

Enacting social transformation through occupation: A narrative literature review

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Enacting social transformation through arts-based occupations: A narrative literature review

Background: In the fields of occupational therapy and occupational science there has been a drive to confront social and health injustices through occupation-based practices with social transformation as a key goal. However, scholars acknowledge a lack of theory and strategies to support this developing area of practice. Aim: To explore how arts-based occupations have been used to enact social transformation for disadvantaged communities and to delineate socially transformative outcomes. Methods: A narrative literature review was carried out using seven databases. Thirty one items published in English, written between 2003-2019 were included. Results: Three broad themes emerged from the analysis: experiences related to giving voice; a continuum of change and creative occupations influence social change. Conclusions: This literature review suggests that whilst personal change and small scale social change outcomes were achievable through arts-based practices, larger scale structural change was less likely to occur. In addition, unintended outcomes in the form of risks to participants were evident. Discussion of how and why change came about was not articulated; leaving a need for further exploration of the mechanisms and contexts supporting change to inform future practice in the growing field of occupation-based social transformation.

Keywords: social transformation, occupation, social change, arts-based

Introduction

Evidence suggests that global health and social inequalities are increasing [1-3]. Health inequalities are known to be socially determined and arise from discrimination and lack of access to resources [4-6]. Despite advances in medicine and health care, health inequalities persist and are evident between and within nations [6]. Globally, there are calls to action to bring about change to improve the lives of populations. At the forefront of this initiative is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [7] and

the World Health Organisations conceptual framework for action on the social determinants of health [8]. Acknowledgement of a moral responsibility amongst health and social care professionals to develop transformative practice and act on social injustices is also evident in the international literature for example in nursing [9] dietetics [10] medicine [11] and social work. This call for social transformation has been echoed in occupational science and occupational therapy [12].

Elizabeth Townsend began developing a social vision for occupational therapy [13], set in the context of 1990s neoliberal Canada, a country experiencing high rates of unemployment and reduced national spending [14]. Soon after, she wrote about social transformation in relation to occupation [15]. In her paper she discussed personal and social transformation and suggested an emancipatory element to support equity and justice for disadvantaged communities [15]. An orientation to social and occupational justice is evident in the occupation based literature [16,17] as well as addressing socio-political conditions that create or maintain injustices [18] although there is acknowledgement of the need for further clarity of occupational justice concepts [19]. In the Global South, socially transformative practice has been the goal of occupational therapists for many years. In Brazil, for example, occupational therapists have been working in the ‘social field’ since the 1970s [20,p.88] and in South Africa, Watson’s and Swartz’s seminal 2004 text ‘Transformation through Occupation’ [21] documented a number of case studies where occupational therapists had been working with communities in the context of poverty and rapid social change.

There is a lack of clarity however, regarding the term ‘social transformation’ within the occupation-based literature. A new definition proposed by Farias et al. [16] seeks to clarify the term and suggests that social transformation denotes a collaborative approach to research and practice designed to develop a just society through

occupations. In the broader social science literature social transformation is described as unplanned and unprecedented change brought about through deep shifts in some aspect of society [22-24]. However, the occupation-based literature does not suggest an understanding of social transformation to this extent. In fact, the term ‘social transformation’ is used interchangeably at times with the term ‘social change’, see for example Farias et al. [16], Richards and Galvann [18], Pollard [25] suggesting an incremental approach to tackling injustices. Practitioners can take inspiration from the ‘social occupational therapists’ who encourage work towards the promotion of social participation for those that are disadvantaged [26], as do an increasing number of occupational therapists and occupational scientists across the world [27-29]. Social occupational therapy is applied outside of the health system [30] and is concerned with transforming conditions of oppression [31].

It is evident that there are efforts to move understanding of occupation-based social transformation forward within occupational science and occupational therapy. Recently, the International Social Transformation through Occupation Network was established following a number of ‘think tank’ meetings at occupational therapy and occupational science conferences [32-34]. The network aims to grow research, practice and education in the field of occupation-based social transformation [35] and are currently undertaking a research project using a qualitative case study design to ‘build understanding of the conditions required for social transformation and the role of occupation in this’ [35,p.5]. Although the above initiatives are an initial foundation; there is scope for further exploration and elucidation of occupation based social transformation from other varied perspectives. There is potential for diverse ontological understandings to contribute to growth in the field [36] and to that end, this paper presents an exploratory, narrative literature review, designed to describe the use of

occupation-based practices to enact social changes for disadvantaged communities and to attempt to elucidate socially transformative outcomes.

A number of different forms of occupation have been used in attempts to enact social transformation, for example there is sport for development [37] and urban or guerrilla gardening [38]. To provide focus for the review, arts-based occupations were targeted. There are a number of reasons why arts-based occupations are relevant to occupation-based social transformation including, firstly, the roots of occupational therapy and science lie in social activism allied to the arts [39] and occupational therapists have a long tradition in using arts as a therapeutic medium. The use in society of art-forms to support social movements has been asserted [40]. Community arts-based initiatives have been used to support citizen participation and community development [41]. There is also a tradition of using art-forms for resistance [42]; Bakhtin, the Russian philosopher, wrote about the use of carnival for creating spaces where dissenting voices could be heard [43]. More recently, there are examples of street art in Egypt [44] or mbira music in Zimbabwe [45] where the creators express opposition to dominant views. There is also a growing interest in the use of arts for health in public health [46], although the use of arts practices for health predate both public health and occupational therapy [39]. There is a renewed interest in the art of gentle protest, perhaps inspired by the women's peace movement of the 1980s, where craft and activism are brought together and known as craftivism [47].

Material and method

A qualitative literature review, as described by Grant and Booth [48], was undertaken using a systematic approach to searching, evaluating and synthesising available literature on the use of arts-based occupations aimed at enacting social

transformation. The following databases were used to provide a spread of relevant articles incorporating both arts and health related literature; CINAHL, AMED, MEDline, Arts and Humanities, Arts Full Text and Socindex. Searches were limited to peer reviewed journal articles from 2000 onwards and were undertaken in October 2019. The research question driving the review was: how can arts-based practices be used to bring about social transformation for people who are marginalised?

