performance capacity and environments over time. Wilcock and Kielhofner both view identity as dynamic; changing over time through engagement in occupation and meaningful activity.

As previously discussed, participating and engaging in occupations can contribute to occupational competence. In addition, Kielhofner’s Model of Human Occupation (2008), shows that humans express themselves, their values, interests and beliefs, through engaging in occupation. The value of any given occupation can be affected by external feedback from the environment which the person internalises and processes to find meaning (Kielhofner, 2008). The mere act of engaging in occupations is significant in how a person perceives own abilities and the values they place on their occupations. The findings in this current study suggest that though community partners did not appear to experience a change in occupational competence, the value placed on those occupations appear to have increased as demonstrated in the OSA and the PSQ. Community partners particularly appeared to place more value on making decisions and using their abilities by the end of the service-learning module. Through participating in service-learning, community partners had the opportunity to engage in a range of meaningful activities and occupations. Meaning can be derived for many reasons. As described by Weinblatt and Acrech-Barr (2001) “it is impossible to give an individual’s occupation any meaning other than the subjective meaning that they, themselves, choose to give it” (p.169). Therefore, from the results, these activities were deemed to be meaningful by the community partners’ own descriptions and not based on judgement on the researcher’s or students’ part.

Occupation is an expression of self; the physical and mental interaction with the environment in a way which is socially and communally meaningful (Aldrich & Cutchin, 2012). It is through engagement in occupation that a person continuously defines themselves and develops an occupational identity (Dickie et al., 2006; Kielhofner & Forsythe, 1997). Dewey’s concept of transactionalism is important in this process. The opportunity for personal growth derives from exposure and interaction with new values (Dewey 1926/1988). Exploring meaningful activity with others may be a method through
which personal development was achieved in the current study. Community partners demonstrated personal growth through the uptake of new activities, behaviours and life changes which may have been achieved from the supportive social environment of their relationship with the OT students (Rebeiro & Cook, 1999). Community partners engaged in meaningful activity with the students and discovered new meaning was discovered through the sharing their expertise, knowledge and life experience with the students. The co-occupation appears to have created a sense of belonging and allowed for community partner to make an impact on the OT students. Belonging is the sense of inclusion, interaction, companionship and mutual support that contributes to a sense of occupational performance and satisfaction (Rebeiro, 2001). Occupational engagement is the act of taking control of a person’s life (Yerxa et al., 1989). Community partners made changes to their lives through finding new roles both within and outside of their partnership. They developed friendships and began to take on supportive roles for others in the service-learning experience. Partners shifted from separate people availing of a service to an emotionally connected group which allowed them to change their own self-perception and identify new roles for themselves. Occupational spin-off summarises these findings well as the presence of unexpected, positive elements and occupational engagement either during or because of a socially supportive, participatory environment (Rebeiro, 2001). The four elements of occupational spin-off; affirmation, confirmation, actualisation and anticipation (Rebeiro and Cook, 1999) appear to be present through the partnership and co-occupation of service-learning.

8.3.2. Students’ occupational engagement and participation

By the end of both service-learning modules, first and second-year students felt more competent in, and attributed greater value to, daily occupations. First year students’ competence regarding to their ability to ‘express myself and accomplish what I set out to do’ changed the greatest. Students reported valuing ‘having a satisfying routine’ more highly after the service-learning. Second-year students reported the largest change in competence in the areas of ‘identifying and solving problems’ and ‘doing activities I like’. The greatest change in value was regarding ‘identifying and solving problems’ and ‘being involved as a student’. These results are in line with the literature (Bednarski, 2016; Gitlow & Flecky, 2005; Parmenter & Thomas, 2013; Riaz; 2007; Vroman, Simmons & Knight, 2010; Wilcock, 2000) and they can be linked to Pierce’s (2009) concept of co-occupation. Students and community partners unite with the same intention to engage in meaningful
activity, students may have developed meaning in these areas having witnessed the impact of meaningful activity for their community partners. Dewey, in his work *Democracy and Education* (1916) wrote about learning through social interaction. Dewey wrote that feeling of inclusion in a community, group, promote assimilation of the interests or aversions of that group (Dewey, 1916). According to Dewey (1916), for a person to be part of a community they need to share common aims or intentions and experience a like-mindedness towards some aspect of their values or beliefs. In this sense, the service-learning partnership is categorised as a community. By fostering that community through developing a partnership, the students and their partners may begin to change the meaning and interest they attribute to occupations.

The OT students expressed their occupational identity through exploring their student role. Through facilitating meaningful activity for others, students learned about occupation and the impact of occupational engagement. In addition, students observed occupational disruption due to the environment. In their reflective workbooks, activity was an important catalyst for learning. Students reflected about engaging in their partners’ chosen activities and dealing with unexpected situations. During the focus groups, students spoke about service-learning as an environment which allowed them to learn at the own pace and in their own way. Service-learning allowed students to learn about disabled people and develop relationships with their community partners without the stresses of placement. Service-learning provided an environment that was person focused and casual which was a unique learning opportunity for students. Furthermore, students believed the relationships they developed with their community partners would not have been possible without service-learning. Though one student expressed a level of dissatisfaction with the variable nature of service-learning, most students reported it was a unique and enjoyable experience which is in line with the literature (Arco, Fernández, Morales, Miñaca, and Hervás, 2012; Noyes, Darby & Leupold, 2015; Darby, Perry & Dinnie, 2015). Interestingly, Noyes and colleagues (2015) found that students reported service-learning to be a highly stressful experience. While this current study found students experienced discomfort during their service-learning experience, stress did not emerge as a finding. This difference may be due to Noyes and colleagues’ (2015) service-learning programme being project-based in nature while the service-learning module in the current study was not. Alternatively, in this study, students were supported through lectures and weekly debriefing sessions which may have reduced feelings of stress.

Students were further able to actualise their student role through interaction with staff according to the focus groups and the reflective workbooks. Staff interaction was also
a valuable learning experience and provided students with another perspective as seen from the reflective workbooks and the focus groups. Some staff shared knowledge with students, while others provided practical assistance. Students learned skills such as providing feedback and managing obstructive staff members. In addition, staff provided emotional support for some students. Similarly, Darby and colleagues (2016) found that staff members can play an important role in helping students overcome their fear of working in organisations by sharing their own perspectives, assisting students’ reflection and giving students the opportunity to share their thoughts.

Learning to overcome discomfort played a large part in engaging in the student role and was the catalyst for most of the learning which occurred, according to the reflective workbooks. Students reported feelings of uncertainty and discomfort during the service-learning particularly at the start of the module when they encountered many new situations. Students learned to overcome their fears of working with new people and learned to work with disabled people. Over time, students learned to adapt to the environment, their role and their partners. By overcoming discomfort, students experienced personal development such as gaining confidence and learning skills and students began to enjoy service-learning. The experience of discomfort is integral to learning and reflection in service-learning (Maddux & Donnett, 2015; Sharpe & Dear, 2010; Bheekie et al., 2016). Deweyan reflection states that learning occurs when a person experiences disruption or discomfort (1910). As stated by Maddux and Donnett (2015), to take Dewey’s pragmatism seriously, it is important to allow students to feel discomfort and support them to reflect using these experiences. Occupational spin-off (Rebeiro, 1999) may also be an explanation for students’ experience of overcoming discomfort. Students appear to have created affirmative partnerships based on inclusion, appreciation and connectedness with the community partners. The students’ experience of overcoming discomfort may be the confirmation stage of occupational spin-off. Students, by becoming more familiar with their partner and their activities, are given confirmation that they can engage and succeed in service-learning.

8.3.3. Service-learning partners as occupational beings

The nature of the service-learning partnerships, their connectedness, equity and integrity, appear to have provided affirmation for community partners and students. Through completing activities and sharing meaning together, community partners and students appear to benefit from co-occupation (Pierce, 2009) which, coupled with an
affirmative environment, confirms the support of both parties. This leads to actualisation; the personal and professional development experienced by OT students and community partners. Anticipation is the imagination of a new, hopeful future which both parties showed through their changes in perceptions, their new behaviours and their personal growth. Occupational spin-off is the sense of engagement over time in the context of the social supports. This is shown within the focus groups and reflective workbooks where students described the behaviours they engaged in as a result, such as finding new roles, taking responsibility for their learning and engaging in new activities and occupations. Upon achieving occupational spin-off, it is fed back into the affirmative social environment and the process starts begins anew (Rebeiro & Cook, 1999).

8.4. Outcomes of service-learning

As with the other themes, students and community partners both experienced outcomes from the service-learning module. From the literature, academic, personal and professional outcomes can be expected for as outcomes for students. Outcomes for community partners are less certain due to the small number of studies in this area.

8.4.1. Outcomes for community partners

As previously discussed, community partner outcomes in service-learning is an area which is vastly under-researched. Social justice and social inclusion are often cited as outcomes of service-learning in relation to the community. While service-learning holds the philosophical underpinnings necessary for the promotion of social justice and social inclusion, there has been criticism of this claim. Maybach (1996) suggests that when students provide service, even with noble intentions, it can perpetuate social injustice if the consequences of their input is not examined and understood. By and large, the consequences of service-learning are not understood from the individual community partner perspective.

In this current study, community partners developed new skills, both practical and transferrable skills and took on new activities and behaviours because of the service-learning module. This is Gerstenblatt and Gilbert’s (2014) findings in terms of developing new knowledge, learning skills and trying new things. In the current study, Community partners reported personal growth through a shift in outlook on life, similar to Rebeiro and
Cook’s (2001) research on occupational spin-off. As with Gerstenblatt and Gilbert’s (2014) study, community partners also appreciated the input of the students, however, this study found the input was that of reciprocal nature and not just one of receiving input. Hollister and colleagues (2008) write that “engaged students are more likely to think about other people’s needs and interests, about the communities in which they are studying, and about the obligations that come with their privileges” (Hollister et al., 2008, p. 18). Though Hollister and colleagues were referring to the experience of citizenship for students, all participants of service-learning are learners (Jacoby, 1996). Citizenship wasn’t directly examined in this current study, however, by finding new roles in and out of the partnership, community partners began to help others, engage in, and contribute to, their larger community.

Community partners from the ILS programme and the CCL course reported that students contributed to their academic experience. Community partners reported feeling a sense of inclusion, acceptance, appreciation and respect which contributed to their experience of their programmes and the evaluation of the service-learning module. By including the OT students in these courses, a social element which many of the community partners enjoyed was also included.

James and Logan (2016) found that children working with university students in a school-based service-learning programme experienced a reduction in negative stereotypes towards university students and they learned about food and food justice. These outcomes are not relevant to this current study as OT students and community partners did not engage in mentoring. Interestingly, though James and Logan (2016) did not identify this as a theme, one finding in the study suggests that shared activity was important for the community partners. James and Logan’s (2016) findings were related to the attainment of knowledge during service-learning. From an occupational therapy perspective, however, there appears to be some suggested that shared activities were enjoyed by community partners. Similarly, the current study’s findings that community partners enjoyed engaging in occupations and working together with the OT students.

