A Scoping Review Exploring the Use of Art-Making-as-Therapy in Adult Mental Health Occupational Therapy Practice

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Abstract

Background: Art-making-as-therapy has been used by occupational therapists in mental health since the inception of the profession. It aims to enable people to gain mastery and produce art. This review synthesizes the research on the use of art-making as therapy by occupational therapists in adult mental health practice.

Method: Arksey and O'Malley's 5-stage framework was used. A search of four databases was conducted with the inclusion criteria of papers from 1980 – 2020 using the keywords of occupational therapy, mental health or illness, and art. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results: Of the 847 articles initially identified, 21 were included in the review. Three themes were identified: (a) the benefits of occupational participation in arts-making-as-therapy for consumers, (b) the environmental context of the art-making-as-therapy experience, and (c) using artmaking-as-therapy to inform professional reasoning, including assessing and enhancing therapeutic relationships. The paucity of literature (n = 21) means that results should be interpreted with caution.

Conclusion: There is evidence for the benefits of art-making-as-therapy for consumers and occupational therapists in mental health settings. Further research is necessary into the efficacy of using art-making-as-therapy in practice from the perspective of people who live with mental illness.

Cover Page Footnote

Credentials Display
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Health and social care organizations have seen increased recognition of the contribution played by participation in art-making to health and well-being programs over the past few decades. This recognition has resulted in increased policy support. In the UK, the "Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing" report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts (2017) promotes the use of the arts in the National Health Service and social care organizations. In the Australian context, Australia's health and cultural ministers endorsed the *National Arts and Health Framework* (The Meeting of Cultural Ministers & the Standing Council on Health, 2014) and called for greater integration of arts and health strategies into practice in health promotion, treatment, and services in all health organizations, departments, and agencies (Davies et al., 2016). This policy direction provides occupational therapists with new opportunities to use art-making as an occupation-based intervention.

An important step for therapists who use art-making in their practice is evaluating the existing evidence-based practice (EBP). Sackett et al. (1996) stated that evidence-based practice is "the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients." This paper seeks to review the empirical research from 1980 – 2020 to inform the evidence base on art-making. The paper builds on the previous review about the traditional use of art-making by therapists by Lloyd and Papas (1999). Arts therapies, including art, dance, music, and drama, were incorporated to explore peoples' unconscious in early 20th psychiatric practice, while current research focuses on the use of art therapy for analysis in psychotherapy (Heenan, 2006). The use of arts and crafts in occupational therapy practice declined in the 1970s as therapists increased their knowledge in other areas of intervention (Bathje, 2012). The use of arts and crafts is still a contentious issue among those in the profession, and its use has changed from psychodynamic approaches to gaining information, building relationships, and increasing self-awareness (Bathje, 2012; Lloyd & Papas, 1999). Part of the divisiveness of using arts and crafts may result from the confusion or lack of clarity in terminology (Broderick, 2011; Fancourt & Joss, 2015). For example, the phrase "art as therapy" can easily be mistaken for "art therapy." Combining a lack of clear terminology with ambivalence toward using low technological methods as interventions may explain therapists' reluctance to use art-making as an intervention (Bathje, 2012; Harris, 2008; Mullersdorf & Ivarsson, 2016). In this paper, art-making refers to the explicit use of art-making to enable a person to express themselves and build self-esteem and confidence using a range of art-making techniques and to gain a sense of mastery in a range of art mediums, such as painting, sculpture, pottery, and installations. Its use is intended to differentiate art-making from art therapy.

In occupational therapy, art-making is one of many creative therapies. Nicholls et al. (2013) define creative therapies in occupational therapy as any activity guided by a person's self-expression focused on the implicit goals of creativity and which provides a variety of creative occupations rather than focusing on the quality of the end product. The therapeutic benefits of engagement in creative therapy include the opportunities to be creative and inventive, to use imagination, and to gain a sense of mastery and achievement (Lloyd & Papas, 1999).

Hean Lim et al. (2007) argue that in occupational therapy mental health practice, participation in creative therapies, such as art-making, assists people with mental health issues to express their circumstances and needs and provides a medium to connect physical and mental realities. When connecting the physical and mental realities, it's necessary to consider the space in which the intervention, project, or program is being facilitated. In 2010, Tucker discussed that the engagement of people with mental health issues and mainstream spaces could cause anxiety but that this could be challenged by territorializing spaces by effectively marking out personal spaces where people can spend a lot of time, thereby creating a safe space (Tucker, 2010). This concept was echoed by Bone (2018), who found that a specific studio assigned to participants helped create a sense of safety, with

participants reporting the environment itself added to their sense of safety (Bone, 2018).

Heenan (2006) argued that art allows a person to choose and participate in a meaningful occupation that develops their skills and increases motivation, self-esteem, and independence. In addition, occupational therapists explicitly use art-making interventions as a means of assessment, as a tool to develop therapeutic relationships, and to enable consumers to gain mastery in art and produce art (Gunnarsson & Eklund, 2009a; Thompson & Blair, 1998). Art-making also provides opportunities to engage in the process of flow, which is achieved during any goal-directed activity in which a person experiences mindfulness through engaging in a process for the sake of enjoyment (Csikeszentmihalyi, 1991). In occupational therapy, the promotion of flow is achieved through occupational interventions designed to enhance the overall health and well-being of a client (Eklund & Leufstadius, 2007).

Müllersdorf and Ivarsson (2012) discussed the use of creative therapies. They surveyed 1,867 Swedish occupational therapists and found that 44% used creative activities as a means of intervention, with the most commonly used form of creative activities being arts and crafts, followed by gardening. They noted that despite the use of creative therapies by occupational therapists, there is a paucity of research to support the efficacy of creative therapies in practice. The rate of use of art-making reported in Sweden is similar to previous surveys of British occupational therapists, with Craik et al. (1998) finding that 59% used creative therapies at least once a week and Griffith and Corr (2007) indicating that 82% of 66 respondents used creative activities, with the majority doing so at least once a week.