Search terms were identified, combining free text terms and Boolean operators and included for example; marginalised, disadvantaged, low income, social exclu* AND occupation-based, arts-based, creativ*, theatre, drama, dance, writing, photo*, video AND social transformati*, social change, transformati*, policy change, attitude change, development, chang*. Articles were screened according to inclusion criteria initially at the title and abstract level and then again at full text level. The inclusion criteria were that;

- the articles should discuss the use of an arts-based occupational medium eg photography, theatre, dance or film *and* also discussion of attempts at social transformation or change,
- articles should be peer reviewed and in English.

Exclusion criteria were that;

- the articles discussed research methods eg interviews or focus groups only, rather than an arts-based occupation
- focused solely on individual development, without a link to broader social transformation.

Searches yielded a total of 686 articles, of which 18 were eligible for inclusion in the narrative review. A secondary search of the reference lists of these articles

revealed a further 13 additional articles, resulting in a final total of 31 included in this review.

Selection of articles

The PRISMA diagram [49] below (see Fig. 1.) has been used to support the transparency of this review and describes the selection of articles.

[Fig 1 near here]

Overview of the literature

Table 1 lists the articles included with details of participants, the type of occupation used, the purpose of the article and a brief outline of changes described. It should be noted that the data is retrospective and as such social change is situated in specific historical and socio-cultural contexts. The articles included participants from locations across six continents being; South America [40,50-53], North America [54-63], Asia [64,65], Africa [65-69], Australia/ Oceania [70], and Europe [71-74].

[Table 1 near here]

Purpose and quality of the literature

The purpose of the 31 articles reviewed varied with the majority (n=21) being either research papers [54,56,59-61,65-68,74] or researcher reflections on their own research processes [52,53,55,57,58,63,69-73]. A further four articles described projects that were not initiated by researchers but by grass roots activists [40,50,51,62,64] and one by a government [51] that aspired towards social change. Researchers had subsequently become involved either to evaluate or comment on the projects. Finally, there were five literature reviews.

The non-researcher initiated projects included one describing the use of

applied textile images called ‘arpilleras’ used to spread information about conditions during the Pinochet regime in Chile [40]. Another detailed Peruvian women’s protests against corrupt government using theatre and carnival [50]. There was an evaluation of a Government initiated programme of circus arts called ‘social circus’ reportedly used to initiate social transformation in Ecuador [51] and a smaller scale social circus programme in Quebec, Canada [62]. Lastly, there was a large quilting project in Hong Kong designed to change conditions for marginalised female textile workers [64].

The ten research papers that reported on the findings of research projects using photovoice or forum theatre [54,56,59-61,65-68,74] were appraised by the first author using the Joanna Briggs Institute Critical Appraisal Checklist for Qualitative Research [75]. The scores in relation to the quality appraisal are given in table 2 below.

Table 2. Scores from critical appraisal tool.

[Table 2 near here]

The quality of the research articles was variable and despite the reported participatory nature of the studies, none of the authors provided a statement of their own positionality, something that is deemed as essential for anti-oppressive work [76] and important in relation to the situated nature of the research. Only Gurman et al. [65] discussed the influence of the researcher on the research. The study by Tijm et al. [67] was the most robust because of its congruence between the philosophical underpinning and methods, including analysis and interpretation of results by co-researchers. In contrast, although Kovacic et al. [54] claimed to be participatory they were directive in relation to the subjects they wanted the participants to photograph. Co-researchers were not included in the analysis of results which would have strengthened the participatory nature of this project.

Finally, there were a number of literature reviews of photovoice or participatory visual methods [77-81]. One was described as a scoping review [80], there was a critical methodological review [77], two literature reviews [78,81] and a qualitative systematic review [79]. Although the systematic review did not conform to expectations of a systematic review, including no PRISMA diagram and no indication of the quality of the papers was included [82].

Despite the variable quality and range of papers discussed they have been included precisely because this is an explorative review that aims to help elucidate how arts-based occupations can be used to enact social transformation. The articles included here provide an overview of the evidence-base available from the selected databases, they meet the inclusion criteria for the review and are pertinent to the answering the research question.

Development of themes

As a narrative review the aim was to identify and summarise what had been published [79] in the chosen databases specifically relating to the question ‘how can arts-based occupations be used for social change?’ To develop the findings the first author read and re-read the full text of all the selected articles. Data were extracted and organised using NVivo 12 Pro© software [83] and inductively developed from codes to subthemes and then overarching themes. The first and second author reviewed several of the articles as a quality check. This involved separate coding of articles and refinement of the subthemes and overarching themes.

Findings

The literature has been synthesised into three broad overarching themes and a number of subthemes, the overarching themes are; experiences related to giving voice, a

continuum of change and creative occupations influence social change. Further description is given in table 3 below:

Table 3. Synthesis of literature into themes and subthemes.

[Table 3 near here]

Experiences related to giving voice

A broad theme that emerged from the articles was that the process of engaging in art-based projects supported participants to ‘give voice’ to their concerns. Giving voice is defined as having an opinion, need or desire expressed out loud [84]. Whilst giving voice was an apparently positive experience for some, others had negative experiences or chose to ‘reframe’ their concerns in an alternative discourse. A final sub-theme related to making participants voices heard to wider audiences including policy makers and the general public.

Benefits to participants of giving voice

Personal validation through opportunities to ‘give voice’ to participants concerns in the wider public domain was a feature of many articles [50,54,55,57,60,64,66,69-71,74,77,81]. In one study, the authors asserted that children were pleased that people outside of their community cared about them [54] whilst in another, during a walking interview with a migrant mother, the participant felt accepted because the *researcher* listened to her story [73]. It appeared that ‘giving voice’ was particularly important in situations where participants were able to share their stories with policy makers or government officials. For example, in the study by Wrentschur and Moser [74], the youth presented to the Austrian Minister for Social Affairs and the Head of the Austrian Employment Service. In Chan’s [64] study, one of the participants voiced that she could have ‘never imagined’ having Legislative Councillors attend the project.