A study by d’Arlach, Sánchez and Feuer (2009) found that their service-learning programme result in community partners changed their attitudes to university students. For most community partners in this study, the shift in attitudes was positive and many of their attitudes were challenged. This finding was closely related to their experiences of the university students; students who were open and eager to work with the community partners were seen in a more positive light while students who did not interact well strengthened community partners prejudices and were not trusted (d’Arlach, Sánchez &
Feuer, 2009). Though attitudes towards students was not specifically examined in this current study, the community partner outcomes did not suggest this to be an issue for community partners. Within the focus group results, there were some cases where community partners had issues with respect, specifically feeling that students were disrespectful. Community partners did not appear to associate these experiences to students in general, instead perceived it as an issue with the individual student. In addition, most community partners reported a sense of empowerment from positive, respectful relationships experienced during service-learning.

d’Arlach, Sánchez and Feuer (2009) also found that community partners’ perceptions on themselves changed and they learned to speak up for themselves in and out of the class. The personal development outcomes in d’Arlach, Sánchez and Feuer’s (2009) study is similar to the findings of this current study. In the current study, during the focus groups community partners gained confidence, reported becoming more social as a result of service-learning, some community partners reported that their outlook on life and their mood had changed as a result. Some reported that they had become more engaged and independent. Community partners also developed new skills and reported a sense of inclusion.

Two themes found in the current study which are not mirrored in the literature are ‘impact’ and ‘enjoyment’. Community partner’s felt that they had made an impact on the OT students, as seen by the focus group results. Impact for the community partners ranged from impressing the students with their abilities, helping students to develop new skills, making the experience enjoyable, supporting students to become confident and providing them with new experiences. Through feeling that they had made an impact on the OT students, community partners felt that they had reciprocated the service which the students had provided. The importance that community partners placed on reciprocity may be linked to Bringle and colleague’s (2009) relationship continuum. By community partners expressing the importance of reciprocity, it suggests that the relationships contained equity. It may also suggest that the relationship itself was transformational for community partners as the desire for reciprocity was expressed in the context of ‘giving back’ to the students, hinting that perhaps student had a positive impact on them.

Similarly, enjoyment was not found in the other studies. Enjoyment is important in finding meaning in occupations which can be the result of engagement in occupations that are stimulating and challenging but not overwhelming (Kielhofner, 1992). In the current study, community partners reported enjoying the experience. This gave further insight into the elements which community partners viewed as important; community partners enjoyed
their relationship with the OT students and the companionship they provided. In addition, community partners reported enjoying the activities which they and the OT students engaged in together. The results from the OSA, PSQ and focus groups appear to suggest occupational spin-off occurred for community partners. As community partners expressed enjoyment and a willingness to re-engage in service-learning, it appears that they sought to re-engage in the process of occupational spin-off and return to affirmation (Rebeiro & Cook, 1999).

8.4.2. Outcomes for students

Giles and Eyler (1994) identified six categories of student outcomes; personal and interpersonal development, increased interest in citizenship and civic engagement, improved academic learning, the ability to transfer knowledge and skills, and the ability to reframe perceptions on complex issues.

8.4.2.1 Personal and interpersonal outcomes

The very nature of service-learning requires introspection through interaction with others. As such, student outcomes have the potential to reach beyond traditional academic learning (Harkavy, Pucket & Romer, 2000). Indeed, it is almost expected within the literature that there will be some personal or interpersonal development outcomes for students. Research into this area has consistently found that students have the potential to experience personal growth and develop interpersonal skills and communication skills, as a result of engaging in service-learning (Celio et al., 2011; Eyler et al., 2001; Gefter et al., 2015; Keshwani & Adams, 2017; Maloney & Griffith, 2013; McMenamin et al., 2014; Peterson et al., 2014).

This current study also found that students improved in communication and interpersonal skills through the PPDQ, reflective workbooks and focus groups. What is different between this study’s findings and the other literature is the detail to which communication and interpersonal skills were explored. As this study focused on relationships, communication and interpersonal skills were important elements in understanding the nature of those relationships. Communication in the literature, however, is a broad term which can have many meanings. For example, in Gefter and colleagues’ (2015) study, communication and interpersonal skills were the ability to clearly present health-related information. This example is a single pathway of information where medical students give information onto their patients. In contrast, for Maloney and Griffith’s (2013)
study into an occupational therapy service-learning programme, therapeutic communication had a different connotation. Through learning communication and interpersonal skills, students were able to improve interactions with clients to achieve their service-learning goals by providing therapy (Maloney & Griffith, 2013). Different still, is the shared exchange of goals, ideas and emotions that should be present in a transformational, co-actualising relationship. This form of communication, however, is not detailed in the service-learning literature, though it is suggested through the work of Bringle and colleagues (2009) and their conceptualisation of the transformational relationship. In this current study of service-learning, which naturally holds a relationship focus, students experienced communication as an extension of the connectedness with their partner and as a mechanism for their own learning. For the OT students in this study, communication and interpersonal skills were both an essential process and valuable outcome of service-learning. Communication was not a method of achieving a goal beyond developing a relationship with their partner. This, coupled learning to manage relationships, allowed for the exchange of ideas and emotions that are characteristic of transformational relationships without adding the complication of ulterior motives. While most students experienced this kind of relationship, some students, particularly those who worked with children and people with dementia, had a different experience of communication as demonstrated through focus groups and reflective workbooks. Students learned to communicate and value different forms of communication from these relationships. For example, in service-learning partnerships where communication was limited students learned to recognise the level of communication possible and interact within those parameters. These students, while not experiencing the same reciprocity of ideas and emotions, re-evaluated their expectations of the relationship to find that reciprocity, thereby learning to communicate and interact in a way that was meaningful to their partners.

Leadership was also a common outcome for students in the literature (Barnes, 2015; Foli, et al., 2014; Lester, 2015; McMenamin, et al., 2014; Wolfe Kohlbry, 2016). Leadership has been described as the ability to inspire others’ commitment in achieving the goals of an organisation (Goetsch, 1992). The findings of this current study are dissimilar to the body of literature as the OT students did not experience leadership as an outcome of service-learning. The service-learning programme in this study, does not place importance in student involvement in the organisation. Instead, this service-learning programme focuses on the individual community partners, so students would not be encouraged to take on the mantle of achieving organisation aims or inspiring others to do the same.
Other studies found increased self-efficacy as an outcome of service-learning (Eyler, 2000; Eyler et al., 2001; Long, 2014; Overton, 2015; Sanders et al., 2016). The current study did not examine self-efficacy in students. Instead, confidence was an outcome for the service-learning module. Confidence is predominantly used over self-efficacy in occupational therapy service-learning literature. Various studies found confidence as an outcome (Atler & Gavin, 2010; Bird et al., 2016; Flinn et al., 2009; Kezar & Rhodes, 2001; Maloney & Griffith, 2013; Raiz, 2007). Similarly, confidence was a student outcome in this current study as demonstrated through the focus group, reflective workbooks and PPDQ. OT students felt more confident dealing with unexpected situations and managing new environments. By engaging in service-learning, students were exposed to new situations and often had to deal with issues which arose naturally from working with other people. Students learned to overcome these issues by trialling new behaviours and strategies and reflecting on how they reacted and changing those behaviours if necessary. As students progressed, they became more confident in their actions and their ability to cope with unexpected or uncomfortable situations. Importantly, students also gained confidence in working with other people. Some students gained confidence working specifically with disabled people, other students reported feeling more confident working with others in general. Students wrote about their experiences of confidence in their reflective workbooks. Confidence was a precursor to trialling new behaviours; students took on new roles, developed deeper relationships and learned new skills because of the growth in confidence from positive feedback and reflection during service-learning.

Finally, OT students experienced emotional development. Students gained self-awareness and learned to overcome discomfort and manage negative emotions which is similar to the outcomes of other studies (Maloney & Griffiths, 2013; Maloney et al., 2014; McMenamin et al., 2014). Student also learned to take responsibility for their own learning and identify learning opportunities that would help them become more experienced, as opposed to choosing experiences that were convenient. This mirrors the findings of Tinto (2003) and Simons and Cleary (2006).

8.4.2.2 Citizenship and community engagement

Citizenship and community engagement are often seen as outcomes of service-learning (Augustin & Freshman, 2016; Beauvais et al., 2015; Eyler et al., 2001; Loewenson & Hunt, 2011; Obhi & Woodhead, 2016; Wozencraft et al., 2015; Zucchero, 2011). Citizenship is expressed in the literature through intention to engage in the community and changing attitudes. In health care professions this is expressed through
engagement with particular client groups. Einfield and Collins (2008) wrote that the philosophy of service-learning aims to move from the provision of charity and towards a mindset of promoting social justice and sharing power within the service-learning partner relationship.

In this current study, occupational therapy citizenship was not measured towards client groups, but from the relationships between students and community partners. Students naturally compared their own lives to the experiences of their partner and found similarities and differences, learning how health and disability can impact engagement. Students began to understand how their partners’ physical, social, political and cultural environment could impact occupational engagement. Through their feelings of connectedness, students learned to see and empathise with the unfairness in partners’ lives or the factors that enabled their partners to live meaningfully. The findings also suggest students appear to have experienced a change in attitudes towards disability. Students learned to recognise their own preconceptions and prejudices towards disability. Their experiences challenged students’ attitudes of disability by helping them to realise disabled people aren’t automatically in need of help, and by learning to see the person as more important than their diagnosis. In addition, students learned about the similarities they shared with their partners which helped them to empathise and develop the relationship. As there is little literature surrounding the relationships, other studies have not found that relationships are a catalyst for citizenship, however as humans are social beings and all learning is social (Dewey, 1916) it is possible that students learn citizenship through connecting with others.

8.4.2.3 Improved academic learning

Meta-analyses of the literature found that service-learning programmes may improve cognitive outcomes for students (Novak, Markey & Allen, 2007; Yorio & Ye, 2012) and other studies suggest the same (Billig & Welche, 2004; Bringle et al., 2016; Eyler et al., 2001; Fitch, et al, 2013; Lizzul et al., 2015; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Milford et al., 2016). Academic literature is linked to the course content. For example, Milford and colleagues (2016) found that students improved competence in health literacy. Therefore, in this study, academic learning for OT students was related to occupational therapy theory and a greater understanding of how theory relates to the real world. Students learned about seeing people before their disability, learning about occupation and it’s meaning for others and an appreciation of different experiences in life. The findings are similar to other occupational therapy service-learning experiences, such as in Maloney and Griffith’s
(2013) study where students learned about the meaning of occupation. Similarly, Gitlow and Flecky’s (2005) study found that students learned about disability and developed an understanding of the barriers and enablers to engagement for disabled people. These results are similar to other studies which also found that student gained academic outcomes related to occupational therapy theory (Gent & Gurecka, 2001; Greene, 1997; 1998).