Policy initiatives increasingly provide opportunities to expand the role of occupational therapists in the use of art-making and for collaborations and intersectionality with colleagues in the arts health space. The Australian *National Arts and Health Framework* writes that arts health and arts health programs, projects, and initiatives "provide access to the arts in both community and health care environments, including through exhibitions, performances, integrated artsworks and opportunities for creative participation, engendering social and personal benefits (The Meeting of Cultural Ministers & the Standing Council on Health, 2014). This is echoed by the NSW Health and the Arts Framework, which states, "Experiencing, making and performing art is just as important, helping to bring people together in a way that fosters social inclusion, community participation, and intergenerational and cultural exchange" (Health, 2016).

In turn, this requires occupational therapists to investigate the efficacy of occupation-based practices, such as art-making. The development of a better understanding of the evidence base for creative therapies may be key to their continued use in practice and clarify the concept of creativity in occupational therapy practice (Hansen et al., 2021). Indeed, Gustafsson et al. (2014) argued that the shift toward the dominance of the EBP discourse potentially causes occupational therapists to dismiss occupation-based practices with a paucity of empirical data to support their use. In addition, a lack of EBP is problematic when occupational therapists are required to justify their interventions and apply for funding. In mental health practice, a perceived lack of accessible, empirical data for occupation-based practice in mental health practice can lessen the job satisfaction of occupational therapists in workplaces. It can lead to the adoption of psychological therapies, particularly when an occupation perspective is not validated by team members (Ashby et al., 2015). The same applies to student-therapist. An exploratory study by Booth et al. (2017) illustrated that while exposure to and observation of art-making increased their confidence to use creative therapies, they also value EBP about its efficacy despite observed consumer well-being when engaged in art-making.

The growing importance of developing an evidence base for occupation-based practice in mental health means that a review of the evidence for the use of art-making by occupational therapists is timely. Thus, this scoping review aimed to identify the empirical research on the use of art-making by occupational therapists in mental health practice.

Method

This paper used the scoping review methodology developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and the PRISMA-ScR checklist developed by Andrea C. Tricco et al. (2018). The checklist provides readers a way to understand the relevant terminology, core concepts, and key items to report for scoping reviews (A. C. Tricco et al., 2018). A scoping review methodology was used because although art-making is a traditional practice in occupational therapy, the research into its efficacy is unmapped. This approach allowed for the review of numerous study designs addressing this topic to guide future research. The review included five stages: (a) identifying the research question; (b) identifying relevant studies; (c) study selection; (d) charting the data; and (e) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results.

Stage 1: Identification of the Research Question

The research question guiding this study was: What is the evidence base for the use of art-making in occupational therapy mental health practice with adult consumers?

Stage 2: Identifying Relevant Studies

This stage involved searching four databases: EBSCO host, OVID, SCOPUS, and ProQuest and Google Scholar. The search included reference lists, government websites, and conference proceedings. The search terms were created in consultation between the authors and a senior research librarian. These terms were mental health, occupational therapy, art and creativity: "occupational therap*", "mental health", "mental illness*", "art as therapy", (art* or creativ*), intervention* or treatment* or program* or project*, "art in recovery", "arts health", artist*.

The search was limited to the scientific occupational therapy literature that was peer-reviewed and dated from 1980 to February 2021 to capture relevant studies and articles that were not included in the literature review by Lloyd and Papas (1999). The choice to exclude non-English language articles was taken pragmatically, with the authors acknowledging that this potentially reduces the scope of the review.

Stage 3: Study Selection

During Stage 3, the literature was selected in two phases. First, using Endnote, the first author screened the title and abstracts of the search results to determine which papers met the inclusion criteria for further review. The inclusion criteria were (a) adult mental health setting, (b) using art-making or art-based creative interventions, and (c) occupational therapy practice. The exclusion criteria were opinion pieces, non-adult mental health practice, and the use of art therapy, or a primarily psychodynamic approach. Second, the full papers were reviewed using the same inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Stage 4: Charting The Data

The data from the articles included in the quality appraisal stage were recorded using headings identified by Arksey and O'Malley (2005): These were author(s), year of publication, study location, intervention type; study population, aims of the study, methodology, and outcome measures. In addition, the authors analyzed the results using the thematic analysis approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Outcomes for consumers were coded by AJ and discussed by all authors. These were then categorized as three overarching themes. Limitations and implications for future research were also recorded.

Stage 5: Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting the Results

This stage involved the collating, summarizing, and reporting of the results, which are described below in the results section.

Results

The initial search strategy yielded 847 articles (see Figure 1). After review of the title or abstract, five duplicates were removed, and 826 articles were excluded. Of the remaining 36 articles,

15 were removed because they did not meet the inclusion criteria: they were not in the adult mental health setting, did not use art-making, and/or art was not used by occupational therapists. This resulted in 21 research studies that met all the inclusion criteria.