Negative experiences related to giving voice

Giving voice is a complex phenomenon due to the embedded nature of communities in long standing socio-cultural and political histories. Despite the stated aims of giving voice using methods like photovoice [85] this did not necessarily follow in all of the literature reviewed. In a photovoice project to combat violence at school, Zuch et al. [66] found that children did voice their concerns about sexual violence during focus groups but they declined to raise this at a dissemination event as they felt they may be judged negatively by the adults attending. In the same study, some stakeholders were dismissive of the children's claims about violence at school, which impacted on the children's sense of agency [66]. In another incidence where participants were supported to give voice to those perceived as more powerful there was a negative outcome when the State Commissioner attended the dissemination event, fuelling rumours in the community of financial inducements being made [69].

Interestingly, the focus of a couple of projects was adapted [53,69] where shameful feelings might have been evoked by giving voice to participants everyday lives. Frey and Cross [53] initially planned to focus on school abandonment in their participatory theatre study, however, they met resistance from their intended participants who did not wish to explore this subject. The authors speculated that school abandonment was avoided as it might lead participants to unhelpful self-blame [53]. However, a change of focus to 'youth rights' supported youth to want to participate. Similarly, the Almajirai boys in Hoechner's study protected themselves from shameful feelings associated with their poverty by reframing their descriptions of their deprived living conditions, articulating their situation as an active choice necessary for their religious learning [61].

Influencing attitudes for positive change by making voices heard

There were a considerable variety of public facing events undertaken as a result of the arts-based projects, for example photographic exhibitions [54,55,59-61,63,66,67,72], theatrical performances [50,73,74], video play back sessions [65,69] and even the public stitching together of a quilt [64]. Appeals and even protests were made to the public and policy makers, suggesting that the projects were able to achieve some of their claims to advocacy. The reach of some public facing events was limited to local community centres [52,54,56] which are places where arguably, audiences may already be knowledgeable of the issues raised. Other articles report efforts of making voices heard at high level committees, for example the All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration at the House of Commons [73]. Projects attracted local government officials [59,61,63,67,69,74] the press [59,61,63,64,67] and universities [54,60,67,69]. In one example, the local press published an article about the study by Findholt et al. [59] which led the participants to undertake many other public speaking events. Large displays in public spaces were also evident, in Hong Kong, the women laid out and pieced together their giant quilt in a public square bordered by enterprises that may have profited, in the past, from their labour [64]. In Lima, Peru, women protestors took their theatre directly outside the Government Palace using parody and puppetry to voice their anger at corrupt officials, the use of puppets shielding individuals' identity and allowing the women to comment through theatre things that might normally be impossible to say [50].

Raising awareness of issues for marginalised groups and attitude change were outcomes discussed in a number of projects, [53,57-59,65,69,81] although in Gurman et al. [65] study the authors caution against positive results in attitude change. There may have been bias in the self-reported accounts of the participants as the authors conclude

most respondents were connected to the project in some way either through participation or providing training [65]. In Robinson's [57] study photographs were used to counter negative assumptions made by 'outsiders' about the community; although Robinson concludes that the community remains excluded. In Chan Fung Yi [64] description of the quilting project, a competition was run alongside the project, involving 20 schools and approximately 280 children in making patches for the quilt, dedicated to the women, which could potentially have raised awareness in the community of the women's cause [64]. Another project using photovoice raised awareness of issues affecting school abandonment that had been previously been overlooked by teaching staff [53].

A continuum of change

This theme details the varying degrees of success described in the articles in relation to bringing about social transformations. Change ranged on a continuum from no lasting change through to a limited number where change occurred at an organisational or local community level. Inclusion criteria for the review was that articles should discuss attempts at social transformation and not just personal change however, many of the authors also asserted in their work that participants experienced personal change as result of engaging in the projects.

Lack of change

Despite intentions towards socially transformative practice, many of the articles were unable to confirm organisational or structural level changes. This was evident in the critical methodological review [77] and in the individual articles discussed here. Hoechner [69] was categorical that despite the intention, her film project did nothing to address structural inequality. In another example of a project designed to reduce violence in school, the authors suggested that teachers and children were not confident

of lasting change [66]. No agreed action was taken at the six week follow up, despite the Principal attending the final dissemination meeting and committing to taking forward some plans [66]. Time scales may have been an issue as transformative processes may occur over the longer-term [51,52,79,81]. For example, in a reflection on a digital storytelling project Wood [70] reported on a participatory project with a ‘failing’ school which aspired to social change through challenging perceptions of failure and ‘good’ and ‘bad’ schools/ communities. The participants were marginalised children, of Maori decent, who created digital stories through the photovoice method to celebrate their strengths, which were to be shared with their town through a street festival. Unfortunately, the council removed backing for the festival at the last minute due to perceptions of risk, which reinforced historic prejudices, potentially strengthening notions of failure [70]. As Wood [70] asserts, historically embedded social exclusion would require more than a six month project to be transformed.

There were examples where placing responsibility for change on the individuals experiencing the injustices would benefit from further critique. For example, photovoice was employed in Zuch et al. [66] study to empower students. However, the authors write that in their dissemination event, stakeholders agreed that school violence problems began in the home and socio-structural factors needed to be addressed beyond the school, but did not offer action plans for this. Additionally, in the study by Kovacic et al. which explored the perceptions of low-income youth on how the environment influences health; the authors provided an individualised definition of health for the children to work from [54], the definition of health was ‘one’s own potential with respect to body, heart, mind, and spirit’ [54,p.1136]. Using this definition suggests that the authors did not attend to their positionality as university researchers or evidence that points to the influence of broader social determinants on health [2]. The authors

acknowledged that many of the children had low literacy levels and had to adapt their research method to accommodate this. The authors went on to ask the children about their future aspirations with children acknowledging the need to do well in school to achieve their aims. However, the authors fail to comment on the children's low literacy in relation to their educational aspirations despite there being established links between poor literacy and poor health [86]. Literacy levels are amenable to change amongst low income families [87] and researchers with a social conscience might do more to explore support in this area.