8.4.2.4 Application of knowledge and skills

As service-learning involves the process of linking academic learning to real world situations, it offers opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills. Whether students apply knowledge to the real world, however, may be dependent on the appropriateness of the course to the organisation or project (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Some studies cite academic learning as one of the main outcomes of service-learning (Celio et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mpofu, 2007; Prentice & Robinson, 2010; Warren, 2012). Through reflection, service-learning can provide opportunities for students to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and apply their knowledge to their experiences (Eyler et al., 2001; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Steinke & Buresch, 2002). There are a range of skills which can be learned in service-learning. Commonly, communication skills are learned during service-learning (Maloney & Griffiths, 2014; McMenamin, 2014; Valdovinos, 2016). Other specific skills may be competencies for specific courses such as physical therapy (Nowakowski et al., 2014), medicine, (Gefter et al., 2015), psychology (Valdovinos, 2016), speech therapy (Pakulski, 2011).

In this study, OT students learned about disability and gained a deeper understanding through reflection. Reflection was used as a method of exploring students’ learning in this study, but it was also an outcome. Students’ skills in reflection developed over time and in the measure for personal development, students rated themselves higher in questions related to reflection after the service-learning module. Likewise, Eyler and Giles (1999) found that reflection can develop as a result of service-learning. Reflection is often used in service-learning literature as a method of analysing student development (Atler & Gavin, 2010; Bialka & Haylik, 2016; Dunn-Kenney, 2010; Karasik, 2013; Vroman et al., 2013). Similarly, this study used reflective journals for this purpose, however fewer studies examine reflective skills as an outcome of service-learning despite reflection being an important skill for professionals (Schön, 1983). In addition, OT students in this study gained a better understanding of occupational therapy theory and it application to practice.
This is similar to other occupational therapy service-learning programmes in the literature (Gent and Gurecka, 2001; Gitlow & Flecky, 2005; Greene, 1997; 1998)

8.4.2.5 Reframing Complex issues

There is a large body of literature which suggests that service-learning effects students’ attitudes (Boys et al., 2015; Gent & Gurecka, 2001; Greene, 1998; Jacoby, 2003). In a study by Greene (1997) service-learning was used to teach OT students moral reasoning skills, findings reveal that service-learning “increased awareness of diversity and a diminishing of formerly held stereotypes” (p. 848).

In the current study, many students met disabled people for the first time. Through interaction, students learned about their similarities and differences. Over time, their beliefs about disability changed and in particular students began to see the person before they considered their disability. In addition, the results from the MIDS corroborate the findings from the focus groups and reflective workbooks regarding a shift toward more positive attitudes towards disability. These findings mirror the prior literature (Barnes, 2015; Boys et al., 2015; Greene, 1997).

Furthermore, students gained in-depth understanding of real-world complexities. Students learned about the effect of the social, political, physical and cultural environment on their partners’ ability to engage in meaningful activity. Students learned how services can be barriers to engagement as much as enablers. By developing a deeper understanding of the complexities of issues outside of the classroom, the OT students’ results mirrored other studies findings (Conway et al., 2009; Giles & Eyler, 1999; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Wolfe Kholbry, 2016; Yorio & Ye, 2012).

French and Swain (2001) found that service-learning allows students to see people beyond their disability and consider facilitators and barriers to engagement. In this current study, students also learned to see beyond a person’s diagnosis and see them in a holistic way. This enabled them to better understand barriers and facilitators to engagement and to interact on a more personal level with their partner, thereby developing deeper, more meaningful relationships.
8.5. Relating this study to the larger context of service-learning

In the previous section, the results of the current study were situated in the context of the body literature. In this section, the findings from the current study will be discussed in relation to the larger context surrounding service-learning, education and democracy.

8.5.1. Service-Learning, Social Justice and Social Inclusion

Despite claiming interests and goals in community engagement (Flecky & Gitlow, 2010), higher education institutions have historically been elitist and inaccessible to all but the most privileged in society (Tsui, 2003; Maxwell and Dorrity, 2009). It is thanks to philosophers such as Dewey, the civil rights movements and the general development of a world-wide awareness of social issues which has led to more inclusive policies in education and the greater society (Pollack, 1999; Albrecht, Seelman & Bury, 2001). Within the greater context of social policy reforms, service-learning is among a handful of pedagogies which became popular with the scholarship of engagement movement (Boyer, 1990).

Service-learning literature claims that social justice and social inclusion are naturally occurring elements in the process and outcomes of service-learning (Gijon Casares, 2012; Koch et. al., 2014; Toporek & Worthington, 2014). The body of literature, however, represents a power imbalance from the priority given to student and university outcomes in research. Those who have made claims of social justice and inclusion, examined these concepts through the perspective of the university or the community organisation. However, it is not the place of the university or the community organisations alone to decide if social justice has been achieved. To claim that it has occurred, without first conferring with the groups involved, is perpetuating the imbalance which is against the basic philosophy of service-learning learning (Camacho, 2004; Pompa, 2002; Stewart & Webster, 2011; Weah et al., 2003; Yoder Clark, 2009). Moreover, by assuming social justice and inclusion are present, it may disincentivise researchers to explore the impact of their programmes.

In the service-learning experience of the current study, every effort was made to see beyond those power imbalances. It was important for students’ learning to understand how their partner was different or similar to them. It was through the similarities that students began to appreciate and empathise with their community partners and vice-versa. In addition, it is because of that connection that both parties began to learn from the other.

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When that learning occurred, barriers and power imbalances within the relationship truly started to break down. While one should be aware of any power imbalances between students and community partners (Crabtree, 2008; Stewart & Webster, 2011) it should be an active element in service-learning to break those imbalances down and equalise them as much as possible. Assuming a disabled person is disempowered and coaching students under that presumption could potentially be damaging (Shakespeare & Kleine, 2013). True reciprocity derives not only from shared outcomes but from a spirit of mutuality in all respects; through attitudes, assumptions, goals, relationships and outcomes (Tinkler et al., 2014). As seen from the results of this study, community partners experienced social inclusion not only as a result of the actions but also of the relationships. While the terminology of ‘social justice’ did not emerge within the results, it does not mean that it wasn’t present. In occupational therapy, social justice is expressed through the fair opportunity to engage meaningfully in life. By developing relationships, engaging and helping each other grow, the OT students and community partners may have taken steps towards social justice. Therefore, by focusing on the person, service may naturally follow.

Furthermore, as the service-learning module in this study is atypical from tradition academic or project-based service-learning, it may offer more opportunities for social inclusion. As seen from the results, the reciprocal nature of the relationship was important to the community partners, through the opportunity to share their expertise and make an impact on the students. The nature of the students’ involvement was not one derived from power. Students were not expected to provide ‘service’ or ‘fix’ their partner and instead were to focus on being with their partner and doing meaningful activities. Because of the students’ role, their inexperience and the personal nature of the relationships, community partners could provide help to the students and find meaning through the act of mentoring. For some community partners, this resulted in a sense of empowerment. Providing opportunities for community partners to take on meaningful roles and reciprocate care, may be a sign of movement towards social justice. In his study Steinman, (2011), concluded that service-learning should look towards building authentic relationships instead of focusing on the power inequalities to combat the hierarchical structures that can arise from service-learning. Steinman, however, notes that there has been no clear path towards creating those relationships. This service-learning model, however, may be potentially a method of achieving this aim.

As social policy around the world is becoming ever-more concerned with social inclusion and social justice, it is important that methodologies intended to promote these concepts are successfully achieving their goals. Based on Dewey’s theories of Democratic
education, it may be suggested that the service-learning module in this study may have potential for social inclusion and social justice. Education is the gateway to inclusion in society (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006) and service-learning presents a valuable opportunity to provide democratic education to communities that may not have benefitted otherwise. Moreover, service-learning may offer the support needed to empower communities to develop their own citizenship and make changes in their own communities. This study suggests that it may be helped not only through service, but through individual relationships to promote social inclusion, and meaningful activity to promote occupational justice and therefore social justice.

8.5.2. Service-Learning, Dewey and Democracy

The focus of the service-learning module in the current study is not for students to provide service or complete projects. Steinman (2011) questions whether service-learning can retain its classification if ‘service’ is secondary. However, in Steinman’s (2011) study, by suspending the provision of service to a population that did not require it, and instead focusing on relationships and interaction, the service-learning programme became a culturally appropriate partnership. Service followed naturally after the relationships were developed through breaking down barriers and finding shared meaning between First Nations people and settlers. Arguably, Steinman’s actions in this case resulted in a better method of ‘healing wounds’ between the two cultures than any direct service-provision could have managed. In this instance, the current study is similar to Steinman’s (2011) in that the relationships were the primary focus. As Dewey describes: “…a [democratic] society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder” (Dewey, 1916/2011 p.56). In addition, service-learning module is still in line with the Deweyan principles which underlie both occupational therapy and service-learning.

The first and most obvious likeness to Deweyan principles is seen through the interaction of communities. As Dewey describes, democracy is not only a form of government it is “primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (1916, p.91). In this quote Dewey describes democracy as the interaction of culture and communities and a truly democratic society is on which:

- makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the
different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and habits of mind which secure social changes (Dewey, 1916, p.115).

The service-learning module in this study, as seen from the results fits into Dewey’s model of democratic education through its relationship-based focus, particularly on an individual level. Furthermore, by students and community partners developing relationships, they become invested in the other person, learning to see beyond their assumptions and biases and to see the person and their environmental barriers and facilitators. Over time, students and community partners learn to work together within that context, recognising environment for its shortcomings and learning to work beyond it. Through the relationships and shared activity, commonalities are recognised which “accustoms all to a unity of outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated” (Dewey, 1916, p.26).

For a society to grow and improve, people from different communities must interact in a positive way (Dewey, 1916). Moore (2010) writes Dewey’s theory of learning is “an active process of grappling with conditions and problems in the world: constructing and testing solutions and interaction with others to make sense and make progress” (p.3). That interaction allows members of both communities to become motivated in inquiry about their own culture, thoughts, behaviours and practices, potentially resulting in social change (Dewey, 1916). In the current study, students learned from the partners and challenged their preconceptions and partners changed their perspectives, took up new activities and found new meanings within the relationships.

Dewey (1910) suggested learning occurs through negative emotions and genuine problems which exist within real situations. As seen from the results, students learned mostly from a place of discomfort. Discomfort often has negative connotations but through experiencing discomfort and overcoming it, students learn valuable skills and theory. This is important because discomfort could arise from any source. In the current study, discomfort derived from new situations, partners’ actions, through communication, working with staff or students’ own thoughts/behaviours. As discomfort has been most associated with positive learning outcomes in this study and in others (Barge, 2017; English & Stengal, 2010; Maddux & Donnett, 2015) facilitators should encourage and environment where students are aware of their own discomfort and are supported in overcoming it without judgement.

