

Title: A systematic literature review on arts therapy interventions with adoptive families

Abstract

Introduction: This review was completed as part of a PhD programme aiming to understand the impact of using planned arts therapy interventions with adoptive families, an under researched area in the UK.

Method: Six databases and 13 journals were systematically searched by the researcher. The search was conducted and reported in line with PRISMA guidelines and the search protocol was published on PROSPERO. Once articles were identified, a four step system was used to analyse the data, along with a Narrative Analysis to understand the qualitative data.

Results: 204 possible matches were found and reduced to six articles meeting the required search criteria. Two articles contained a planned intervention for adoptive families using arts therapy. Due to the low number of matching results, four articles focusing on planned therapeutic interventions with adoptive families were included.

Discussion: With limited evidence available on arts therapies with adoptive families, it is difficult to support or dispute their usage. Parents who were more able to empathise with their child had a higher sense of positive attachment and hope in the relationship. As mentalisation based interventions were best for parents, therapists and commissioners may need to think about upskilling and funding more work in this area.

Recommendations: The literature review here highlights a lack in planned arts therapy interventions and quality evidence-based outcomes to measure the impact on interventions. For adoptive families to experience higher levels of life satisfaction and resilience, interventions and outcomes measures need to be tailored and reported using mixed methodologies, whilst specific training should be considered for arts therapists in this area.

Context

In the UK, during the financial year of 2021-2022, the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) provided creative arts therapies for 2448 adoptive parents and children and for 2795 individual children (without parents). Given that the total number of creative arts therapy cases being funded was over 25% of ASF all therapeutic funding (total cases being 19537), the use and reporting of planned interventions, leading to replicable research results in the profession is low. In client centred work with families, the outcome of therapy must have a positive impact of the family's wellbeing (Swanick and Papatzikis, 2022). In order to gain an

understanding of what processes work best for the clients, reproducible results are needed to evidence the intervention and the outcomes in different contexts (Vaux, et al. 2012).

Furthermore, supporting the family as a whole, and in particular the parents, will have the longest lasting positive impact on the future of the family (Crittenden, 2016; Swanick and Jacobsen, 2019; Swanick and Papatzikis, 2022).

Literature Review

The aim of this review was to understand the impact of offering adoptive parents arts therapy interventions alongside the therapy of their child and to understand if the interventions could affect positive change in the family dynamics. It was hypothesised that taking part in a planned family intervention will support the families to experience better attachment relationships and feel more satisfied with their daily lives.

The literature review, search terms and interrogation questions explained below were initiated during a PhD project on understanding the impact of including families in creative arts therapies.

Alongside the exploration of literature available to understand what creative arts therapy interventions were available for adoptive families, five interrogation questions were stated so that articles could be analysed.

- I. What intervention was used?
- II. Did the parents engage?
- III. What creative activities were used?
- IV. What emotive themes were found?
- V. Was there an increased use of positive words or feelings of positivity around the attachment relationship?

Method

Lachal's (2017) four step systematic review process and a Narrative Analysis (Parcell & Baker, 2017) was used to review articles on the effectiveness of including adoptive parents, with children aged 16 or under, in arts therapy (art, music and dramatherapy). This review was conducted during 2022 by the lead researcher. The review used PRISMA to report the

findings and the search protocol was registered at the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (<https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/>; CRD42022322526).

Search Strategy

The following section details the search strategy used to review the stated databases and journals. This was created with the support of the reviewing team and as part of the PhD programme supervision. The search took place during April, 2022. The literature search was conducted in two parts during the same time period.

The following databases were searched online ASSIA; Child Development and Adolescent Studies; CINAHL: COCHRANE; EMBASE; Nursing & Allied Health Database; Oxford Journals; PUBMED/MEDLINE. The following journals were also searched online:

Approaches; Australian Journal of Music Therapy; British Journal of Music Therapy; Canadian Journal of Music Therapy; Drama Therapy Review; Dramatherapy; International Journal of Art Therapy; New Zealand Journal of Music Therapy; Nordic Journal of Music Therapy; The Arts in Psychotherapy.