Figure 1
Search Strategy
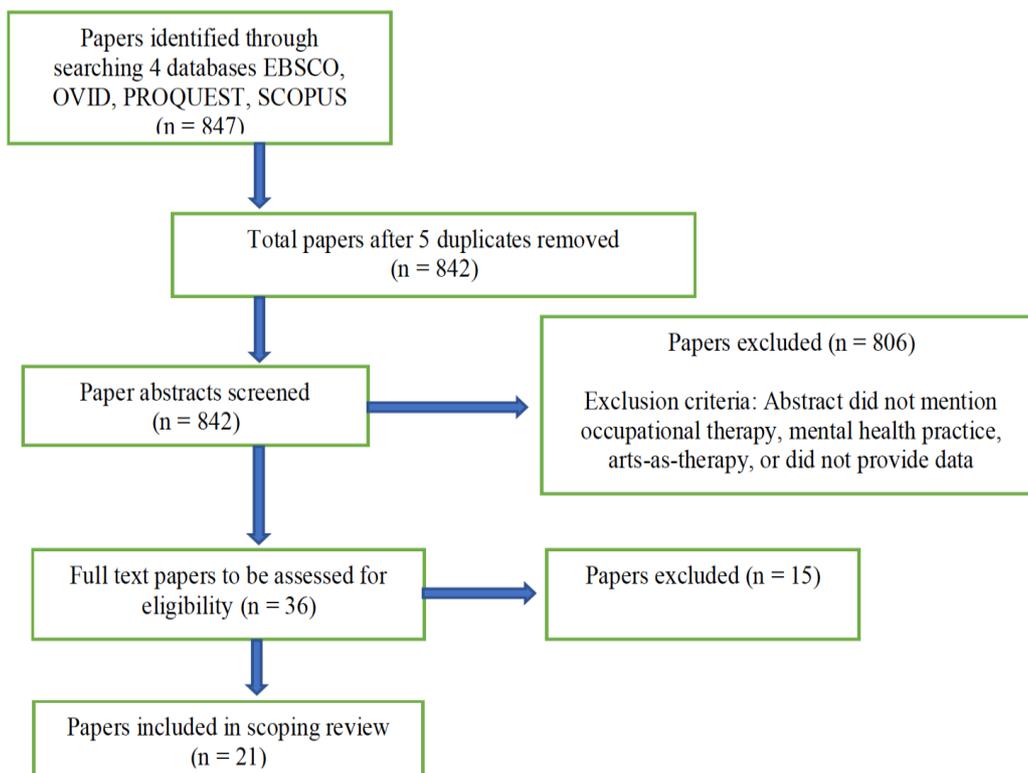
The scoping review identified 21 articles: 14 research articles, two case studies, three literature reviews, and two project descriptions. The aims, methodologies, and findings and limitations of the papers are summarized in the Appendix. The analysis of the articles identified three themes that emerged from the data from the 21 papers included in the scoping review. These and the subthemes are described in Table 2.

Table 2
Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Description	Subthemes
1: The benefits of occupational participation in art-making for adult mental health consumers	The ways mastery in art leads to flow experiences, improved mood, learning/mastery new techniques contributed to an enhanced sense of achievement and increased confidence by improving skill development.	Creation and self-expression
		Self-discovery
		Achievement
		Self-esteem
		Improved physical and mental health
2: The environmental context of the art-making experience	The ways in which the environmental context shaped the experiences of participants.	The need for 'safe' spaces
		The importance of trusted social settings
3: Using art-making to inform professional reasoning	The rationales which guided therapists' use of arts-as-therapy in practice.	Assessments of performance components: affect, communication skills, interpersonal skills, motor skills, processing skills
		Perceived benefits for participants to improve performance components: affect, communication skills, interpersonal skills, motor skills, processing skills
		Rationales for using art-as-therapy for the enhancement of therapeutic relationships

Theme 1: The Benefits of Occupational Participation in Art-Making in Adult Mental Health Consumers

Achievement and Mastery

An important occupation-participation aspect of participation in art-making was that art-making and producing a final piece of work led to a sense of achievement and mastery. In all 14 research articles, researchers reported that art-making enabled consumers to gain a sense of achievement from the participation in the art activities they had chosen (Dam, 2008; Griffiths, 2009; Griffiths & Corr, 2007; Gunnarsson & Bjorklund, 2013; Lawson et al., 2014; Lloyd & Chandler, 1999). It was important for consumers to have the opportunity for choice in a range of art activities, with instruction on how to participate (Griffiths, 2009; Lloyd, 1999). The experience of exhibiting work and sharing their narratives and talent was beneficial to consumers as it provided recognition of their skill, which was enhanced when their work was purchased (Lloyd and Chandler, 1999).

Opportunities for Creation and Self-Expression

The creation of artworks benefited consumers because it provided opportunities for self-expression (Bryce & Lorraine, 2009; Dam, 2008; Griffiths & Corr, 2007; Lloyd & Chandler, 1999; Lloyd & Papas, 1999; Lloyd et al., 2007; Pooremamali, 2011; Schmid, 2004).

Self-Discovery

Participation in art-making programs improved consumers' self-identity through the sharing of work and enabled an increased understanding of self and others through that process (Bryce & Lorraine, 2009; Dam, 2008; Griffiths, 2009; Lloyd et al., 2007). Art-making provided the opportunity to find meaning and purpose in the activity, through the personal meaning contained in the work an individual produced (Bryce & Lorraine, 2009; Griffiths, 2009; Hansen et al., 2021; Lawson, 2014; Lloyd & Papas, 1999; Lloyd et al., 2007; Pooremamali, 2011).

Self-Esteem

Participation in an art-making group provided consumers with the opportunity to develop a sense of belonging. This was linked to increased confidence and self-esteem through their participation and engagement in the group and through their choice of art-making activities (Griffiths, 2009; Griffiths & Corr, 2007; Lawson, 2014; Lloyd & Chandler, 1999; Lloyd et al., 2007). The increased feelings of self-esteem also benefited participant's ability to engage in other occupations and provide hope for the future (Dam, 2008).

Improved Physical and Mental Health

Dam et al. (2008) found participating in art-making helped reduce stress and symptoms, which in turn allowed for medication reduction and fewer hospital admissions (Dam, 2008; Griffiths, 2009; Hansen et al., 2021).

Theme 2: The Environmental Context of The Art-Making Experience

Five articles described how the environmental context of the art-making program played an important role in participation (Griffiths, 2009; Lawson, 2014; Lloyd & Chandler, 1999; Lloyd et al., 2007; Schmid, 2004).