Dewey, as the father of pragmatism, has encouraged a philosophy of education and research whereby there must be value and application for a service-learning programme to
be considered a success. Critical pragmatism aims to “improve our individual and shared
capacity to tap into the critical potential of lived experience in a world that is unalterably
classified by flux and change” (Kadlec, 2007, p12). The world is dynamic and in a
constant change and the only way to stay relevant and effective as a programme is to stay
informed of the lived experiences of those that are affected by it. Moreover, the meaning of
those experiences can only be judged by those directly involved. That was the reasoning
behind this study design. Dewey’s critical pragmatism states that attempts to define fixed
principles were obstructive and damaging to personal and societal development (Kadlec,
2007). Therefore, a service-learning module which is too contrived may be hindering the
personal growth and lived experience of the students and community partners. By focusing
on supporting relationships, perhaps development can occur in a natural, unhindered
environment. Though it may be less standardised, it may be more democratic.

8.5.3. The Findings as Transformational Elements in Service-Learning

The results show that the experience of service-learning was beneficial for
community partners and the students. Both parties experienced the development of
relationships, meaningful activities and positive outcomes. These elements occurred the
context of the service-learning environment, and more importantly, the partnership. The
partnership is the foundation of the experience which leads to the engagement in
occupations through learning about the other. Engagement in occupations and meaningful
activity then leads to the outcomes experienced by both community partners and students.
Due to the transformational nature of the entire process, however, meaning changes, as the
people involved, the relationship and the outcomes change how both members of the
relationship interact with each other and their occupations. Furthermore, the partnership
itself is an outcome. To explain it clearly, the interplay between these three concepts has
been visualised in the Figure 42;
8.5.3.1 Partnerships

Many service-learning partnerships are transactional; they provide benefits for both parties at the time of the relationship. The partnership in this study, as discussed by Bringle and colleagues (2009) appears to be transformational based on the presence of connectedness, respect, appreciation, acceptance. Through engaging in meaningful occupations, and increasing the opportunities for interaction, the transformational characteristics were strengthened over time. The partnership and the occupations allowed the students and community partners to express their occupational identity and may have promoted their personal development outcomes. It is within the emergence of the outcomes that we can see the true nature of the partnership. From the community partner perspective, changing an outlook on life, trying new things, becoming empowered, making an impact on others and learning new skills, are all changes which have the potential of a lasting effect. Similarly, OT students gained confidence and self-assuredness, they learned to cope with negative emotions and deal with upsetting circumstances, they learned to solve-
problems, evaluate their own occupations and gained wisdom from their experience with their partner. Furthermore, students learned many valuable interpersonal skills and challenged many of their own preconceptions of disability. While many of these outcomes will undoubtedly help students on placement and later in practice, students may also benefit on a personal level. These outcomes change the partnership from transactional to transformational. While other service-learning studies examining relationships claim transformation, for a relationship to be truly transformational, it must occur for both parties. Otherwise, the relationship becomes unequal and potentially one member can become taken advantage of, as is a concern of some service-learning literature (Sharpe & Dear, 2013; Steinman, 2011; Tyron & Stoecker, 2008). In transformational partnerships, both parties have the same aim, both parties work together, both invest equal or very similar amounts of effort and both show integrity in their actions (Bringle et al., 2009). The service-learning partnership shows co-actualisation; the process that “both draws from and fosters the actualizing processes in each person” (Motschnig-Pitrik & Barret Lennard, 2010, p.376). Co-actualisation must occur in a relationship that is equal, carries similar goals, both members are motivated to self-improve and are supportive in the other person’s improvement (Motschnig-Pitrik & Barret-Lennard, 2010). While transformational partnerships and the experience of co-actualisation cannot always be present in a service-learning experience, it should at least be aimed for when the circumstance are contusive towards relationship development. Moreover, co-actualisation is an important concept to keep in the forefront of our consciousness as self-actualisation is sought after in service-learning learning literature. Indeed, in this study, actualisation may have already shown itself through occupational spin-off where supportive social environment leads to personal change and hopefulness for the future.

8.5.3.2 Occupations

Occupational spin-off can only occur from a supportive social environment (Rebeiro & Cook, 1999). The relationship is integral as it builds a supportive foundation where by the occupation is used to test and realise that support. The occupation allows the person to receive confirmation of the support they were provided. Through engagement in meaningful activity, the person realises they are competent. This in turn, leads the person to internalise their success and the positive effects of engagement, leading to actualisation. Anticipation comes from acknowledgement of the benefits of engagement and the hope for the future based on their newfound understanding of the impact of occupation. Finally, occupational spin-off occurs when the person engages in the new occupations.
Occupational spin-off is seen as using occupation as a process of improving wellbeing and mental health (Rebeiro & Cook, 1999). It is the basic tenant of occupational therapy that a person’s sense of health and well-being is linked to their ability to engage in meaningful occupation (Wilcock, 2009). Therefore, occupation can be described as service, thereby fulfilling the ‘service’ element of ‘service-learning’. The Model of Human Occupation (2009) explains that people effect and are affected by the environment. Within each person are internal processes which help form occupational identity; volition, habituation and performance. A person’s occupational identity is formed by the activities they engage in and feedback from the environment. MOHO’s (2009) occupational identify is similar to the processes of occupational spin-off and is mirrored within the results of this study. Students learned about meaningful activity from the relationship and interaction with their partner. Through creating the partnership with a shared goal to engage in meaningful activity, students and community partners created a supportive environment which lead to co-occupation and confirmation of each other’s’ abilities. Through engaging in co-occupation, both students and community partners grew personally and as they grew, their partnership changed. This led to a shift in meaning which resulted in trying new activities and occupations. The re-negotiation of the partnership and the engagement in occupation is the catalyst for the outcomes experienced by both OT students and partners.

8.5.3.3 Outcomes

The outcomes experienced by community partners and students are both the result of the partnership and the process of the re-negotiation of the new partnership when meaning has shifted. As discussed previously, the outcomes appear to be the result of the relationships, co-occupation and occupational spin-off. Furthermore, the relationships appear also to be an outcome for community partners and students. These outcomes were both personal and professional and had the potential to change students and community partners’ sense of meaning in the activities they engaged in. By developing confidence, feelings of empowerment, impact and social inclusion, both community partners and students grew as individuals. As outlined by the Model of Human Occupation, these experiences changed students and partners occupational identity, resulting in different participation in activity and in the relationship itself.

The outcomes experienced by students were in line with what many service-learning studies have found. One outcome which many studies claim outcomes in however, it civic engagement (Billig, 2002; Conway et al., 2009; Perry & Katula, 2001). This was not a discovered outcome for students. This may be due to the personal nature of this
service-learning module. While many service-learning programmes focus on the inequalities and greater social issues experienced by the communities with whom students engage, this service-learning module is of a smaller scope. As students were to focus on individual’s students learned about their partner’s experiences, they learned about barriers or facilitators to engagement from the personal perspective. Students spoke and wrote about these findings and the real-world issues their partner faced and from inequalities and injustices.

In contrast, there were many outcomes for community partners which were not mirrored in the literature due to the area being severely under-researched. Gerstenblatt’s (2013) study, however showed various similarities in outcomes for community partners civic participation, developing new knowledge, learning skills, trying new things, becoming energised and recognising the lasting positive effect of the students’ input. In addition, d’Arlach, Sánchez and Feuer’s (2009) findings suggest that feelings of closeness and trust may be an outcome for community partners. The outcomes of this study add to the findings of the others. Community partners experienced empowerment, inclusion, enjoyment and personal development outcomes such as independence, confidence and a new outlook on life.

The specific outcomes for a service-learning programme are likely to differ depending on the programme. It may be that through the fostering of relationships and connectedness, the outcomes for students and community partners in this study could be replicated.

8.6. Conclusion

The body of service-learning literature is firmly lacking in the perspectives of individual community partners and regarding relationship between community partners and students. To truly identify the impact of service-learning as a pedagogy for democracy and social justice, it is important to also examine the lived experience of all involved. By the aggregation of individual’s voices, we can begin to examine the true potential and impact of service-learning as method of preparing community partners and students to be citizens with the ability to cope with an uncertain future. Furthermore, it may be worth re-evaluating the use of ‘service’ in service-learning and instead consider the nature of the relationships between individuals as a mechanism for providing flexible guidance which allows students maintain awareness of community needs.

The service-learning module in this study focused on developing relationships with individual community partners for students to learn about other people as occupational
beings. It aimed to engage students in meaningful activities with community partners so that both parties can benefit and learn from the experience of co-occupation.

The aim of this research was to examine the nature of the relationship and the impact of the module on students’ and community partners’ personal and professional development and occupational competence and value. Students’ attitudes were measured, and their learning and growth was examined through the use of reflective workbooks.

In this study there were three main findings shared between both community partners and OT students; ‘the nature of the service-learning partnership’, ‘occupational engagement and participation and ‘outcomes of service-learning’. These three categories interacted with each other, each one contributing to the other, creating a cycle of shared development and co-actualisation during the service-learning experience. The relationships were at the heart of this service-learning experience and everything that was achieved derived from the connectedness shared between the community partners and the OT students. These transformational relationships led to the engagement of meaningful occupations, which in turn changed students and community partners’ occupational identity and led to personal and professional growth. The growth experienced by students and community partners in turn changed how students and community partners interacted with each other and expressed their relationship and therefore their occupation.

Social justice and social inclusion were also found to be a potential outcome from this study. By engaging in meaningful occupation and allow community partners and students to express themselves through ‘doing, being and becoming’, community partners reported a sense of social inclusion and empowerment. Community partners changed their outlook on life and their perceptions of themselves which was expressed through adopting new behaviours and activities. Therefore, this service-learning offered opportunities to dismantle some of the barriers to engagement in meaningful occupation.

While this service-learning module has taken a different perspective on the pedagogy of service-learning, it still operates within the boundaries of Dewey’s theories on democracy and learning. It does this through the interaction of communities and recognition of the similarities between them. Students learned through reflection based on emotions which arose from genuine problems within real, relevant situations and the module recognises the importance of flexibility to the everchanging needs of the community by working directly with individual community partners, engaging in occupations of their choice. Returning to the slogan of the disabilities rights activists “Nothing about us, without us” (Charlton, 1998), the only way to maintain pragmatic, equitable and reciprocal service-learning programmes is to give priority to this sentiment.
On a final note, democracy is about people. As Abraham Lincoln famously said in 1863 during the Gettysburg address, a democracy is “of the people, by the people, for the people”. People are at the heart of democracy. If service-learning is to continue to claim roots in democracy, social inclusion and social justice, as a pedagogy, it needs to re-evaluate its priorities and find a method of placing individuals at forefront.