The first search of databases and journals used the key search terms (Table 1) to examine titles, abstracts and keywords and the results were limited to English language papers only. This first literature search did not bring any results that matched the named search terms. The researcher conducted a broader second search (Table 1) and this yielded more suitable results. The second search was conducted on the databases and journals stated above, with the amendment of SCOPUS to replace Oxford Journals. A further hand search was undertaken as well as contacting relevant researchers in the field of adoption and arts therapies. References were then stored on the software package, Zotora, and recorded on to a spreadsheet for further analysis.

First Search Terms	Second Search Terms
Adoption AND adopt* Parent* OR family OR families, Child* OR Adoles* Creative art* OR music therap* OR dramatherap* OR art therap*, Intervention OR planned+intervention	Adopt* (proximity search) (child OR adolescent OR parent OR famil* OR father OR mother) Creative OR art OR music OR drama Therapy OR treatment OR intervention

--	--

Table 1: Key Search Terms used in the first and second searches.

Types of Study to be included

Population	
Inclusion	Exclusion
Articles published after 2010, children inc. and under 16, adoptive parents (Heterosexual, homosexual, transgender, in a couple or single), planned interventions with adoptive parents that are taking place concurrently or dyadically with adoptive children using art, music or dramatherapy, adoptive families undertaking an intervention, all evaluations designs – RCT or non-RCT, mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative, must include an intervention, peer-reviewed only articles (including PhD thesis and student papers.	Articles published before 2010, children over 16 years of age, foster families, approval adopters, biological parents, proposals with multiple interventions (this is to limit the number of variables when thinking about support), non-arts therapy interventions, descriptive papers which do not evaluate an intervention, non-English language papers and papers in review.
Intervention	
Inclusion	Exclusion
Planned interventions with adoptive parents, taking place concurrently or dyadically with adoptive children using art or music therapy or dramatherapy Families undertaking an intervention 'Care as usual'	Proposals with multiple interventions (this is to limit the number of variables when thinking about how an intervention will help the family), non-arts therapy interventions Contrasting populations such as foster or biological parents