The Need for "Safe" Spaces

The consumer participants in two studies reported the importance that the art space environments were experienced as safe and non-threatening (Griffiths, 2009; Lloyd et al., 2007) and noted that this appeared to enhance participant experiences. Doing crafts in such a group environment was also found to provide stability and routine for participants, making them feel safe (Horghagen et al., 2014). In addition, it is seen as a combination of physical and emotional properties, including acceptance or being yourself, achievable expectations, and a consistently predictable set-up (Griffiths, 2009, Horghagen et al., 2014).

The Importance of Trusted Social Settings

Lloyd and Chandler (1999) noted that the trusted social setting provided by Girrebala House allowed consumers to have a sense of ownership. In this study, participants also valued the ability to shape the environment and make it a place they wanted to go where they felt supported to produce art (Lloyd and Chandler, 1999). This was echoed in Dam's (2008), findings where participants valued belonging to a community of shared experience (Dam, 2008). Lawson et al. (2014) found that the project being performed in a "mainstream" setting away from mental health services was important as participants felt they were being treated respectfully like a member of the public. This supportive environment allowed for the development of friendships and confidence to explore opportunities outside of this setting (Lawson, 2014). Schmid (2004) found that the environment needs to have trust, safety, and support to allow creativity to take place. This needs to occur in the immediate and wider context (Schmid, 2004).

Theme 3: The Contribution of Art-Making to Professional Reasoning

Therapists valued the use of creative activities and interventions because they enabled the assessment of the following performance components: a person's mental state, "psychological function," cognitive skills, social skills, and physical function in 1:1 and group interventions. Schimd's (2004) study found that creativity is used as part of everyday practice and that the use of creativity is a conscious approach (Schmid, 2004) which may be affected by the therapists' personal experiences of creativity (Harris, 2008; Hickey, 2016). Other therapists believe that art-making has a therapeutic value similar to other interventions (Gunnarsson et al., 2018) and their associated clinical reasoning (Harris, 2008) and can strengthen clients' occupational performance (Mullersdorf & Ivarsson, 2016). In addition, therapists considered art-making versatile as skill levels could be adapted or graded, the diversity of art marking was used, and they were often low-budget options (Griffiths and Corr, 2007; Hansen et al., 2021; Lloyd and Papas, 1999). Therapists identified that working alongside a person during art-making provided opportunities to develop therapeutic relationships (Bryce, 2009; Griffiths, 2009; Griffiths and Corr, 2007; Lloyd and Papas, 1999; Pooremamali et al., 2011; Schmid, 2004).

Perceived Improvement in Performance Components

Affect

There were descriptions of the impact of art on participants' affect. These included improved mood, reduced symptoms (Gunnarsson & Bjorklund, 2013), increased well-being and self-esteem (Mullersdorf & Ivarsson, 2016), and feelings of relaxation and flow during activities (Griffiths, 2009), which were also found to be normalizing, fun, and non-threatening (Griffiths, 2009; Griffiths & Corr, 2007; Hickey, 2016).

Motor and Processing Skills

Participation and engagement with creative activities benefited the practical skills development of the activity (Griffiths, 2009). Therapists also considered that engagement in creative activities had improved their consumers' everyday skills in the areas of concentration, fine motor skills, practical skills learned, or task performance skills (Griffiths & Corr, 2007; Hansen et al., 2021; Horghagen et al., 2014).

Communication and Interaction Skills

Group work and the use of creative interventions allowed opportunities for participants to develop communication skills through an opportunity to socialize (Bryce and Lorraine, 2009; Griffiths, 2009; Lloyd and Papas, 1999). Art was also considered to be a powerful tool in a person's recovery journey, and this was assisted by the act of peer support from other group members (Bryce & Lorraine, 2009; Horghagen et al., 2014), which led to feelings of support and often friendships (Horghagen et al., 2014; Lloyd, 1999; Lloyd, 2007). Art was perceived as enabling people to share difficult or painful

narratives using words and images without the challenge of personal interactions (Bryce & Lorraine, 2009; Gunnarsson et al., 2006). Pooremamali (2011) found that. art-making as an individual intervention enabled the participant to describe their experiences and make sense of them. This is similar to reported outcomes from the Tree Theme Method (TTM) (Gunnarsson & Eklund, 2009b; Gunnarsson et al., 2006).

Enhancement of Therapeutic Relationships

Creative activities were used to improve communication. Artworks demonstrated meaning, which increased therapists understanding of consumers, which in turn facilitated more effective support during times of distress (Bryce & Lorraine, 2009; Hickey, 2016; Pooremamali et al., 2011).

Discussion

Lloyd and Papas (1999) identified the use of art in mental health settings declined since the 1980s with no apparent reason for the decline, and this is supported by the findings in this scoping review. Alternatively, the findings may suggest that art-making is an accepted part of practice in adult mental health setting and therapists' research efforts are focused elsewhere.

Yet the intersection between arts health and occupational therapy practice combined with supportive legislation both at the state and national levels may introduce the need for further research to establish the benefits the scoping review has found (Davies et al., 2016). Working in the frameworks in partnership with consumers and artists may provide new impetus to support the arts health movement and the professions' involvement (Health, 2016). This scoping review provides an overview of the evidence, which supports the efficacy of art-making and the role art-making can play in recovery and promoting occupational participation in mental health practice. This is demonstrated by the three themes identified in the review: (a) the benefits of occupational participation in art-making in adult mental health consumers, (b) the environmental context of the art-making experience, and (c) the contribution of art-making to professional reasoning.

Benefit to Consumers

The review identifies that art-making can increase the occupational participation of consumers. It provides opportunities to develop therapeutic relationships, develop self-awareness, and improve communication and interaction skills. In addition, art-making increases skills development and mastery of art-making and facilitates the potential journey of self-discovery. It can lead to people gaining a new understanding about themselves, their relationships, and their illness, which can facilitate recovery from mental illness (Lawson, 2014).

The scoping review highlights that while the making of artwork is beneficial, other extrinsic factors appear to shape how people experience. art-based interventions. In particular, the benefits of occupational participation in art-making for consumers of adult mental health services, appear to be enhanced by peer-worker support and are associated with environmental contexts.