8.7. Limitations of the Study

While every attempt was made to reduce the limitations of this study, as with all research, there exists some limitations to this inquiry.

The first limitation is the relatively small sample size which means that these results cannot be generalised to all experiences of service-learning. Though the findings appear to be consistent for students over the two years examined in this study, more research into this area would add further weight to the topic.

Due to the lack of prior research in this topic, there are few studies which the results can be directly compared to, in terms of the relationships between students and community partners. Therefore, it is not known whether the experiences of the OT students and community partners in this study were unique or similar to experiences in other service-learning programmes. However, the results from this study may present an exciting opportunity for future research to examine the nature of the relationships between community partners and students.

The service-learning module is only one element of the overall occupational therapy course in Trinity College Dublin. As such, it is possible that some of the findings in the quantitative strand could be attributed not to service-learning specifically but to a natural maturation effect. While this may be the case, the study design was chosen partly to combat this potential limitation through triangulation of data by using the quantitative measures, the focus groups and the reflective workbooks.

Two of the measures were created for this study; the Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire and the Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire. As these measures have not gone through psychometric testing, their validity and reliability have not been ascertained. To mitigate this limitation, however, the mixed methods approach was utilised to provide triangulation of data.
Finally, there is a dearth of literature on community partners’ experiences of service-learning, community partners who are not associated with any organisation are even further underrepresented in the literature. The original hope for this study was to also access this group of community partners however, due to time and scope limitations, it was not possible. It is, however, an area that would greatly benefit from more study.

8.8. Suggestions for Further Research

This study has examined the outcomes and experiences for community partners and occupational therapy students in a service-learning module. It offers a unique perspective of study through the examination of community partners and through the relationship focus within the module and the study itself. Placed within the greater context of the body of literature, this study is important as step towards addressing the gap both in terms of understanding service-learning partnerships and the experiences of individual community partners. Following on from this study, further research is recommended.

The exploration of the service-learning partnership in this study has relevance to the theory behind service-learning and is unique in its approach. This offers an exciting opportunity for further research into this area, regarding the development, support and outcomes of the relationships. Further research is particularly important between students and individual community partners and the categorisation of these relationships in terms of whether they are exploitative, transactional or transformational.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a method of research where the participants are involved in the formulation, design, implementation and analysis of a study. This may be valuable as a method of further exploration of both the relationship and the outcomes and experiences of service-learning. This approach to research would allow for the community partners themselves to identify areas which they deem as important, using measures that are relevant to them. Currently in the literature, including in this study, measures based on the university’s perspective of important outcomes are used. By engaging in PAR the community partners can identify for themselves measures which may have more relevance and accuracy in depicting the outcomes and experiences of community partners. Through this method, power can truly be shared in the evaluation of a service-learning programme.

Research into the practices and facilitation of service-learning is lacking from the literature. Research often omits helpful information for understanding service-learning programmes. This includes the nature of the interaction between service-learning partners,
the level of the supports provided by the university, how students interact with those supports and the methods through which they are assessed. The methods of reflection are often also not covered within the literature. Furthermore, none of these areas are typically examined for community partners. As these elements may influence community partners and students’ outcomes more research should be done into these areas.

Furthermore, service-learning is lacking in longitudinal research, which may be a useful means of further establishing relationships as transactional or transformational. If outcomes from a service-learning programme are lasting, the relationships can be understood as transformation, however, if they do not maintain some benefit, they can be understood as transactional. Of further benefit would be research into similar service-learning experiences with different groups of students and community partners. Though this study did examine different groups of students and community partners over the course of two years, further research may be beneficial for greater numbers over longer periods of time.

This study did not test for the length of engagement as a variable. The study was not design with this variable as the service-learning programme in this research offers many different opportunities for engagement with the community. As such, the length of time may not correlate with the quality of a service-learning experience or students’ learning/community partner benefit. While a preliminary analysis of the findings did not appear to show a correlation between length of time, it may be a factor in other service-learning programmes. A study design which tests for length of engagement, higher participant numbers and less variation in the content of service-learning experiences may find more outcomes relating to length of time and learning.

To ensure the social justice underpinnings of service-learning are being adhered to, more research should focus on the experience and outcomes of social justice for all stakeholders in service-learning. In addition, social justice should be a part of the research design. The intent of this study was to provide an equal examination into student and community partner experiences and outcomes of service-learning. While this study went some way towards doing this, further steps need to be taken.
9. References


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*U.S. Declaration of Independence, Paragraph 2 (1776).*


Appendix A

Search Methodology for Literature Review

Databases searched were EBSCO, JSTOR, ProQuest, ERIC, Pubmed, PsychInfo. Journals searched were Inclusive Education, CAOTJ, AJOT, Higher Education, Occupational Science, International Service-Learning and Community Engagement, Journal of Service-Learning in Higher Education, Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning, Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement, Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education. In addition, the reference lists of articles found on from the search terms were examined for relevant studies.

Appendix B

B.1 Occupational Therapy Student and Community Partner Invitation Letter

Dear Students,

My name is Isabel Kennedy, a PhD Candidate in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy in Trinity College Dublin.

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled “An exploration into the outcomes and perceptions of a service-learning environment”.

The purpose of this study is to explore elements relating to service-learning outcomes and perceptions in terms of achieving course aims, personal and professional development, the service-learning relationship, attitudes and occupational competence.

The study will involve completing one questionnaire at the beginning of the module and then one questionnaire at the end of the module. You will also be invited to participate in a focus group which will take approximately forty-five minutes.

I will not release any information that can identify you. All information will be kept strictly confidential. As a way of securing anonymity, the information you provide will be assigned a code. A tape recorder will be used to record the focus group and the audio tapes will be transcribed verbatim.

If you have any questions or queries related to this study, you can contact me by phone at 0871249088 or by email on kennedim@tcd.ie

If you are interested in participating in this study, please take a week to consider your participation and you will then be provided with an informed consent form which you will be asked to sign. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Isabel Kennedy
What did you learn from your classes with the OT students?

My name is Isabel Kennedy. I am an OT doing research in Trinity College. I am doing research about what you learn from the classes you share with the OT students.

For my research I want to find out what you learned in your sign language class and health and fitness classes. I also want to know what you think about the sign language class and health and fitness class.

If you want to be in my study I will ask you to do 2 things:

Do one short survey when you start your sign language classes and do the same survey again when you finish your sign language classes. This takes 10 minutes to do.

Tell me about your experience learning sign language when you finish doing the classes. I will ask questions to a group of you. This is called a focus group. It will take 30 minutes to do.

Everything you tell me will be private. I will record our talk at the end of your sign language classes so I don’t forget anything you say. I will delete the recording of our talk after I have listened to it. I will keep all your information safe in a locked room. After 5 years I will destroy it.
It might be inconvenient to do this study because you will have to make time to do the survey but doing this study will give you a chance to talk about your opinions and experiences. It will also give you a chance to learn more about doing research. This research will also help make the sign language classes better for you and the OT students.

You don’t have to do this study. You can leave this study at any time.

If you have any questions you can contact me by phone or by email.

Thank you!

Contact Details: Isabel Kennedy

[redacted]

[redacted]
An exploration into the impact of 'person-focused' service learning according to the community partners.

Introduction

I am Isabel Kennedy and I’m a student doing a PhD in Occupational Therapy at Trinity College Dublin.

I am studying opinions of the impact of the shared classes you are taking with the occupational therapy students. These classes are called service learning classes. The information I learn from this study will help me learn more about service learning from different people including yourself, occupational therapy students and the staff who are helping with these classes.

Procedures

I would like you to help me by being a part of my study by:

- Answering some questions on an online survey at the beginning and one at the end of the module. In the survey I will ask what you think of the module, what you have learned from the module and questions about what a service learning partner means to you. The questions will take about 15 minutes of your time.

- If you would like, you can also help me by answering some questions in person at the end of the module. We will meet up and I will interview you about your experiences of these shared classes throughout the year. This will take about forty-five minutes with a short break half-way through.
Benefits
By doing this study, you will get to have your opinions and experiences about the shared classes heard.

Risks
The risks in this study are small but because you will need to take about 15 minutes to do the surveys this might be inconvenient for you. If you choose to do the interview, it will take 1 hour at the end of the service learning classes which may be inconvenient as well. In the interview there will be a half-way rest break so you do not become tired. You will not be asked any personal questions during the interview but if you do become upset for any reason, I can give you information about emotional supports in the college.

Exclusion from Participation
You cannot participate in this study if: you are under 18 years of age, if you have communication difficulties or if you cannot give written consent.

Voluntary Participation:
You do not have to do my study. You can still do the service learning classes and not do my study. Also, you can leave my study at any time and keep doing the service learning classes. There won’t be any bad effects if you leave the study.

Your information will be completely confidential. Your name will not be published and will not be given to anyone outside the study group. If this information is used in conferences or written in an academic journal, any personal details will be left out for your privacy.

Any information you give will be kept in a locked cabinet in the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences until it gets destroyed after 5 years. The only people with access to the information you give will be my supervisor and myself. In the report I won’t use your name or any other personal information so no one will know it was you.

Stopping the study:
If you decide to do this study, you can leave it at any time. If you decide not to do the study or if you leave the study, there will be no bad effects and you can still do the service learning classes.
You can leave out any information or refuse to answer or respond to any question you are asked without penalty.

You have the right to have your questions about the study answered. If you have any questions about this information sheet, feel free to ask the primary investigator.

You understand that the investigator may withdraw your participation in the study at any time without your consent.

**Permission:**

Permission to run this study has been granted by the Faculty of Health Science Research Ethics Committee in Trinity College Dublin.

**Further information:**

If you have any questions or would like to arrange a meeting to talk about the study you can call me

Isabel Kennedy - [redacted]

email me - [redacted]

You can also contact my supervisor:

Dr. Clodagh Nolan - [redacted]

Thank you
An exploration of a service-learning environment for occupational therapy students and their community partners: Outcomes and perceptions

Purpose
You are being asked to take part in a research study on service-learning in Trinity College Dublin. The purpose of this study is to explore the outcomes and perceptions of occupational therapy students in a service-learning environment in terms of learning, attitudes and skills. The findings from this study will inform further research into service-learning and its impact on students and community partners.

Methods
You will be asked to complete a short survey at the beginning of your module and then another survey at the end. You will also be asked to take part in a once-off focus group which will take approximately an hour at the end of the year. Finally, the researcher will ask to take up your reflective workbook at the end of the year after any information that can identify you has been removed.

