

Research Statement

Art therapists typically manage to connect with clients that are 'hard-to-reach' for other mental health professionals (Ashby, 2011). Furthermore, clients have noted that their sessions are highly relevant and proactive for managing their mental illness, and as a result, are more likely to be enthusiastic about attending art therapy programs (Huet, 1997). Despite this, art therapy continues to be a misunderstood and undervalued

Methods

The sampling strategy was strategic (Patton, 2015), where rich cases were selected to study that could provide explanatory contributions to the inquiry. Seven of the participants understood art therapy through being a supervisor for art therapy interns, while two of the participants understood art therapy on a scholarly level. They worked in a variety of services including prisons, psychiatric in-patient facilities, transitional and psychosocial rehabilitation services, as well as outreach counseling programs. The nine selected participants were regarded as knowledgeable and experienced mental health professionals who all had more than 5 years supervisory experience.

profession by fellow mental health professionals (Bellmer, Hoshino, Schrader, Strong, & Hutzler, 2003; Huet, 1997).

The reviewed research points to a need to investigate the perceptions of art therapy with mental health professionals who have exposure within their workplace. This poster will focus on the findings of a recent qualitative study where the objective was to gather an understanding of mental health professionals' perspectives of art therapy.

Findings

Through an analysis of the data, several themes were revealed. These have been outlined in Figures 1 & 2.



Each participant was interviewed for approximately one to one and half hours. The length was gauged to be appropriate for gathering focused, but intensive responses. Each interview was loosely structured to gather individual perspectives about art therapy.

The process of thematic analysis initially followed the steps created by Braun and Clarke (2006). Once a set of sub-themes had been created for each participant they were then sent back for verification. The participants all provided agreement that their themes accurately represented their beliefs and perceptions. Subsequently, the sub-themes took a deeper level of abstraction through analyzing them for patterns between the participants' accounts in order to derive themes.

Skeptical Attitudes about Art Therapy

Opportunities for **Advancement** in the Field of **Art Therapy**

- I am skeptical about diagnosing someone based on their artwork. Bryce
- I wonder can you put anything that is enjoyable in front of the word 'therapy' and use it to make us feel better. Bryce
- I also think my ignorance comes from not being artist at all myself. Bryce
- I am not sure how much art therapists clearly explain to their clients what they can expect to receive and how it should help them. Thomas
- The more art therapists get out into the field, the more they can show others the value and the more respect they will get. Thomas
- A combination of presentations to the entire staff team by the interns and me (the director) educating about why they were here helped greatly. Kate

Provides meaningful engagement in the service.

Reveals another perspective of the client.

Some of the benefits of art therapy are more transparent than others. Bryce

It seems unclear to me whether art therapists use techniques that are empirically supported. Thomas

- Maybe there isn't enough rigorous research getting out there on what art therapy offers. Bryce
- I need to learn more about how art is used as a therapeutic angle to help you resolve issues. Bryce
- I have not been exposed to art therapy in my clinical work, which I think is due to lack of funding. Paul

Figure 2. Skeptical attitudes and opportunities for advancement.

Figure 1. Established benefits of art therapy.

Conclusions

A major insight derived from this study was that mental health professionals work with a shared value of supporting clients to assist in improving their quality of life. Therefore, in order to work more collaboratively and effectively with them, art therapists need to provide a clearer understanding of how and why art therapy can provide benefits for clients in mental health settings.

The process of the interviews helped to decrease mystification about art therapy as a profession by providing avenues for clarification or amplification with the participants. They also helped to serve as a reciprocal process of information gathering and knowledge acquirement about the profession of art therapy. Nevertheless, this study was small in scope and therefore raises the issue of how information about art therapy can be communicated at a wider level.

References

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