Environmental Contexts

Adult mental health consumers and occupational therapists identified the importance of creating safe and trusted environmental contexts for art programs, as the spaces where the art-making occurs appear to shape the consumer experience. This is similar to arts health research that emphasizes the need for participants to feel that the social and physical environment provides safety to express themselves and socialize (Van Lith, 2015).

The Contribution to Professional Reasoning

The review highlights that, similar to other occupation-based interventions, the observation of a person's participation in art-making can contribute to professional reasoning. Its role in assessment indicates that in settings where time with consumers is limited, the observation and communication that occurs during participation in art-making can provide valuable information. In particular, the

review found art-making is useful as a form of informal, observational assessment of motor and processing skills, such as concentration and attention, along with communication and other interpersonal communication skills (Griffiths, 2009; Griffiths and Corr, 2007; Lloyd and Chandler, 1999).

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

Although the findings from this scoping review can be used by occupational therapists to support the use of arts-as-therapy in occupational therapy practice, they should be regarded cautiously. The review was of 21 articles, of which most were small-scale, service-focused, study-specific research that resulted in small sample sizes. The aim was to review the evidence for practice, but it is acknowledged that, consequently, the review is partial because only scientific papers were searched, and no attempt was made to find textbooks, proceedings, or unpublished work. In addition, the authors acknowledge that the research was limited to journals written in the English language only, which may have limited the inclusion of other research.

Thus, this scoping review provides an impetus for occupational therapists using art-making to conduct research into their practice and to publish their findings. This is a key step, as the current lack of published research may be problematic and cause a decline in the use of creative therapies. As noted by Gustafsson et al. (2014), "a lack of empirical research data can cause practitioners to doubt the efficacy of their occupation-based practices and allows external forces to shape practice". (p. 121). Indeed, Ashby et al. (2017) identified that a lack of evidence for occupation-based practices can lead occupational therapists in mental health practice to adopt psychological therapies because they are perceived as having a larger evidence base.

A lack of ongoing, larger-scale mixed methodology research in this area may be a result of comparison across diverse and varied settings as a result of different environmental settings, different approaches used, and different types of staff in each area (Clift 2016; Kirsh et al., 2019; Van Lith, 2015). This heterogeneity of programs makes comparisons between services and improved outcomes for individuals difficult to attribute solely to the benefits of arts interventions (Kelaher et al., 2014; Kirsh et al., 2019; Van Lith et al., 2009). However, qualitative research methods, such as ethnography, photo-journalism, and other uses of imagery, can potentially enable exploration of the efficacy of art-making.

Although not discussed in the reviewed literature, there is also an opportunity to investigate the potential for art-making to be evaluated using standardized assessment tools that measure occupational participation and consumer perspectives of performance and satisfaction. These include the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (Law et al., 2005) and the Model of Human Occupation assessment tools, such as the Model of Human Occupational Screening Tool (Parkinson et al., 2008). In addition, the Kawa model involves art-based life narratives (Iwama, 2006). These occupation-based outcome measures can provide methods of gathering data to support the efficacy of art and creative interventions in clinical practice and to explore if their use enables specific aims to be achieved.

Conclusion

This review identifies the potential benefits that arts-as-therapy contribute to occupational therapists and adult consumers in occupational therapy mental health practice. It establishes a need to expand the evidence regarding the efficacy of art in mental health practice and how it contributes to the professional reasoning of occupational therapists. In particular, there is a paucity of research from the perspective of consumers about how this form of occupational participation shapes their recovery. The growth of the arts health sector, new policy directions, and funding provide the profession with opportunities to expand practice and create new intersectional directions. Thus, as the potential for

intersectional research in arts health projects and occupational therapy moves ahead, it is important for research to be conducted in this area of mental health practice.

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Appendix

Table 1
Summary of Papers

Section 1: Research Papers (n = 14)

Author (year)	Aims of article / location of study	Methodology	Results	Limitations and implications for future research
Schmid (2004)	To explore the phenomenon of creativity though the subjective perceptions of three occupational therapists. Location: Australia	Qualitative methodology using phenomenology with a descriptive, critical approach. Purposeful sampling was utilized to identify therapists to participate in conversations that involved questions, answers and views about creativity. A field journal was used to support and aid rigor. N = 3	Five themes were found: 1. Creativity is part of everyday practice. 2. The use of creativity as a conscious approach. 3. Creativity involves risk taking. 4. Creativity needs a supportive environment. 5. Creativity is the use of expressive arts in therapy.	The small sample size and age range may have impacted the meaning of creativity when compared to a larger number of participants across a wider age range. The study recommends further research to achieve a more substantial perspective and language for creativity in occupational therapy practice, and also to provide outcomes for practice.
Lloyd et al. (2007)	To explore how involvement in arts program contributed to the recovery process. Location: Australia	Qualitative methodology: focusing on personal experiences. Data collection: semi-structured interviews including the use of visual material. N = 8 Clients	Five major themes and 15 subthemes were identified **1. Art as a medium** = Expression, Catharsis, Imagination, Survival strategy. **2. Self-discovery** = Journey Specific turning points, Internal conditions. **3. Spirituality** = Meaning and purpose, Acceptance and hope, Purposeful activity **4. Empowerment** = Sense of control, Power to influence. **5. Self-validation** = Sense of identity, Normality, Self-confidence Self-satisfaction Pursuing goals. The individual experiences of recovery were similar to those of other previous accounts of recovery. The participants were encouraged by personal self-discovery and self-generated strategies as a result of internal changes. Supportive relationships and the physical environment were found to be significant in providing a creative environment in which they felt safe, were able to take risks and to be vulnerable in their journey of discovery	The results cannot be generalized outside of this study but may have use in comparing similar projects. A major limitation of the study involved the sampling strategy. The researchers stated that the first 8 to agree to participate were the ones who were particularly appreciative of the benefits which may have influenced the results. The study recommended further research should be conducted in to strengthen the knowledge base of the use of community arts programs in promoting recovery and community participation.
Griffiths and Corr (2007)	To identify scope of practice and how creative arts were used by British occupational therapists. Location: UK	Part 1 of a Mixed Methodology study 1. A cross-sectional survey in the first phase, which collected quantifiable and exploratory data to identify the scope of current practice.	82% of the 66 respondents used creative activities. Of this 82%, 94% reported they used them at least once a week. The findings indicated that occupational therapists used creative activities for one-to-one interventions and group programs. They used a diverse range of creative therapies to achieve a variety of objectives.	The survey achieved its aim, but some systematic bias may have arisen through the sampling method which recruited a high proportion of occupational therapists using creative activities.