Benefits
- By participating in this study you will be provided with an opportunity to reflect on your experiences through guided reflection which will assist in the development of your reflection skills—a key skill in professional development (Mann, Gordon & MacLeod, 2009) and to potentially learn more about your service-learning experiences after completing the module by asking you to think critically about it.
- You will be contributing to improving the service-learning module in Trinity College Dublin by helping the investigator explore your experiences and you will be helping to inform a larger study around service-learning.
Risks
The risks involved in this study are minimal however, you may experience some inconvenience due to the time it will take to commit to the hour-long focus group at the end of the module. To reduce to risk of fatigue during the focus group, you will be provided with a break and refreshments half-way through. Finally, while there will be no questions of a personal nature posed to you, should you become upset during the group you will be provided with information on emotional supports around the college and will be provided with details of a college counsellor should you wish to avail of the service.

Confidentiality
Your identity will remain confidential. Your name will not be published and will not be disclosed to anyone outside the study group. Should this data be used in conferences or written in an academic journal, any identifiable information will be omitted.
Any data gathered from this study will be kept confidential and will be stored in a locked cabinet within the occupational therapy department in the Trinity Centre of Health Sciences in St. James’ Hospital. As is recommended, this information will be stored for 5 years after the study when it will then be safely disposed of.

Participant Rights
The interview will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. If you wish to have access to the transcription you may contact the primary investigator and they will then be made available.
If you decide to volunteer to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate, or if you withdraw, you will not be penalised and will not give up any benefits that you had before entering the study.
You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you without penalty.
You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, feel free to ask the primary investigator.
You understand that the investigator may withdraw your participation in the study at any time without your consent.
Permission to run this study has been granted by the Faculty of Health Science Research Ethics Committee in Trinity College Dublin.

**Further Information**
You can find more information or answers to your questions about the study, your participation in the study, and your rights, from the primary investigator Isabel Kennedy or the research supervisor. If the study team learns of important new information that might affect your desire to remain in the study, you will be informed at once.

**Contact details**
Primary Investigator: Isabel Kennedy
Phone: [number redacted]
Email: kennedim@tcd.ie

Research Supervisor: Clodagh Nolan
Phone: [number redacted]
Email: nolancl@tcd.ie
What did you think about your classes with the OT students?

I know I am being asked to answer questions about what I think about my classes with the OT students as part of this study. It’s okay if I don’t want to do this study. It’s also okay if I want to stop doing this study at any time.

I don’t have to answer any questions I don’t want to. My answers will be stored safely with the researcher.

I know my details will be kept private and my name will not be given to anyone. My answers might be used in other studies without being contacted for permission

I want to do this study:

✓ Yes ____

✗ No ____

Name _______________________________

Signature ___________________________

Date ______________________________
PROJECT TITLE: An exploration into the experiences of a person-centered service-learning experience according to community partners

If you choose to take part in this research, you will be asked to fill out a short survey at the beginning of this course and another survey at the end. You can also volunteer to take part in an interview at the end of service learning which will take about an hour.

Any information you provide will be treated with the utmost care and will be entirely confidential. Any information that will make you identifiable will be coded and kept in a locked cabinet in a secure room within the occupational therapy department which will only accessible by the primary investigator and the research supervisor.

No one will be able to identify you or your answers and no one will know if you participated in this study or not.

The information you give may be used in future unrelated studies without further specific permission given by you.

DECLARATION:

I have read, or had read to me, the information leaflet for this project and I understand the contents. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I freely and voluntarily agree to be part of this research study, though without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time and I have received a copy of this agreement.

PARTICIPANT'S NAME: .................................................................
CONTACT DETAILS: ..............................................................
PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE: ...................................................
Date: .........................
An exploration of a service-learning environment for occupational therapy students and their community partners: Outcomes and perceptions.

**Principle investigator** - Isabel Kennedy Bsc. OT Sch.

**Background**
The purpose of this study is to explore the outcomes and perceptions of occupational therapy students in a service-learning environment in terms of learning, attitudes and skills. Should you choose to take part in this research you will be asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of the service learning module and another questionnaire at the end of the year when the module is completed. In addition, you will be requested to attend an hour-long focus group at the end of the year and you will be invited to submit your reflective workbook once any identifiable information has been removed. Any data you provide will be treated with the utmost care and will be entirely confidential. Any information that will make you identifiable will be coded and kept in a locked cabinet in a secure room within the occupational therapy department which will only accessible by the primary investigator and the research supervisor.

**Declaration**
I have read, or had read to me, the information leaflet for this project and I understand the contents. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I freely and voluntarily agree to be part of this research study, though without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time and I have received a copy of this agreement.

**PARTICIPANT’S NAME:**.................................................................
**CONTACT DETAILS:**...............................................................
**PARTICIPANT’S SIGNATURE:**..................................................
**Date:**..............................
Appendix C

C.1 Ethical Permission for Community Partners

Isabel Kennedy
Discipline of Occupational Therapy
Trinity Centre for Health Sciences
St James’s Hospital
St James’s Street
Dublin 8

Ref: 150501

Title Of Study: An exploration of the impact of person focused service learning according to the community partners.

Dear Isabel,

Further to a meeting of the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Committee held in June 2015, we are pleased to inform you that the above project has been approved without further audit.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ruth Pilkington
Chairperson
Faculty Research Ethics Committee
C.2 Ethical Permission for Occupational Therapy Students

Isabel Kennedy
Discipline of Occupational Therapy
Trinity Centre for Health Sciences
St James’s Hospital
St James’s Street
Dublin 8

20th July 2015

Ref: 20150505

Title of Study: An exploration into the impact of “person-focused” service learning on staff and occupational therapy students

Dear Ms Kennedy,

Further to a meeting of the School of Medicine Research Ethics Committee held in May 2015, we are pleased to inform you that the above project has been approved.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Professor Thomas Rogers
Chairperson
School of Medicine Research Ethics Committee

An tOllamh Paul Browne AM, FRCPI, FRCPATH
Céann Scoil an Leigiúis
Ms. Orla Bannon
Riarthóir na Scoile

Scoll an Leigiúis
An Institiúid Olaiochtai Bithleigis
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Ollscoil Átha Cliath
152-160 Sráid an Phibesnaigh
Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.

Professor Paul Browne AM, FRCPI, FRCPATH
Head of School of Medicine
Ms. Orla Bannon
School Administrator

School of Medicine
Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute
Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin
152-160 Pearse Street
Dublin 2, Ireland.

+353 1 896 1476
medicine@tcd.ie
www.medicine.tcd.ie
C.3 Ethical Approval for Amendments to Study

Isabel Kennedy  
Discipline of Occupational Therapy  
Trinity Centre for Health Sciences  
St James’s Hospital  
St James’s Street  
Dublin 8

08th March 2016

Ref: 20150505

Title of Study: An exploration into the impact of “person-focused” service learning on staff and occupational therapy students

Dear Ms Kennedy,

The School of Medicine Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your amendment request form; we are pleased to inform you that the above amended project has been approved.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Thomas Rogers  
Chairperson  
School of Medicine Research Ethics Committee
Appendix D
D.1 Service-Learning Partner Questionnaire

In the service-learning module you will be working with OT students. You will be service-learning partners.

Do you know what a service-learning partner is?

Yes___
No___

If yes, please explain what a service-learning partner means to you.
D.2 Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire (Phase One)

The following questions relate to the impact the service learning had on your personal and professional development. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I am looking for your opinions.

Please read the statement in each section of the questionnaire and rate your agreement with it.

Section 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A lot of the time</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can be on time and punctual</td>
<td>⬜️</td>
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<td>I can be reliable in a collaborative relationship</td>
<td>⬜️</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can follow through with commitments and responsibilities</td>
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<td>I use sound, rational judgement</td>
<td>⬜️</td>
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<tr>
<td>I acknowledge responsibility for myself</td>
<td>⬜️</td>
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<tr>
<td>I present myself in a manner that is accepted by my peers</td>
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<td>I display positive attitude towards becoming a professional</td>
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<td>I am aware of how my body posture displays interest and attention</td>
<td>⬜️</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am aware of how my speech patterns (tone, intonation, speed) effect communication</td>
<td>⬜️</td>
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<td>I have a positive attitude towards my learning</td>
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<td>I am aware of my personal professional development</td>
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<td>I can initiate a task and/or discussion</td>
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<td>I can take responsibility for my own learning</td>
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<td>I speak new ideas and learning perspectives through questioning, reading and discussion</td>
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<td>I can identify and use resources</td>
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<td>I am motivated to self-direct learning</td>
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<td>I can be sensitive and respond to the feelings of others</td>
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<td>I can consider the opinions and ideas of another person</td>
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<td>I acknowledge my own feelings and how they relate to those of others</td>
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<td>I express respect for the right of others to hold different values and beliefs</td>
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<td>I can respond with appropriate words, tone of voice, facial expressions, touch and gestures</td>
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<td>I encourage others to share their opinions and values</td>
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<td>I can work effectively with other individuals</td>
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<td>I show consideration for the needs of the group</td>
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336
| I can share knowledge ideas and questions | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I acknowledge the importance of the knowledge, expertise and skills of other people | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I contribute ideas and critiques to the task at hand | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I can demonstrate flexibility | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I can assist in the development of the knowledge and awareness of others | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I can compromise to reach a consensus without rejecting a person’s basic values | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

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<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
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<td>I can prioritise myself and my tasks</td>
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<td>I can use my organisational skills to contribute to the development of others</td>
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<td>I can contribute beyond requirements</td>
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<td>I can organise material for class and come prepared</td>
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<td>I can demonstrate problem solving skills</td>
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<td>I can demonstrate critical thinking skills</td>
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<td>I can reflect on my actions</td>
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<td>After reflection I can modify my behaviour</td>
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<td>I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses</td>
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<td>I can evaluate how my behaviours are influenced by my beliefs and attitudes</td>
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<td>I recognise that professional development, learning and reflection is an ongoing process</td>
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<td>I can state my opinions clearly</td>
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<td>I can ask questions</td>
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<td>I can ask for clarification</td>
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<td>I confront others as to where things stand between myself and them</td>
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<td>I ask others for the rationale of their opinion</td>
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<td>I can explain my own opinion and its rationale</td>
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<td>I paraphrase the statements of others</td>
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<td>I respond to what is being said</td>
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<td>I am aware of my non-verbal communication</td>
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<td>I make eye contact</td>
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<td>I display open body language</td>
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<td>I am aware of the dynamics of the immediate setting</td>
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<td>I respond to non-verbal cues</td>
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<td>I communicate ideas and opinions clearly and concisely in my writing e.g.</td>
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<td>reflective report</td>
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<td>I can communicate complex subject matter</td>
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<td>I can make comprehensive session plans</td>
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<td>I try out new behaviours</td>
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<td>I practice different ways of responding</td>
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<td>I am not afraid to engage in unfamiliar situations</td>
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<td>I seek opportunity to work on self identified limitations</td>
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<td>I express excitement about new learning</td>
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<td>I can give feedback</td>
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<td>I can receive constructive feedback</td>
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<td>I can alter my behaviour on the basis of feedback</td>
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<td>I can recognise that constructive feedback is aimed at the behaviour and</td>
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<td>not the person</td>
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<td>I ask others for their perception of my behaviour</td>
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<td>I withhold judgement during feedback</td>
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</table>