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Data

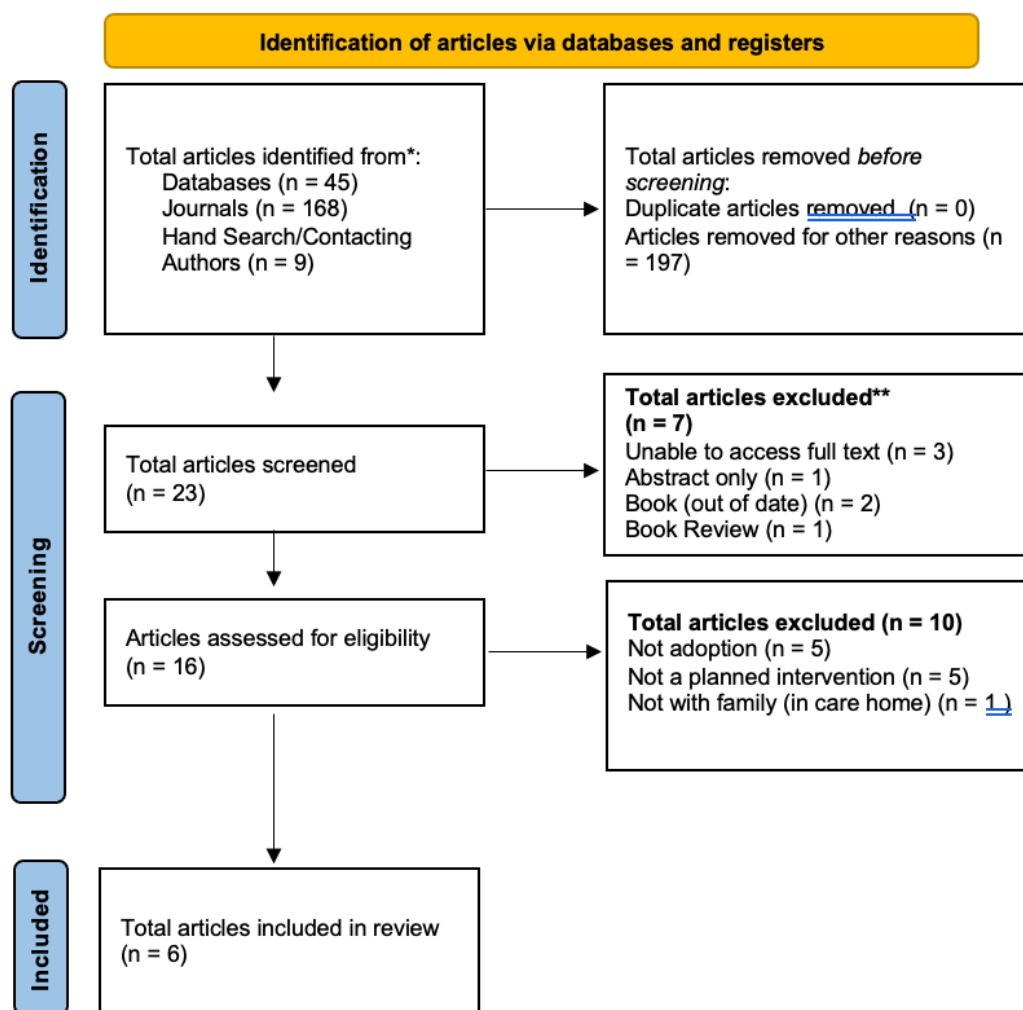


Figure 1. Prisma Flowchart of included studies.

Data extraction (selecting and coding)

The lead researcher (RS) first screened the literature by title and abstract. References that were not included were screened by the other reviewers in the process of supervision. Once the eligible articles were agreed upon, a full text screening was undertaken by the researcher and discussed in the same way as the initial screening.

A bespoke table of included/ excluded studies was developed (Table 3). The table included the study allocation number, authors, date of publication, study title, study reference,

summary of aims, country of study, number of participants, age, gender, parents, intervention type, time limited, mode and length of intervention delivery (e.g., f2f or online), study design, methodology and methods, type of data analysis, summary of key findings, strengths and limitations of study recorded.

Number of Study	Authors	Date	Publication/Database	Summary of Aims	Country of Study	STUDY INCLUDED/ EXCLUDED	Reason why Inc/Not
1	Young, B	2012	J Child Fam Studies	Parental behaviours on childhood anxiety	USA	N	Parents, trauma, NOT ADOPTED OR INTERVENTION
2	Sullivan, C	2018	DMT	Book Review: Creative therapies for complex trauma	UK	N	Book, out of date
3	Moore, J	2012	Dramatherapy	Book Review: Creating change for complex children and their families	UK	N	Book, out of date
4	Paine et al	2021	European Child & Adol Psych (EBSCO)	Early Adversity predicts emotional and behavioural challenges in adoptees	USA	N	Parents, Adoption, NOT INTERVENTION
5	Robertson, B	2001	American Journal of AT	Art therapy for adolescent adoptees	USA	N	Not a planned intervention, not parents
6	Sawin, P	2017	J of American Folklore (EBSCO)	The difficulties of adopting and how stories can help	USA	N	Adoption, Parents, stories, NOT INTERVENTION
8	Workman, K.S		EBSCO			N	Could not be retrieved
9	Montrons, H	2016	Nordic JMT	Abstract: Reflective article on adoption, loss and trauma	UK	N	Abstract only
11	Parry et al	2021	Child & Youth Care Forum (EBSCO)	Evidence based interventions for children in care	UK	N	Adopted, interventions, NOT IN FAMILY
12	Diaz et al		EBSCO		Spain	N	Could not be retrieved
13	Pastali	2012	J of MT	Investigation of music dynamics between parent and child	USA	N	Music, Family, NOT ADOPTED
14	Sullivan		Handsearch	Information, resources and services for adoptive parents		N	Book, out of date
16	Gravestock	2018	Attachment	A summary of clinical experiences with music therapy and adoptive families		N	Not a planned intervention, not parents
17	Taylor-Buck	2012	Int J of AT	Including parent-child dyads can support positive work	UK	N	Parent-child, intervention, NOT ADOPTION
19	Pastali	2011	Nordic JMT	Lit review on developmental psychology and music therapy for families	USA	N	Lit review, music therapy, families, NOT ADOPTION
20	Jacobsen, SL	2014	Nordic JMT	Effects of parent-child music therapy intervention	Denmark	N	Parent-child, intervention NOT ADOPTION
21	Ludlam, M	2005	Sex Rela Ther	Case study with an adoptive family in crisis and in the interventions used		N	Family, intervention, adoption NOT INCLUDED AS NOT A PLANNED INTERVENTION
A	Drozdz, F	2017	J Child Fam Studies	Systematic review of training and interventions for adoptive parents	Norway	Y/P	Interventions, parents, adoption
B	Kerr & Cossa	2014	Child Abuse review	Systematic review of attachment interventions for foster and adoptive chl	UK	Y/P	Interventions, parents, adoption
C	Harris-Waller	2018	Adoption & Fostering	Systematic review of psychological interventions for adoptive parents	UK	Y/P	Lit review, adoptive parents, interventions
D	Midgley, N e	2018	Adoption & Fostering	Mentalisation based intervention for post-adoption support in families	UK	Y/P	Family, intervention, adoption
E	Moore, J	2009	Dramatherapy	Dramatic, narrative approach with adoptive families	UK	Y/P	Arts, families, adoption
F	McApin	2013	Dissertation	Parents and children singing group		Y/P	Music therapy, family, intervention, adoption