In other examples, where participants had been able to give voice to policy makers or government officials, there was a lack of evidence for these practices bringing about change. In Peru, women participated in street performances protesting against the corrupt government, but Moser [50] felt that change was probably not due specifically to the women's actions but may have been part of a national movement towards change. Additionally, although asylum seeking women in the United Kingdom were able to present at an All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration at the House of Commons, the project authors, Erel et al. [71] theorised about the *potential* (emphasis added) for socially transformative change rather than providing evidence of it. A number of the studies reported that participants generated a list of possible solutions to problems that were being addressed [53,56,61,68,79]. In Walker and Early's article [68] recommendations were made for the participating organisation and some for government, but there was no discussion as to how government actions would be taken up. Equally, solutions to food justice problems were generated by the children in Leung et al. [56] photovoice study but a lack of longer-term impact was cited as a limitation of the study. Finally, in Lorenz and Kolb's [55] article they admit that no action was taken as a result of the study but also that they did not involve policy makers in the project.

Overall, there was an evident lack of follow-up in some of these studies, which was echoed in Benjamin-Thomas et al. [77] critical review.

Personal transformations

The majority of the articles asserted participants experienced personal change in some way as a result of involvement with the projects or research [50-52,61,62,64,66-70,73,74,77,78]. Disappointingly, for projects based on a participatory ethos, this assertion was not always supported with evidence from the participants [54,77] perhaps because participation has been shown to be confined to data collection in some research projects [77]. Additionally, there was a lack of discussion about the factors that brought this change about. However, aspects of personal transformation reported were; increased confidence [50,55,62,67,70,74], increased political awareness [64,70,74,77,78] and increased sense of empowerment [66,69,71,74,78]. Empowerment was not universally reported [72] and Catalani and Minkler [78] found that enhanced empowerment was not reported in photovoice studies where participants were not included in all aspects of the research process.

Actions at the meso level

Although more limited in number than personal transformations, there were some promising examples in the literature of socially transformative practice extending beyond individuals, to institutional or community changes [61,63,72,77-79,81]. Changes included enhanced city plans to increase walkability and bikability, [61], development of a youth violence prevention centre [63], and using video to promote better accessibility to support services [72]. In the review of participatory digital methodologies by Benjamin-Thomas et al. [77] a number of institutional changes were reported including the development of a farmers market at a school to reduce food insecurity [88] and creating a non-profit organisation [89]. Unfortunately, the trigger

factors for change were not articulated in the papers. In Sanon et al. [81] literature review of photovoice, 11 studies reported on immediate action for change with three making significant changes including the passage of a state law [90] , renovating a park and building of a grocery store [61]. Despite these examples they assert that most change occurred at the individual level [81]. In a similar review by Catalani and Minkler [78] 60% of projects lead to action which included holding exhibitions. However, action was more evident in longer-term projects that included greater degrees of participation and community building efforts that lasted for months and even years.

In addition to the above mentioned transformations, there were a number of examples of enhanced social capital as a result of the projects. Although there are numerous definitions of social capital [91] the term is used here to denote enhanced networks or relationships and a reduction in isolation. The large-scale quilting project reported in Chan Fung Yi's paper brought previously isolated women together into a community [64]. This sense of solidarity and shared experience was evident in other projects [71,73,74,77].

Creative occupations influence social change

The focus of this theme is on the occupations used to bring about change. Creative methods were beneficial in influencing change in a number of ways including providing a safe 'space' for participants to explore and reflect on the complex issues they faced. However, there were risks, mostly to the participants, inherent in the use of the arts. Finally, the last subtheme explores how arts-based methods resulted in the production of tangible artefacts which could last beyond the exhibitions developed to showcase them.

Variety of arts-based methods used

A range of diverse occupational mediums were used throughout the literature to support social change, although photography and photovoice were in the majority in this review [54-61,63,66-68,70,72,78-81]. Other mediums included video [52,53,65,69,73,77] theatre and carnival [50,53,71,73,74] storytelling [72,77] quilting [64] textile images [40] and circus arts [51,62]. The majority of the articles reported on the use of arts-based methods initiated by researchers to facilitate change. Unusually, there was also the adoption of a national circus arts project by the Government of Ecuador, designed as a social intervention with marginalised groups across the country. The aim being to enact the Government's commitment to the policy of 'Buen Vivir', which emphasises community well-being over economic indicators [51]. The underpinning philosophy is that collective risk taking and creativity developed using circus arts by marginalised groups will lead to social transformations. The inherent playfulness and creativity in circus arts was reported as a medium for re-learning relationships within groups and the physical aspects supported the development of trust [51]. The authors who evaluated the project felt that the social circus programme facilitated a culture of collective wellbeing albeit amidst tensions between the aims and the perceived need, in some quarters, to demonstrate success in economic terms [51].

Benefits of creative methods

Occupational mediums provided participants with a safe space to explore issues pertinent to them that might not otherwise be achieved with more formal discussions [52,53,69,73,74]. The use of theatre had particular power in this regard. The young people in Frey and Cross' study dramatized 'putting their school on trial' [53,p.72] to explore the schools role in causing student drop-outs. This gave participants opportunities to question school practices and avoid unhelpful self-blame. Some studies

used more formalised ‘forum theatre’ [71,74]. The participants were able to enact scenes relating to the personal experiences, which allowed participants to try out different ways of engaging. This was a useful strategy in Erel et al. [71] study, where a migrant mother was able to role play a variety of responses to administrators therefore increasing her confidence in dealing with officials [71]. If forum theatre is extended to wider audiences, spectators are encouraged to become ‘spect-actors’ and collectively brainstorm alternative solutions [74].