D.3 Personal Skills Questionnaire
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>A lot of the time</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can be punctual</td>
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<td>I can work with another person</td>
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<td>I can follow through with commitments and responsibilities</td>
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<td>I use sound, rational judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td>I acknowledge responsibility for myself</td>
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<td>I can initiate a discussion</td>
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<td>I can talk to people about things I like</td>
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<td>I can be sensitive and respond to the feelings of others</td>
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<td>I can consider opinions and ideas of another person</td>
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<td>I acknowledge my own feelings and how they relate to those of others</td>
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<td>I express respect for the right of others to hold different values and beliefs</td>
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<td>I can respond with appropriate words, tone of voice, facial expressions, touch and gestures</td>
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<td>I encourage others to share their opinions and values</td>
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<td>I show consideration for the needs of the other person and/or the group</td>
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<td>I can share knowledge, ideas and questions</td>
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<td>I acknowledge the importance of knowledge, expertise and skills of other people</td>
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<td>I can demonstrate flexibility</td>
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<td>I can compromise to reach a consensus without rejecting a person’s basic values</td>
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<td>I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses</td>
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<td>I can evaluate how my behaviours are influenced by my beliefs and attitudes</td>
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<td>I can state my opinions clearly</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can ask questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I express respect for the right of others to hold different values and beliefs</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can explain my own opinion and its rationale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of my non-verbal communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not afraid to engage in unfamiliar situations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek opportunities to work on self-identified limitations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy learning new things</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### D.4 Personal Skills Questionnaire Simplified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of the time</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I can be on time
- I can work together with another person
- I can manage my responsibilities
- I make good choices
- I am in charge of myself
- I feel I can do some things very well
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Never</td>
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<td>Rarely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of the time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I can talk to people about things I like
- I can learn what I need to learn on my own
- I know I have people to help me do things in my life
- I know what is important to me in my life
- I know what I want my life to be like in the future
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A lot of the time</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know what other people are feeling</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can listen to other people’s ideas</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my own feelings</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know other people have different values to me</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use the right words and body language to respond to people</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the right way to act in different situations</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I let other people share their opinions with me</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what I like and what I don’t like</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>A lot of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can share my ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share my opinion when I am doing group work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can help other people learn things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can work with a person even if I don't agree with them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can show other people when I am listening to them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know about my body language</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of the time</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I can share my opinions clearly
- I can ask a question
- I can explain my own opinion
- I make eye contact
- I am not afraid to do new things
- If I think I am not good at something, I look for ways to get better
- I like learning new things
D.5 Learning Goals Questionnaire

Please state your learning goals for the service learning module. What do you hope to learn in this module?

1.

2.

3.

How do you think you will achieve these learning goals?

1.

2.

3.

Why did you choose these learning goals?

1.

2.

3.
Learning Goals Follow Up

Think back to the start of the service learning module when you wrote down three learning goals. Did you achieve those goals during the year? Why did you, or did you not achieve those goals?

_____________________________________________

Did other learning opportunities arise during your service learning module? What else besides your learning goals did you learn?

________________________________________________________________________

How did you achieve this extra learning?

________________________________________________________________________
### D.6 Occupational Therapy Competencies Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the meaning of the term 'occupation'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand how my personal values affect my occupations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the person-occupation-environment relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can describe the occupations of another person based on their values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the meaning of the term 'occupational engagement'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the meaning of the term 'occupational deprivation'</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand the meaning of the term 'occupational justice'</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I recognise differences in beliefs about occupation, including cultural &amp; individual differences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can show other people that I am listening to them through effective listening skills</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware what I am communicating through my body language</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can give and receive feedback in an honest manner</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can change the language I use to suit the person I am with</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can communicate effectively in a formal manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can communicate effectively in an informal manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can present written information in a clear, well-structured manner</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can present oral information in a clear, well-structured manner</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
D.7 Occupational Self-Assessment

Step 1. The below statements are about activities you do in everyday life. Please read each statement and rate how well you do these activities by marking the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I have a lot of problems doing this</th>
<th>I have some difficulty doing this</th>
<th>I do this well</th>
<th>I do this extremely well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressing myself to others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting along with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and solving problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing and enjoying myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting done what I need to do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a satisfying routine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling my responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being involved as a student, worker, volunteer and/or family member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing activities I like</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working towards my goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making decisions based on what I think is important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishing what I set out to do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectively using my abilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2. For this step, please read each statement and rate how **important** these activities are to you by marking the appropriate box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>This is not so important to me</th>
<th>This is important to me</th>
<th>This is more important to me</th>
<th>This is most important to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressing myself to others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting along with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and solving problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing and enjoying myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting done what I need to do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a satisfying routine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling my responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being involved as a student, worker, volunteer and/or family member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing activities I like</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working towards my goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making decisions based on what I think is important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishing what I set out to do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectively using my abilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D.8 Occupational Participation and Spin-Off Questionnaire

Here is a list of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>When did you do this activity?</th>
<th>How important is this activity to you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I did it before</td>
<td>I do it now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Cooking</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Keeping</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting New Places</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Management</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Skills</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after Yourself</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying New Hobbies</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is a list of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>When did you do this activity?</th>
<th>How important is this activity to you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I did it before</td>
<td>I do it now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frisbee</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaelic Games</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Football</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D.11 Modified Issues in Disability Scale

Please indicate, using the scale below, your opinion on each of the 37 statements which follow. Although some of these items may appear factual, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. I am simply looking for your opinion (i.e., whether you personally agree or disagree with each statement). Therefore, even though you can respond "don't know/no opinion", you should use this response only when you have no idea at all what your answer is. For each statement, state your level of agreement or disagreement by circling the appropriate number from 1 to 7 where 1= Strongly Disagree and 7= Strongly Agree.

**Statement 1.** The majority of physically disabled adolescents should attend special schools which are specifically designed to meet their needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Don't Know/No Opinion</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statement 2.** Certain jobs should be set aside for blind persons so that they don't have to compete directly with sighted persons

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Statement 3.** Disabled children should not have to compete academically with non-disabled children

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Statement 4.** Most people who have physical disabilities expect no more love and reassurance than anyone else

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Statement 5.** If you are walking with a blind person, it is easier for him/her to take your arm than for you to take his/her arm

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

**Statement 6.** Physically disabled drivers should pay more for their automobile insurance than non-disabled drivers

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
Statement 7. It is more humane to allow a child with a severe disability to die at birth than for him/her to live as a severely disabled person

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 8. Efforts to place physically disabled people who have been institutionalised back in the community are really pressing them to do more than they are capable of doing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 9. If a person with epilepsy becomes angry with people over little things, it should be overlooked because of his/her disability

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 10. Disabled people are generally easier to get along with than non-disabled people

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 11. Parents of disabled teenagers should be as strict as any other parents

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 12. Sheltered workshops (non-competitive factory work exclusively for disabled people) cannot adequately solve the employment problems of people who happen to be disabled

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 13. People with physical disabilities should be expected to meet the same vocational standards as other people

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 14. Physically disabled people are usually easy going and seldom get angry

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Statement 15. One should avoid asking disabled people questions about their disabilities

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 16. Disabled people don’t have enough influence in politics

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 17. Income from taxes paid by an employed disabled person is greater than the amount of money spent to put that person back to work

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 18. Wheelchair users frequently have bowel or bladder 'accidents' (i.e., they can't get to the bathroom in time).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 19. Educational programs for physically disabled students are very expensive in relation to what the physically disabled child gains from them

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 20. You have to be especially careful what you say when you are with people who are physically disabled

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 21. Disabled people are generally no more anxious or tense than non-disabled people

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 22. Adequate housing for disabled people is neither too expensive nor too difficult to build

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 23. Teachers should not expect students who have epilepsy to participate fully in physical education activities

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 24.</th>
<th>Trained workers who use wheelchairs are no more likely to have accidents on the job than equally trained non-disabled workers</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 25.</th>
<th>Disabled people are no more likely than non-disabled people to be church goers</th>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 26.</th>
<th>Since a physical disability interferes with certain activities, the disability is foremost in a disabled person's mind practically all the time</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 27.</th>
<th>Blind people tend to get a more accurate first impression of others than most people do</th>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 28.</th>
<th>A man or a woman with a physical disability is much more likely than a non-disabled person to have a child who will also have a disability</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 29.</th>
<th>For a severely disabled person, the kindness of others is more important than any educational program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 30.</th>
<th>Disabled people are more accident prone than non-disabled people</th>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 31.</th>
<th>Most disabled people would rather socialise with other disabled people than with non-disabled people</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Statement 32. Employers’ attitudes are a greater handicap to a disabled person than a lack of ability

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 33. A physically disabled secondary school student will probably feel inadequate in a regular classroom

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 34. Physically disabled drivers have more automobile accidents than non-disabled drivers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 35. Disabled people should be expected to fit into our competitive society

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 36. It would be much easier for disabled people if they lived in residential units (e.g., apartment buildings) with other disabled people

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Statement 37. It is logical for a woman who uses a wheelchair to consider having a baby

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Appendix E

E.1 Focus Group Questions Students

**Question 1.** Tell me about your overall experience of service-learning

**Question 2.** Did service-learning have an effect on your professional development?

**Question 3.** Did service-learning have an effect on your personal development?

**Question 4.** Tell me about your experience working with your service-learning partner?

**Question 5.** How would you rate service-learning as a tool for learning about other people?

E.2 Focus Group Questions Community Partners

**Question 1.** Tell me about your overall experience of service learning?

**Question 2.** Has anything changed in your life since you began service learning?

**Question 3.** Did you learn anything from your service-learning experience?

**Question 4.** Do you think the service learning experience had an impact on your service learning partner?
Appendix F
F.1 Reflective Workbook Sample

Week 5

Significant Event 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What happened?</th>
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</table>

How did you feel?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What did you do...</th>
<th>At the time?</th>
<th>Afterwards?</th>
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</table>