Table 3. Included and Excluded Studies

Strategy for data synthesis

A four step metasynthesis was used to code, categorise, and subjectively analyse the qualitative data retrieved from the literature search (Lachal, et al, 2017). The subjective analysis followed the method of Narrative Analysis to gain understanding of emotive and descriptive data, a key aim of this review (Parcell & Baker, 2017). Figure 2 details the steps for analysis data that Lachal (2017) proposed.

Four Step Systematic Review

Step 1: Carefully reading and re-reading articles

Step 2: Coding

A line-by-line coding of the document will be used to interrogate the document. The following questions will be used to interrogate the papers and results recorded appropriately.

- I. What intervention was used?
- II. Did the parents engage?
- III. What creative activities were used?
- IV. What emotive themes were found?

V. Was there an increased use of positive words or feelings of positivity around the attachment relationship? Step 3: Group and Categorise Themes Step 4: Subjective Analysis
--

Figure 2. Four Step Systematic Review with the addition of the author's systematic review questions (Lachal, 2017).

Results

The aim of this review was to understand the impact of offering adoptive parents arts therapy interventions and how that may affect changes in the family dynamics. The articles reviewed contained numerical, anecdotal and thematic analysis of the search results is offered.

Included Studies

The search terms elicited six articles in total. Two articles specifically exploring creative arts therapies, adoption, families and planned interventions (Moore, 2010; McAlpin, 2013), and one further article described a planned intervention with adoptive families using mentalisation, a form of psychotherapy (Midgeley, et al. 2018). The three remaining articles were systematic reviews and the presenting author extrapolated the information from the reviews on the researchers, participants, intervention type and data analysis, detailing them in Table 4. As there were only two articles relating directly to the use of creative arts therapy planned interventions with adoptive families (Moore, 2010; McAlpin, 2013), it was decided with the reviewing team to include the three systematic reviews as interesting themes may have been highlighted in order to make positive recommendations for creative arts therapy interventions. Two articles were connected to each other; Harris-Waller, et al (2018) conducted their systematic review in response to Kerr & Cossar (2014). The final article was a systematic review on training and interventions available for adoptive parents (Drozd, et al. 2017). In the systematic reviews, there were several articles reviewed in multiple papers and this is also noted in Table 4. Overall, in all six reviewed articles, there were 28 studies analysed.