There was evidence of additional benefits in the creative methods adopted, partly in terms of supporting alternative communication forms. As an example, dramatisation and video were used to support engagement and communication between socially excluded youth and researchers in one study [53]. This alternative to traditional workshops was favoured by participants as writing tasks reinforced the youth’s feelings of failure in relation to their school dropout. Creative methods were also felt to amplify participants’ voices [60] and the novelty and visual impact of photography helped to raise visibility amongst other competing priorities for action [61]. In the case of Kramer et al. [61] study, the authors suggest that photovoice acted as a catalyst for action in the community, although the authors do not elaborate on why or how photovoice was effective.

Some of the occupational mediums used had particular cultural meaning for the participants, for example, the quilting project gave the ex-textile workers from Hong Kong an opportunity to re-validate their skills in the public domain [64] whilst the women in Peru harnessed traditional forms of carnival to make their protest [50]. Moreover, the use of film making as a modern technological method in Hoechner’s study [69] successfully altered the perceptions of marginalised youth amongst the middle and upper class audience they aimed at reaching.

Generation of tangible resources

Arts-based interventions for social change can result in the production of tangible artefacts for example photographs, videos or giant quilts. A participant in one study felt that photographs were able to tell truths that would counter negative media reporting about their community [57]. In a similar fashion, textile images known as ‘arpilleras’ were made and distributed globally to spread information about the reality of the Pinochet regime in Chile with the textiles allowing the makers to remain anonymous [40]. In addition, the textile art-works were exported to raise financial support to women living in shantytowns. In other cases, artefacts were then used and re-used to further social causes in a wider variety of ways [54,55,58,72]. However, this was not possible with ‘one off’ theatre productions [52] and unfortunately in Wood’s [70] study the digital stories were lost due to computer error. Two authors did not report on further use of the artefacts [67,68]. There were also potential long lasting ethical issues in relation to anonymity and confidentiality with visual images [77] as participants situations may change and they may no longer relate to their previous experiences, as was the case for some participants in Johnson and Martínez Guzmán [72] study.

Risks in using arts-based practices

There were risks inherent in the occupational processes described in the articles. Some of the articles were set within the context of authoritarian or military regimes [40, 50] where participation in anti-government actions is notoriously risky. The Chilean women making arpilleras had to work in a clandestine fashion, meeting in secret and hiding their work in their skirts so as not to be discovered by the regime [40]. There were many human rights violations in Chile and the reality for people who opposed the Government could be torture or death [92].

Photography and participatory video were problematic in some instances. The use of video meant protecting identities was difficult, which concerned one young actor playing the role of a thief in a participatory video. He was anxious that members of his community may not be able to tell fact from fiction leading to further stigmatisation [69]. Similarly, careful selection of the occupational medium is needed as an example from Cooke et al. [52] shows; using performance and participatory video in India, with a group who historically were nomadic street performers limited the value of the message because of long standing cultural assumptions about performers as undesirables.

In another example, in the school based study about violence, the children participating reported that they were hated by other children for shedding light on what happens at school [66]. Some of the parents were also concerned for their children's safety when participating [66]. In addition, carrying video equipment or cameras put participants at risk if they were perceived to be valuable by others, or if there was suspicion at the motives of the participants for taking photographs, as was the case in Tijm et al. study [67].

Discussion

This review aimed to explore how arts-based occupations have been used to enact social transformation for disadvantaged communities. There were varying degrees of success in relation to the projects and the change derived. Personal transformations for project participants were reported in many of the articles but these claims should be treated with caution as they were not always substantiated with evidence from the participants. It is possible that these personal changes might go on to lead to greater social effects, however this would be difficult to evaluate [93]. The process of conscientization, as articulated by Freire [94], might be at work, which is a personal

transformation where an individual develops their socio-political awareness in relation to their positionality. This raising of a critical consciousness allows people to question power and privilege leading on to taking action for change.

There were a small number of changes that were described that impacted beyond individuals. The social justice framework, first described by Boutain [95], is a useful framework for understanding the levels of change achieved beyond the individual. The framework includes the concepts of social justice awareness, social justice amelioration and social justice transformation [95]. Social justice awareness relates to the process of participants, researchers and audiences developing new understandings of power and systems of oppression [81] in relation to their situation. In this review, many articles reported social justice awareness which relates to those instances where participants gained increased political awareness, critical consciousness or where attitudes changed about participants or their situations. Opportunities for participants to give voice to their life conditions also reflected social justice awareness. Giving voice included dissemination of participants' views to 'outsiders', those in their wider community, or policy makers and others with power. Whilst this might induce empathy in the audience, practitioners working towards change should be cautious as this representation of the 'other' can reproduce a 'them' and 'us' division, reinforcing inequalities [96]. Two of the articles in this review suggested that giving voice to a marginalised community may be 'enough', a worthwhile pursuit in its own right without further change occurring [50,55]. However, this was the opinion of the authors and not substantiated by voices of the participants. Certainly, the authors in this review suggest that giving voice was experienced as validating by participants, but this alone is inconsistent with the ethos of participatory approaches. Attention needs to be given to the ethics of raising expectations for change when this is not delivered [97]. Johnston [80] goes further and

argues that approaches like photovoice should be used only to inform policy and not necessarily raise expectations of policy change. Being transparent about the potential limits of projects is advised by researchers with experience in the field of arts for social change [97].

Social justice amelioration describes a situation where *action* is taken to meet immediate concerns in the short-term [95]. There were examples of social justice amelioration in this review where changes within institutional practices or community developments were made, such as renovating parks [61] and establishing not-for-profit organisations [89]. Although there is potential for these changes to have longer term impact, crucially, amelioration does not really change the conditions that repeatedly create injustices, therefore it is not transformative in the broader social science sense. Whilst there maybe merit in developing short-term meso level solutions, the danger is that these actions do not shift the status-quo and lead to the reproduction of injustices [98]. Unfortunately, establishing ‘worthy’ projects may unintentionally shift focus away from pervasive inequalities, depoliticising injustices [53,62,69]. This appeared to be the case in many of the studies under review. In the social circus example, the authors did not report changes in the living conditions for marginalised groups [51]. The focus of some of the social circus projects shifted to using circus occupations to help participants enhance individual skills and employability at the expense of focusing on community social well-being [51]. In using arts-based occupations to bring about ameliorative change to conditions attention needs to be focused on the structural conditions that give rise to, and perpetuate, these circumstances.