What was the results/ What was your learning?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What was the results/ What was your learning?</th>
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</table>
## F.2 Personal and Professional Development Questionnaire (Phase Two)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>A lot of the time</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can be punctual</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can be reliable in a collaborative relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can follow through with commitments and responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use sound, rational judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td>I acknowledge responsibility for myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>I display a positive attitude towards becoming a professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am aware of how my speech patterns effect communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have a positive attitude towards my learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am aware of my personal and professional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can initiate a task and/or a discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can take responsibility for my own learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>I seek new ideas and learning perspectives through questioning, reading and discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can identify and use resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am motivated to self-direct my learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can be sensitive and respond to the feelings of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can consider opinions and ideas of another person</td>
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<tr>
<td>I acknowledge my own feelings and how they relate to those of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I express respect for the right of others to hold different values and beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can respond with appropriate words, tone of voice, facial expressions, touch and gestures</td>
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<tr>
<td>I encourage others to share their opinions and values</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can work effectively with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I show consideration for the needs of the other person and/or the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can share knowledge, ideas and questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>I acknowledge the importance of knowledge, expertise and skills of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I contribute ideas to the task at hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can demonstrate flexibility</td>
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<td>I can compromise to reach a consensus without rejecting a person’s basic values</td>
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<td>I can demonstrate problem solving skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can demonstrate critical thinking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can reflect on my actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>After reflection I can modify my behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can evaluate how my behaviours are influenced by my beliefs and attitudes</td>
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<tr>
<td>I recognize professional development, learning and reflection is ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can state my opinions clearly</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can ask questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>I confront others as to where things stand between myself and them</td>
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<tr>
<td>I express respect for the right of others to hold different values and beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can explain my own opinion and its rationale</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am aware of my non-verbal communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>I make eye contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>I display open body language</td>
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<td>I am aware of the dynamics of the immediate setting</td>
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<td>I respond to non-verbal cues</td>
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<tr>
<td>I communicate ideas and opinions clearly and concisely in my reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can communicate complex subject matter</td>
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<tr>
<td>I try out new behaviours</td>
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<tr>
<td>I practice different ways of responding</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am not afraid to engage in unfamiliar situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>I seek opportunities to work on self-identified limitations</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy learning new things</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can receive constructive feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can alter my behaviour based on feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>I recognise constructive feedback is aimed at the behaviour, not the person</td>
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<td>I ask others’ perception on my behaviour</td>
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<td>I withhold judgement during feedback</td>
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## Appendix G

### G.1 Occupational Therapy Student Focus Group Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>• Acceptance/Appreciation</td>
<td>• Mutual gain</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Connectedness</td>
<td>• Learning about partner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Roles, boundaries and managing expectations</td>
<td>• Learning about relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Group v. individual relationships</td>
<td>• Managing relationships</td>
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<td>• Power</td>
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<td>• Experience of relationship</td>
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<td>• Group v. individual relationships</td>
<td>• Impact of SL on relationships</td>
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<td>• Connectedness</td>
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<td>• Appreciation</td>
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<td>• Importance of relationship</td>
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<td>• Roles</td>
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<td>• Organic v. forced</td>
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<td>• Expectations</td>
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<td>• Advocacy</td>
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<td>• Person v. disability</td>
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<td>• Independence</td>
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<td>• Group v. individual</td>
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<td>• Sharing knowledge</td>
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<td>• Respect</td>
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<td><strong>Meaningful Activities</strong></td>
<td>• Facilitating meaningful activities</td>
<td>• New experiences</td>
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<td>• Service-learning vs. traditional course work</td>
<td>• Service-learning v. placement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Working with staff</td>
<td>• Discomfort</td>
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<td>• Overcoming discomfort</td>
<td>• Frustration</td>
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<td>• Guilt</td>
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<td>• Meaningful activities for student</td>
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<td>• Meaningful activities for partner</td>
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<td>• SL experience</td>
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<td>• SL environment</td>
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<td>• Service-learning structure</td>
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<td>• 1st year v. 2nd year</td>
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<td>• Working with staff</td>
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<td>• Support</td>
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<td>• Feedback</td>
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<td>• Practice</td>
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<td>• Development of input</td>
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<td>• Freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Subthemes</td>
<td>Codes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>• Change in attitudes</td>
<td>• Enjoyment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Learning skills</td>
<td>• Making an impact</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Occupational therapy theory and real-world learning</td>
<td>• Recognising worth</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Personal/professional development</td>
<td>• Real world learning</td>
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<td>• Learning complexity</td>
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<td>• Learning about disability</td>
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## G. 5 Community Partner Focus Groups Themes and Codes

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<td>- Feelings of inclusion</td>
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<td>- Acceptance/Appreciation</td>
<td>- Trust</td>
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<td>- Inclusion</td>
<td>- Familiarity</td>
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<td>- Mutual gain</td>
<td>- Importance of the relationship</td>
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<td>- Respect</td>
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<td>- Connectedness</td>
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<td>- Improved health</td>
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<td>- Personal development</td>
<td>- Enjoyment</td>
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<td>- Empowerment through relationships</td>
<td>- Independence</td>
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<td>- Enjoyment</td>
<td>- Impact</td>
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<td>- Learning</td>
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<td>- New Skills</td>
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<td>- Pride</td>
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<td>- Change in circumstances</td>
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Appendix H

H.1 COTEC Conference Poster Presentation

An Exploration of a Service-Learning Environment for Occupational Therapy Students and Their Community Partners: Outcomes and Perceptions

Ms. Isabel Kennedy BSc., Sc. sen., Dr. Ciadhag Nolan PhD., M Sc., M.A., Pg Dip. Stats., Dip. C.O.T.
Discipline of Occupational Therapy, Trinity College Dublin

Introduction

Service-learning is a pedagogy based on the philosophy of social justice, reciprocity and social inclusion (Fleisch & Gallo, 2011).

Service-learning aims to link academic learning with real-world experiences through engaging students in volunteer work and helping them develop critical thinking, understanding and understanding about diversity.

In addition, service-learning should be mutually beneficial, both the student and the community partner working together to engage in occupations of their choice.

This quantitative research project examined the outcomes of a service-learning module at one university for first and second-year occupational therapy students and their community partners for the purposes of this study (this refers to people with intellectual disabilities).

Objectives

- To explore the nature of the relationship between the occupational therapy student and their community partner.
- To explore the personal and professional development outcomes for both parties.
- To explore the potential for occupational engagement and participation as a result of the service-learning environment.

Methods

Focus groups were completed post-service-learning module.

Participants

1. First and second-year occupational therapy students.
2. Two cohorts of students with intellectual disability engaging with certificate courses within the university.

Data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

Results/Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Partners</th>
<th>Occupational Therapy Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership/Relationship</td>
<td>Partnership/Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Development</td>
<td>Self-Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion and Support</td>
<td>Attitude Change</td>
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<td>Developing New Skills</td>
<td>Developing New Skills</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Both cohorts experienced personal and professional growth by achieving their course goals, developing skills, engaging in new occupations, increasing their occupational competence in initiating occupations, changing attitudes and being in an environment that was supportive and inclusive.

A key theme that emerged was the nature of the service-learning partnership. The relationship was collaborative which led to mutual self-development. Both groups reported they helped each other to develop in addition to receiving help.

The themes of inclusiveness and support and 'rethinking change' were linked in the results. Many community partners noticed the change in their service-learning partnership and felt more comfortable over time, connecting with the students' change in attitude.

The results suggest this service-learning module offers opportunities for occupational enrichment through the development of skills, strategies, personal growth, feeling of competence and feeling of inclusiveness and support for occupational therapy students and their community partners (Mitcham & Whittet, 1999).

References

An exploration into an inclusive mutual learning environment for occupational therapy students and their community partners using a service learning approach

ISABEL KENNEDY BSC. O.T, SCH
DR. CLODAGH NOLAN PH.D., M.SC., M.A.,
PG. DIP. STATS, DIP. C.O.T.,

Service-Learning

Research Aims

To explore the nature of the relationships between the occupational therapy students and their community partners.

To explore the personal and professional development outcomes for both groups.

To explore the potential for occupational engagement and participation as a result of the inclusive learning environment using a service-learning approach.
Methods
Qualitative data was collected from focus groups post a service-learning module.

Participants
First and second year occupational therapy students
Two cohorts of community partners

Analysis
Data was analysed using Braun and Clark’s (2006) thematic analysis.

Results – OT Students

Results – Community Partners
Conclusion

The relationships were key to many outcomes and overall experience.

Students developed improved attitudes towards disability and the community partners experienced social inclusion as a result.

Students and community partners reported changes in personal and professional development.

Several unexpected outcomes (spin-off) emerged.

References


An exploration into an inclusive learning environment for occupational therapy students and their community partners using a service-learning approach

Isabel Kennedy B.Sc. Cur. Occ. Sch. (Ph.D. Candidate)

Occupational Therapy (OT)

“Occupations refer to the everyday activities that people do as individuals, in families and with communities to occupy time and bring meaning and purpose to life. Occupations include things people need to, want to and are expected to do.” (WFOT, 2012)

“...to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life... by working with people and communities to enhance their ability to engage in the occupations they want to, need to, or are expected to do, or by modifying the occupation or the environment to better support their occupational engagement.” (WFOT 2012)

Service learning in the Discipline of Occupational Therapy

**Aim:** Build collaborative relationships with community partners for students to learn about another person’s values/occupations

**Method:** Engaging in meaningful occupation together

**Learning:** Reflection, Debriefing, Assignment
Service Learning for the Community Partners

The aim for the community partners:

To engage in meaningful occupation

Research Aims

- To explore the nature of the relationships between the occupational therapy students and their community partners.
- To explore the outcomes of the service-learning programme for occupational therapy students and their community partners

Methods

Qualitative data was collected from focus groups following a service-learning module over 2 years.

Participants
First and second year occupational therapy students (n=46)
Five groups of community partners (n=19)

Analysis
Qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis.
Results – Occupational Therapy Students

- Personal Development
- Service-Learning Experience
- Service-Learning Relationship

Results – Community Partners

- Personal Development
- Service-Learning Experience
- Service-Learning Relationship

Service-Learning Relationship

Occupational Therapy Students
- Respect
- Collaboration
- Mutual gain
- Impact

Community Partners
- Respect
- Collaboration
- Mutual gain
- Empowerment
Personal Development

Occupational Therapy Students
- Overcoming discomfort
- Wisdom
- Confidence

Community Partners
- Overcoming discomfort
- Explore new things
- Skills
- Freedom

Service-Learning Experience

Occupational Therapy Students
- Enjoyment
- Expectations
- New experiences
- Freedom to learn

Community Partners
- Enjoyment
- Appreciation
- Exploring new roles
- Social inclusion

Professional Development

Occupational Therapy Students
- Complexity
- People v. disability
- Skills
- OT theory
- Change in attitudes
Discussion

Results suggest this service-learning programme provides a variety of personal and professional outcomes for occupational therapy students and their community partners (Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Stewart & Wubbena, 2015).

This service-learning programme appears to encourage social inclusion for people with disabilities in Trinity College Dublin and in the community.

An emphasis on collaborative relationships in the service-learning experience appears to have contributed to the outcomes achieved for both occupational therapy students and their community partners.

References