		It excluded art therapy or those based on a psychodynamic approach). Part 2 is reported in Griffiths (2008) UK Occupational Therapists working in Mental Health N = 66		The qualitative data collected from open ended questions in the survey were limited and subject to the respondent's interpretation of the question, with no opportunity for the researcher to clarify or pursue further information. The occupational therapists reported that the nature of the activities allowed for 'the journey'. This described engagement in an activity that was adapted and graded for purpose, and the "outcomes "which were the finished product. Both were perceived as leading to a sense of achievement and encouragement
Dam et al. (2008)	To explore the impact of a community art studio initiative for adults with mental illness by exploring the members experiences. Location: Canada	Qualitative methodology using semi structured interviews, observations, field notes and a short demographic questionnaire. Data analysis: Use of a systematic data analysis process. Constant comparative analysis was used to generate initial themes. A code recode process was used to increase dependability of findings. N = 6 clients	Five main themes were found: (a) Creative transformation led to positive self-affirmation, (b) Increased social capital through an art based community, (c) Capacity development through community art based activity, (d) Occupational engagement: new avenues to participation and productivity, (e) Improved physical and mental health.	The study was limited by time restraints which prevented discussion of conclusions with participants. The study indicates that further research which actively engages participants in the research process and a well-designed qualitative study which uses a variety of clinically meaningful outcomes are needed. Practice implications: The study indicates that there is a need for resources that focus on creativity, productivity and health for those with mental illness, and that occupational therapy can play a role by incorporating art, work and wellness for that community. Meaningful activity must be creative, flexible and provide the appropriate challenge to promote positive health impacts.
Griffiths (2009)	To explore the clinical use of creative activities used as	Part 2 of the Mixed Methodology study reporting on qualitative methodology developed	Griffiths identified improvements in the clients' self-esteem, confidence and symptom reduction. Clients also noted the importance of having an	The data for this study were from a homogenous group accessed through a

	a treatment medium in 4 groups by occupational therapists with people with mental health problems.

Location: UK | from Griffiths and Corrs (2007)

2. Qualitative methodology - Ground theory methodology using interviews with and focus groups to explore the experiences of occupational therapists and participants of four creative activity groups.

Data collection: semi-structured interviews, participant observation and focus groups.

N = 5 Occupational Therapists
8 Clients | opportunity for activities with individual meaning and purpose and skills development. Lastly, occupational therapist and client participants felt that the use of creative activities could be a bridge to accessing other groups in the community. Five categories of participants perception and experiences of creative activity groups emerged:
1. Choice,
2. Environment
3. Engagement
4. Occupational Gains
5. Group Impact | snowballing sampling strategy. Data saturation was not achieved.

Further research is required to consolidate categories and explore experiences including those whose experience was less positive.

Stated implications for practice: Creative activities can provide a versatile treatment medium but should only be used with those for whom they have meaning and value. |
| **Harris (2008)** | To clarify the meaning of craft to practice by understanding the meanings one occupational therapist attributes to craft.

Location: Australia | The study used purposeful sampling and narrative enquiry to explore the topic, a reflexive journal was kept.

Data analysis was based on narrative analysis which provided themes and sub themes.

N =1 Occupational Therapist | The study produced three findings.
1) Craft making has therapeutic value.
2) Reasoning about the therapeutic use of craft is similar to reasoning about other therapeutic activities.
3) Personal experience with craft making can influence the selection of craft as therapeutic media.
The study concludes that craft making is important to human beings because of our innate need to be creative, to make and to do.
The study affirms the value of craft as a therapeutic medium that may be suitable for some clients to achieve some of their goals. | The study felt the findings could have been strengthened by participant feedback of the narrative but time constraints affected some parts of the study.

Future research recommendations include exploration of the impact of personal and professional experiences on therapists' choice of media. Analysis of sociopolitical context of meanings therapists attribute to craft making is suggested, as is exploration of new graduate and experiences female therapists.

Finally research on current use of craft in mental health settings, curriculum implications for craft and determining if Australian therapists believe there is stigma associated with the use of craft. |
| **Gunnarsson and Eklund (2009)** | To examine therapeutic alliance and client satisfaction about their perceptions of everyday occupations and health factors using the Tree Theme Method | A prospective clinical study with a combined quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test and correlational design. Nine therapists recruited 35 clients to participate in the TTM. Self-rating instruments focused on therapeutic alliance, daily occupations, health | The results of this study showed significant changes following intervention with the TTM, as shown by differences between measurements pre and post intervention concerning both everyday occupations and health-related factors. | The study acknowledges an uneven gender balance in participants which may have skewed results, and that there was variance in the variables of the study combined with small sample sizes. |