In addition, whilst the researchers may have been well meaning in their endeavours, there were risks inherent in the processes used. These risks were mostly carried by the participants, for example, when children had their concerns dismissed

[66] or when projects evoked shameful feelings in participants [53,69]. In community based work, unequal power relations need to be identified and addressed from the outset [99]. Therefore, some of these risks should have been foreseen, or at list mitigated through a deeper degree of reflexivity on behalf of the researchers [97]. Positionality, or a practitioners/researchers social position vis-à-vis the participants should be addressed as researchers are likely to hold dominant social standing, therefore experiencing greater power than their participants [100]. Practitioners are urged, as an ethical necessity, to address power relations and not merely reflect upon them [97]. A lack of attention to positionality was evident in this review and this is particular critique of photovoice research [101]. By adopting reflexive processes researchers should aim to harness their privileged position to work alongside those with less power [102].

According to Boutain [95] social justice transformation is devoted to redressing unjust conditions by changing structures using long range systematic solutions. This would necessitate change at a national policy or legislative level. There was one example of new legislation cited in the review by Sanon et al. [81] where a new state law was established which demonstrated legislative change, albeit at a localised level. As Wood [70] asserts, historical injustices require long-term system change to transform them. Revolutionary movements seek large scale structural changes that challenge established power bases [103]. For occupation-based practitioners a call for revolution might be beyond their abilities or will. An alternative strategy for social change, espoused in some social movements, is a process of incremental change adopted by activists who work *within* systems for short-term gains hoping for longer-term improvements [103]. This may be the realistic way forward for those who have ambitions to work towards the alleviation of social injustices. Engaging in practice that aspires towards social change is not a value free endeavour and is likely to be

challenging, resulting in possible conflicts that will need to be negotiated [97].

Attention to the emotional aspects of this social change work received little attention in the papers under review, although there are scholar-activists who do provide guidance in what is termed ‘affective politics’ [102,p.265].

The research question underpinning this review also sought to establish *how occupation-based practices* might lead to social transformation. The findings suggest that using art forms, for example, photography, theatre, film and textile arts might support the development of social justice awareness and amelioration but the underlying factors of how this change actually comes about is less apparent. Some key features were that using arts-based occupations provided a ‘safe space’ to discuss and critique injustices, and visual representations appeared to be powerful ways of communicating. Art forms, by nature, are concerned with expression and have the power to evoke emotions in people [104] which could be a causal factor in relation to change. However, there were also negative outcomes reported in relation to using arts-based occupations for social change.

There were only a small percentage of articles reviewed (n=5) that reported on the use of arts for social change or transformation, that were not initiated as a research project. It is possible that re-running the literature search in a broader range of databases may uncover more articles that report on the use of occupations for social transformation outside of academia. It is more likely however, that knowledge around the use of occupations for social change may not be reported in academic journals without an accompanying research evaluation and particularly as ‘peer review’ was an inclusion criteria in this literature review. Knowledge of change processes is likely to be tacit, learned in the field, and not necessarily reported in academic journals. Additionally, there was a quietness in the literature in relation to project participants’

knowledge of change. While their expertise in projects was reported in terms of the pertinent issues they faced, their understanding of how changes might occur was not considered or given space. This is an omission given that participatory approaches are claimed as empowering people at grass roots to create change [105].

This literature review has added to the knowledge base in relation to understanding the types of social change outcomes that might be achievable by using arts-based methods. The review does not however, provide sufficient detail in relation to how the change occurs; causation has not been given space in this literature. More work is required therefore, to be able to help achieve the ambitions of the International Social Transformation through Occupation Network in creating strategies for occupation-based social transformation [12]. Hocking has suggested that exploring diverse ontologies might be beneficial in occupational science [36] and the critical realist approach may have value in furthering understanding of occupation-based social transformation. Critical realism advocates a model of generative causation [106] and pays particular attention to the complexity of contexts. This model is contingent [107] in that it supports researchers to identify mechanisms that *might* operate to produce certain outcomes in particular contexts, rather than proposing linear causation where x causes y, which is typical of positivism [108], or focusing on interpretation and description which are advocated in constructivism [109]. Therefore, a critical realist approach could have merit in uncovering how and why using occupation-based practices with communities might bring about socially transformative outcomes.

Limitations

Findings from the current review must be considered with regards to a number of limitations. Only studies written in English were included, potentially excluding valuable information in other languages. Although systematic searches were undertaken

and rigorous processes followed, the articles selected for review were chosen by the lead author alone, therefore limiting the rigor of the review [110]. The narrative synthesis is both a potential strength and weakness of this review; it permitted a comprehensive integration of a broad range of studies, however it is limited to the authors' subjective interpretation which may lack transparency.

Table 1. Contextual information of articles included in the literature review.