	(TTM) intervention. Location: Sweden	related factors and client satisfaction. The instruments were administered pre and post TTM intervention. Data analysis was performed by SPSS13.0. N = 35		Further research is needed to understand the TTM and how to implement it. Qualitative research utilising interviews exploring client experiences of the technique and therapeutic alliance may help understand the intervention. Larger numbers of participants in the TTM would be beneficial in studying outcomes in future research.
Mullersdorf and Ivarsson (2012)	To describe the use of creative activities in occupational therapy and how often therapists used creative activities as a means of intervention. Location: Sweden	An online survey was conducted via the Swedish Association for Occupational therapists email database. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 19 and processed with descriptive statistics. N = 1867	The study found that 44% of respondents used creative activities as an intervention with most working in psychiatric care. The most common form of creative activity was arts and crafts followed by gardening.	The definition of creative activities was unclear. The survey included a limited list of activities items concerning creative activities. Further research is recommended to focus on in-depth inquiries about how therapists and their patients distinguish the use of creative activities as a means of treatment in occupational therapy.
Gunnasson and Bjorkland (2013)	To evaluate if the changes participants experienced in the TTM continued three years post intervention. Location: Sweden	A quantitative longitudinal design recruiting clients three years post intervention and utilizing self-rating questionnaires. Data analysis utilized SPSS version 14. N = 31	The study found positive changes in participants' sense of coherence and occupational performance, and satisfaction with occupational performance. Ratings related to psychological symptoms, self-mastery, activity level and satisfaction with performed occupations were found to be stable.	The study found it difficult to attribute the positive changes solely to the TTM as other factors in life were unable to be explored to quantify this. Attrition: 31 of the previous 35 in the study participating in the study. Future studies should consider a control group to validate the results from the TTM.
Horhagen et al. (2014)	To explore how engagement in craft activities at meeting places supported managing everyday occupations. Location: Sweden	Qualitative methodology utilizing Ethnography design. The researcher spent time in the field observing participants in their chosen groups and activities and recording the observations in field notes. Data was analyzed using paradigmatic analysis by gathering stories and allowing themes to emerge. N = 12	Three themes were identified Doing crafts in a group facilitated 1. Stability and routines. 2. Skills and abilities 3. Peer support	The study found that the researcher being a participant and researcher was both a strength and limitation of the project. Recommendations for future research include focusing on participant's internal life experiences, gender differences and how people manage occupations when housebound. The study supports the view that the act of doing crafts in groups has significant value

				for recovery and health promotion.
Lawson et al. (2014)	To explore the psychosocial benefits of participating in a 2-year community arts project. Occupational therapists interviewed eight people living with long-term mental health problems. Location: UK	Qualitative methodology utilizing single semi structured interviews with eight. participants. Supported by a steering group of people previously involved in community arts projects at the museum and others who had been involved in mental health projects. Data analysis was based on Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). N = 8 participants	Seven themes utilizing participants' language as the theme titles. 1. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world": A prized experience 2. "There are still things I can do": Drawing confidence and self-worth from the project 3. "Working within a group": Positive influences of the group setting 4. "You're being treated like a human being": Forming an identity beyond mental illness. 5. "It was like a history lesson and art lesson at the same time": Acquisition of creative skills 6. "It's having a focus": Experiencing focus, structure and meaningful occupation 7. "It's not all glamorous": Negative aspects of the project Lengthy immersion in art making, acquisition of artistic skills and knowledge, and social inclusion help to challenge stigma and labels. The study supported previous findings of improvement in self-worth and self-confidence, enabling an identity beyond mental illness. The end of the project also had a potentially detrimental impact on participants' wellbeing.	The timing of the interviews at the halfway stage may have influenced the themes which emerged. Different themes at curation and exhibition stages may have been found. The sample size of eight participants from a potential 25 artists is small. Responses and experiences may have differed between people experiencing mental health issues and those with an acquired brain injury within the sample size. Transferability of results could be limited by the uniqueness of the project which utilized making art in response to a private art.
Mullersdorf and Ivarsson (2016)	To better understand how occupational therapists use creative activities in practice. Location: Sweden	Online survey with participants from the 2012 survey who had indicated they would participate in follow-up study. 520 surveys were sent out, with 58.5% responding. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 19 and processed with descriptive statistics. Statements from open questions were transcribed and then analyzed using thematic analysis. N = 304	The main reasons for utilizing creative activities was to strengthen the client's occupational performance, well-being and self-esteem. Expected outcomes of using creative activities were to support self-expression, and experiencing joy and desire. 50% of therapists who responded did not use creative activities to the extent they wished.	Creative activities were used as a vital treatment to strengthen client's occupational performance. The study was performed by therapists and therefore only provided a professional perspective, more research is needed to gain the client's perspective on the therapeutic value and also an international perspective from therapists in other countries.
Hickey (2016)	To explore occupational therapists experiences of creative occupations within psychiatric intensive care units. Location: UK	Qualitative research exploring therapists experience of creative occupations. Purposeful sampling was utilized to identify therapists to take part in semi structured interviews. A research diary was utilized to aid trustworthiness. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis, using Braun and	Five themes emerged from the data. 1. Individual meaning of creativity 2. Process rather than product 3. Creative problem solving 4. Creative use of resources 5. Gender differences	Limitations included sample size, time restraints and also limited therapists within this setting. Future recommendations include studies concerning gender and creativity, and the role of technology within creative activities in PICUs.

		Clarkes (2006) six phases of identifying patterns and meanings within a transcript. N = 3		
Gunnarsson et al. (2018)	To compare the short term outcomes of Tree theme method (TTM) against regular interventions for people with depression and / or anxiety disorders. Location: Sweden	A randomized control trial of people with anxiety and /or depression from 18 to 65 were randomly assigned TTM or usual occupational therapy. Assessment data was collected pre and post intervention. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 23.0 N = 118 pre and N = 107 post.	No significant changes were identified in short term outcomes between the two groups. Both groups showed demonstrated positive changes in outcomes for almost all aspects of activities in daily life, psychological symptoms, health related and intervention.	Results showed no significant differences between the groups but this indicates the need for further long term research into the TTM and its outcomes compared to regular occupational therapy.