Citation in alphabetical order	Participants / location	Occupational Medium	Purpose of article / project	Aspects of transformation/ change described
Adams, 2002	Chilean women making 'arpillera' in workshops	Arpillera – appliquéd textile images	Reflection on ethnographic research in relation to arpilleras	Authors reflections on the use of visual textile images (arpilleras) in the pro-democracy movement in Chile. Making of arpilleras helped to socialise new recruits into the movement, support solidarity and convey messages to the rest of the world and garner support from the wider community.
Benjamin-Thomas et al. 2019	Literature review	Storytelling, video, participatory graphic information systems	Critical methodological review of 20 research articles related to participatory digital methodologies	All projects reviewed had transformative goals. However, authors assert that mostly personal rather than social transformation was found including; increasing sense of belonging, being given space for voices, building self-esteem, consciousness raising and passion for developing social change. Some projects were found to change attitudes and challenge negative stereotypes. Some institutional level changes were reported.
Catalani & Minkler, 2010	Literature review	Photography	Literature review to establish a) what defines the photovoice process b) outcomes of photovoice c) how level of participation is related to process and outcomes.	Reviewed 37 articles and evaluated level of participation in photovoice projects from low, moderate to high. Projects that involved higher levels of participation were more likely to include engaging community members in action and advocacy. The authors conclude that photovoice impact at community level has not been well described or assessed.
Chan Fung Yi, 2012	Disenfranchised women textile	Quilting	Describes a project to raise awareness	Personal transformation described in relation to re-validating identity of women workers to their community and

	workers in Hong Kong, 1000 women estimated to have participated over 6 months		and funds for the women's workers association	strengthening community networks. This was achieved through creating 'the largest quilt in the world' in a public space. Despite including 'legislative councillors' in the public event the author does not discuss any structural changes.
Cooke et al. 2018	Marginalised communities in South Africa (6-15 yrs) India (9-24 yrs), Brazil – (young women)	Video	Reflection on findings from projects using participatory video, focus on product not process	Change is not discussed in depth as the projects are still ongoing and currently 'exploring ways to utilise the films to effect change in the lives of participants.' P271. However, each of the 3 projects were working towards public facing events. In India they plan to show the film to national policy makers, in Brazil the film will go to a community centre. The authors claim personal transformations e.g. increased confidence, empowerment and giving voice but this is not backed up by quotes from participants.
Erel et al. 2017	20 ethnically diverse migrant mothers in London, UK	Theatre	Reflection on the transformative potential of participatory theatre	The project helped participants build social networks and reduce isolation. Through acting out their experiences of social problems (e.g. trying to access the GP) where they lacked power, the participants developed their own new strategies to challenge this. Authors acknowledge this is a way to make oppression visible but the potential limitations of this as lacking attention to structural inequalities.
Findholt et al. 2010	Six high school students from Oregon, USA	Photography	Research paper – analysis of photovoice project	Project aimed to increase public awareness of community issues impacting on children's physical activity and diets to develop support for interventions. Article claims that the project was 'very useful' in raising awareness but does not provide evidence of this. Additionally, authors did not assess whether increased awareness translated to greater support for interventions.

Frey and Cross, 2011	Group of 15-18 year olds who had abandoned school in Buenos Aires	Theatre and video	Reflection on the use of theatre and video in a participatory action research project	The article details how the young people used theatre in the form of putting their school on trial for the high number of school dropouts. The methods allowed the participants to give voice, the subsequent video and theatre transcripts made teachers aware of student perspectives and some meso level changes at school were planned.
Graham et al. 2013	9 participants with an average age of 19 from Detroit, USA	Photography	Research paper – analysis of photovoice project	This photovoice project sought to address violence and its possible solutions in Detroit youth communities. It further intended to generate dialogue and action among youth, community leaders, and policy makers toward violence prevention. Dissemination events held but little description of further action taken.
Gurman et al. 2014	201 participants from a multi-site gender based violence project in South Sudan, Uganda, Thailand, Liberia and Rwanda	Video	Research paper - analysis of the ‘Through Our Eyes’ participatory video project	Reports a number of positive results in relation to behaviour change and a reduction in violence although authors caution for bias of self-reports. The authors advocate for a multi-level approach and did involve partners (NGOs, workers, men, government) in the projects. Although no real evidence of structural change.
Hergenrather et al. 2009	Literature review	Photography	Qualitative systematic review	Identified that methodologies did not always align with participatory nature of photovoice e.g. researchers identified community issues and undertook data analysis. However, 9 studies reported changes in programme or policy, including increasing collaborations and developing a pamphlet. Changes appear to be at micro or meso level.
Hoechner, 2015	12 almajirai boys from Kano, Nigeria	Participatory video	Reflection on the pros and cons of a participatory video project to stimulate	The author is transparent about the aims of the project which were to sensitise the public through the use of film to the issues facing the community and at the same time, using data collected during the production process for academic work.

			social change for this group who live in poverty	Some personal transformation is acknowledged as is a lack of change at the structural level.
Johnson et al. 2013	LGBT group in Brighton, UK and Trans collective in Barcelona, Spain	Photography, storytelling	Reflection on 2 participatory action research projects that aimed to transform dominant forms of representation	Little information provided about personal change but some hints at meso level change e.g. – better access to support services and also the potential of using the narratives as critical testimonies where they hoped to change legislation in Spain.
Johnston, 2016	Literature review	Photography	Scoping review of photovoice to explore how it effects social and policy change	Whilst photovoice has proven effective in engaging people in the political and social lives of their communities, the author concludes from the review that photovoice is most valuable as a vehicle for informing policy rather than for bringing about policy change.
Kovacic et al. 2014	10 African American 8 to 13 year olds from low income households in Detroit, USA	Photography	Research paper – analysis of photovoice project	Project seems to have been a catalyst for developing networks in order to support public health initiatives. However, article individualises problems (eating healthy diets) and does not discuss how to tackle structural determinants.
Kramer et al. 2010	26 adults and 15 youth from low income, ethnically diverse areas of Colorado, USA	Photography	Research paper – analysis of photovoice project as part of wider community projects	Policy leaders were participants in the project. Numerous dissemination activities were held which resulted in a number of policy and environmental changes; including healthier food offerings in schools and restaurants, city planning efforts that emphasize walkability and bikability, access to healthier food, demolition of unsafe buildings, and promotion of youth markets selling fresh produce.
Leung et al. 2017	7 females, 5 males age 11-14	Photography	Research paper – analysis of	Participants able to identify solutions to food justice issues and create a dialogue with peers and family. At the end of the

	years, East Harlem, New York, USA		photovoice project as part of wider food justice project	project a celebration and exhibit was held with youth and staff of other youth based organisations, community members and academics. However, longer-term impact and sustainability was unknown and not specifically built into the project.
Lorenz and Kolb, 2009	8 people from a brain injury service 40 – 60 years old, 5 women 3 men in Massachusetts, USA	Photography	Description of how using cameras can be effective in gaining public involvement using 2 case study examples	Photos displayed widely to the public, which may have resulted in attitude changes but no evidence for this. Authors admit no real change to policy as they did not include policy makers in the dissemination.
Miller, 2006	Homeless individuals in Boston, USA. No numbers given	Photography	Explores homelessness and how visual images can foster social change	This was a service learning project, collaboration between a college and a neighbourhood organisation, involving people who were experiencing homelessness taking photographs and a public exhibition. There were some sustainable outcomes including the original photographers conceiving and planning, a second, expanded exhibition. Student participation in community events increased.
Moser, 2003	Peruvian grass roots women's organisations around Lima, Peru	Theatre, street carnivals/ parades	Describes how theatre can be a form of grass roots political protest for social change	Describes women's political protest in Peru using theatre and carnival type street protests. Compelling argument for giving voice, but not for social change. Theatre as a 'positive, peaceful protest.'
O'Neill et al. 2019	Women asylum seekers in London and North East	Walking, video, forum theatre	Critical discussion of the experiences of women seeking asylum and the use of participatory arts-based methods	These projects brought a feeling of solidarity for the women. Social change was clearly on the agenda in these projects. The challenges of which were given voice by participants and researchers. Researchers 'hope' that through engagement with the projects policy makers are inspired to think differently.

Robinson, 2013	6 male and 2 female adult participants from a marginalised community in Vancouver	Photography	A theoretical and field-based exploration of the urban photography contest 'Hope in the Shadows.'	Reporting of focus group analysis into the experiences of participants involved in a community photography contest. Whilst the organisation that runs the contest has social change as an aim the contest itself is said to not be policy motivated, it's aim is to enable individuals to record their experiences. The author feels the competition gives voice, but the community is still excluded.
Sanon et al. 2014	Literature review	Photography	Literature review to analyse the social justice impact of photovoice projects	Maps the research impacts using a framework of social justice awareness, amelioration and transformation.
Spiegel & Parent, 2018	Young people from 13 to 34 across four marginalised areas of Quebec	Circus arts	Mixed methods evaluation of 4 social circus projects in Quebec	Personal transformation was evidenced as was the growth of social networks and feelings of community connectedness for the participants. Authors question how much structural change is achieved or whether the programmes serve to reinforce the status-quo.
Spiegel et al. 2019	Youth and marginalised groups, across Ecuador	Circus arts	Mixed methods evaluation of national social circus programme in Ecuador	Government initiated national project, large scale evaluation. Does address personal transformation. Identifies the conflicting driver of economic change in relation to the circus making participants more work ready (individual skill development) versus a focus on general improvement to community and 'Buen Vivir'
Tijm et al. 2011	10 people with physical disabilities, 5 men, 5 women in Ghana, Africa	Photography	Research paper – analysis of a photovoice project	This project gave people voice and opportunity to disseminate needs to stakeholders but it is not clear if any further action came of it.
Walker and Early, 2010	NGO workers in Sierra Leone, Africa	Photography	Research paper - analysis of a photovoice project	This project focused on people who work with the disadvantaged community. Transparent table of actions developed; some for the organisation that the participants

				worked for and some for government. The organisation made some changes but it is not clear whether the proposed changes by government were followed up.
Wang et al. 2004	41 youths and adults including policy makers, Flint, USA	Photography	Descriptive field report of a photovoice project	Description of a project designed to identify community assets and concerns. An innovation was including policy makers as participants. Photovoice project said to have been instrumental in competition for a Youth Violence Prevention Centre and renewal of funding for programmes.
Wood, 2016	61 school young people and 6 teachers from a failing school in New Zealand	Photography and digital storytelling	Reflections on a photovoice and digital story project designed to counter social exclusion.	The author did not feel that the main goal of celebrating the young people's strengths and changing attitudes within the town was not achieved. A dissemination event was cancelled by the local council which was perceived to be too risky, which ultimately compounded attitudes of failure.
Wrentschur and Moser, 2014	23 Disadvantaged young people (16-24 years) unemployed in Austria. 16 performances, 1000 people involved overall.	Theatre	Research paper – analysis of a forum theatre project	Used Forum theatre to try and bridge the gap between the youth and policy makers and to strengthen partnerships. Partners invited to rehearsals early on including NGOs and government departments. Audiences discussed problem solving strategies and notes were made of proposals. Recommendations were and will continue to be discussed with stakeholders /decision makers. Sounds like there was commitment for policy change from stakeholders to the extent that recommendations are published in a booklet.
Zuch et al. 2013	8 School children South Africa	Photography	Research paper - analysis of a photovoice project	A photovoice project to combat violence at school. With 8 children from 1 school in South Africa. Personal agency was experienced by participants but authors admit to no lasting change.

Table 2. Scores from critical appraisal tool.

Citation	Critical Appraisal Score (max 10)	Appraisal questions include:
Tijm, Cornielje & Edusei, 2011	8	Is there congruity between; the philosophical perspective and research methodology, methodology and questions, methodology and methods, methodology and data analysis, methodology and interpretation of results. A statement locating the researcher and their influence. Are the participant voices represented? Is it ethical? Do conclusions flow from the data?
Wrentschur & Moser, 2014	7	
Gurman et al. 2014	6	
Zuch et al. 2013	6	
Walker & Early, 2010, Findholt, Michael & Davis, 2010 Graham et al. 2013	5.5	
Kramer et al. 2010	5	
Leung et al. 2017	4	
Kovacac et al. 2014	3	

Table 3. Synthesis of literature into themes and subthemes.

Experiences related to giving voice	A continuum of change	Creative occupations influence social change
Benefits to participants of giving voice	Lack of change	Variety of arts based mediums used
Negative experiences related to giving voice	Personal transformations	Benefits of creative methods
Influencing attitudes for positive change by making voices heard	Actions at the meso level	Generation of tangible resources
		Risks in arts-based practices

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