Section 2: Case Study (n = 2)

Author (year)	Aims of article / location of study	Methodology	Results	Summary of article
Gunnarsson et al. (2006)	To describe the Tree Theme Method (TTM) as a method for intervention in psychosocial occupational therapy through the application of a case study.	The study followed the participant through the TTM intervention of five sessions and follow up three years later via one interview and two TTM sessions. Sessions were recorded and transcribed with the therapist documenting her own notes. Life themes were identified throughout the transcripts.	Four life themes were identified. 1. Been shy 2. Close to the family 3. Being afraid the worst thing will happen 4. The feeling of being alienated	The TTM intervention was found to be suitable for use within psychosocial occupational therapy but future studies are warranted to evaluate the intervention with a larger number of participants to gain a better understanding of processes and outcomes.
Pooremamali et al. (2011)	To illustrate how an occupational therapy intervention can highlight the role of culture and address bicultural identification in a young adult immigrant woman with mental health problems Location: Sweden	A single descriptive case study using a narrative inquiry presented a description of a young woman experiencing psychosis and her participation in occupational therapy using painting as an intervention. The case study took place over two years. Data collected included: field notes, therapy notes, clinical notes, assessments and intervention plans, a reflective diary about therapy and the paintings produced. The data was reviewed by the author initially and then analyzed using the narrative analysis approach by Polkinghorn. Finally	Seven sub-plots were termed: 1.The invisible self 2. The ill self 3. The caged self 4. The confused self 5. The fearful self 6. The released self 7. The integrated self	A narrative approach has potential to move past professional boundaries and also influence the analysis an interpretation of results. Use of peer review and **member checking challenged any biased interpretation of themes identified during data analysis.** The intervention needs to be tested in further cases to assess its transferability. Further research in this area was identified by the author as there were other areas that the research did not address.

		the data was analyzed using Polkinghorns adaptation of Dollards criteria to describe significant life events and experiences.		
		N=1		

Section 3: Literature Reviews (n = 3)

Author (year)	Aims of article / location of study	Methodology	Results	Summary of article
Lloyd and Papas (1999)	To reviewed art-as-therapy within occupational therapy in mental health settings.\n\nLocation: N/A	The study reviewed the occupational therapy literature. The review aimed to define the rationale for the use of art by occupational therapists in a mental health setting.\n\nN = 16 articles	Trends from the literature indicated that art is used by occupational therapists to assess clients, promote the therapeutic relationship and enhance communication and self-expression.	The review recommends research examining why occupational therapists use art, its effectiveness in gaining information about clients and its effectiveness in promoting communication would be warranted.
Kirsh et al. (2019)	To provide an overview of OT interventions within adult mental health services and the documented outcomes.\n\nLocation: N/A	Review of the occupational therapy literature. A comprehensive overview of the evidence for current OT interventions by providing a summary of the documented outcomes.\n\nN = 50 articles	Seven categories of intervention were identified. • Employment/education • Psychoeducation • *Creative occupations/activity* • Time use / occupational balance • Skills / habit development • Group/family approaches • Animal assisted therapy	The review identified that further research in the form of extensive controlled studies is warranted to establish an evidence base for mental health OT.
Hansen et al. (2021)	To provide clarification of the concept of creative activities as intervention though reviewing articles using concept analysis.	The use of PRISMA procedure for systematic review and selection of studies to be included.\n\nData was coded, then grouped into categories. A reference panel was used to validate the attributes and cases.\n\nN = 15 articles	The concept of Creative Activities as Intervention was summarized in 5 attributes. 1) Often consisting of elements of art and craft using mind and body. 2) Being experienced as meaningful 3) Creating creative processes 4) Developing skills, enhancing occupational performance and managing everyday life 5) Being easy to modify individually or in groups with different approaches.	The study recommends more concept analysis research concerning phenomenon and intervention to elicit more precise definitions for the profession. They also identify the need for comparative studies to measure and record effects of creative interventions.

Section 4: Project Descriptions (n = 3)

Author (year)	Aims of article / location of study	Methodology	Results	Summary of article
Lloyd and Chandler (1999)	To describe and discuss the development of Girrebala which included three arts-as-therapy projects.\n\nLocation: Australia	Reports on examples of creative works and anecdotes and uses quotes and reflections from staff and clients.\n\nN = not described	The artist was permanently based at a residence which was not a part of the hospital site and supervised by the senior occupational therapist. An important part of the role of the artist was to work with the residents to develop and promote artistic skills and challenge the stigma associated with mental illness.\n\nFor consumers choice of project was important.\nThe project encouraged the creative potential of consumers with a mental	No self-reported limitations, but there were no formal evaluations or methodology. The number of participants was not included.

			illness, helping them to find balance and meaning in their lives. Consumers took a central role in the arts projects and were positive about the benefits. Girrebala provided consumers offering them quality of life through focusing on their success and gaining fulfillment through creative activities.	
Bryce (2009)	To describe two arts projects involving use of a camera and the creation of work for an exhibition to explore spirituality and hope. Location: UK.	This describes art work, client and therapist reflections, documented anecdotes / reflections from participants. Selection of images and peer reflections and discussion/ reflections / comments about images. A participant was also an author on the paper N = not described	The environment was important as it provided a supported, relaxed environment where self-expression was encouraged with the result of increased self-esteem. The residents were included in all aspects of the program and this led to a sense of ownership and belonging. The use of artworks allowed for the explanation of complex feelings and emotions. They described the ways in which participants shared personal thoughts and feelings though discussion about the images which allowed them to increase understanding, feel more connected and not alone. This was based on the reflections of the authors, one an occupational therapist and one a participant. The paper argues that from a participant perspective the "value of the visual was allowing her to say the things she cannot easily put into words" (p.14). The authors posited the project was a success but identified further exploration was required on how the use of imagery can affect peoples' recovery and hope.	The paper did not identity methodology for collecting data from participants, and did not clarify the number of participants included. The authors reported that participants may have self-censored images to "please OT" and that participants had to be comfortable in images produced potentially influencing images taken.