Researchers	Article Authors	Participants	Intervention	Data Analysis
Agbayani (2014)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	3 families	Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy	Not available
Baker, et al (2015)	Drozdz, et al (2017)	15 participants	Emotional Attachment and Emotional Availability Group	Emotional Availability Questionnaire, Parenting Stress Index
Baskin, et al (2011)	Drozdz, et al (2017)	138 participants	Educational Group Intervention for Couples	Forgiveness, marital satisfaction, depression questionnaires
Becker-Weidman (2006)	Kerr and Cossar (2014); Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	34 families	Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy	Randolph Attachment Disorder Questionnaire
Benjamin (2010)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018); Drozd, et al (2017)	20 x 2 families	Benjamin Interactive Parenting	Not available
Carnes-Holt, (2010)	Kerr and Cossar, (2014); Harris-Waller, et al, 2018); Drozd, et al (2017)	32 families	Child-Parent Relationship Therapy	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
Chan (1987)	Drozdz, et al (2017)	17 participants	Attachment based educational program	Maternal attachment behaviours
Colonessi, et al. (2013)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	20 families	Basic Trust Video	Not available
Dozier (2006, 2009)	Kerr and Cossar (2014)	Unknown	Unknown	Parent Attachment Diary (PAD)
Faver and Alanis (2012)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	14 families	Red Rovers Readers	Not available
Gilkes and Capstick (2010)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	Unknown	Parent-to-Parent Buddying Scheme	Not available
Gilkes and Klimes (2003)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	20 families	Incredible Years	Not available
Goulding and Picken, (2004)	Kerr and Cossar (2014)	Unknown	Fostering Attachments	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, Carer Intervention Questionnaire
Gurney-Smith, et al. (2010)	Kerr and Cossar, (2014) Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	13 families	The Fostering Attachments Group	Carer Intervention Questionnaire, Expression of Feelings and Relationships Questionnaire
Henderson and Sargent (2005)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	35 families	Incredible Years	Not available
Holmes and Silver (2010)	Kerr and Cossar (2014); Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	54 families	Managing Behaviour with Attachment in Mind	Carer Intervention Questionnaire
Juffer (1997, 2005)	Kerr and Cossar (2014); Harris-Waller, et al. (2018); Drozd, et al (2017)	30 x 2 families	Sensitive Parenting Workbook	Strange Situation Procedure (SSP)
Laybourne et al. (2008)	Kerr and Cossar (2014)	Unknown	Unknown	Carer Intervention Questionnaire

Loew, et al (2012)	Drozdz, et al (2017)	98 participants	PREP – Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program	PREP questionnaire
McAlpin (2013)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	10 families	Kindermusik	Parent diaries, observational
Midgeley, et al, (2018)	Midgeley, et al (2018)	36 families	Adopting Minds	The Brief Assessment Checklist, Brief Parental Self Efficacy Scale, Experience of Service Questionnaire, Experience of Therapy Interview
Moore (2010)	Moore (2010)	117 adoptive families	Dramatherapy	Not available
Rushton et al (2010)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018); Drozd, et al (2017)	10 families	CBT, Psychoeducation	Not available
Ryan and Madsen (2007)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	1 family	Filial therapy	Not available
Selwyn, et al (2009)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018); Drozd, et al (2017)	41 participants	'It's a Piece of Cake' intervention	Confidence in Parenting Skills Questionnaire
Stams et al (2002)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	27 & 17 families	Follow up to Juffer (1997, 2005)	Not available
Timmer, et al. (2006)	Harris-Waller, et al. (2018)	1 family	Parent-Child Interactions therapy	Not available
Wassall et al (2011)	Kerr and Cossar (2014); Drozd, et al(2017)	21 families	The Fostering Attachments Group	Parental Competence Questionnaire, The Sense of Security Scale

Table 4. Table of authors, recording researchers, participants, interventions, and outcomes measures, where known.

Participants:

The articles that were reviewed concerned families with adopted children aged 18 and under.. Four articles did not report on the number of participants (Goulding and Picken, 2004; Dozier, et al. 2006, 2009; Laybourne, et al. 2008; Gilkes and Capstick, 2010). In 19 articles, researchers reported on the number of families (n=565), with no information given on the individuals within the family (Juffer, 1997, 2005; Stams, et al. 2002; Becker-Weidman, 2006; Timmer, et al. 2006; Ryan and Madsen, 2007; Moore, 2010; Benjamin, 2010; Carnes-Holt, 2010; Gilkes and Capstick, 2010; Gurney-Smith, et al. 2010; Holmes and Silver, 2010; Rushton, et al. 2010; Wassall, et al. 2011; Faver and Alanis, 2012; Colonessi, et al. 2013; McAlpin, 2013; Agbayani, 2014; Midgely, et al. 2018). The remaining five articles reported on the individual's experience of the intervention (n=309) (Chan, 1987; Selwyn, et al. 2009; Baskin, et al. 2011; Loew, et al. 2012; Baker, et al. 2015). A breakdown on the participants

reported in each of the articles is available in Table 4. Not all studies reported the number of participants and therefore there are gaps in the data available.

Data Collection:

When analysing the methods of data collection in the two arts therapy interventions (Moore, 2010; McAlpin, 2013), descriptive data collection methods were preferred. Moore (2010) focused on the family's perceived sense of behavioural change, using self-created questionnaire. Whilst, McAlpin (2013) focused on parent interviews and observations. In Grebosz-Haring, et al's (2022) article on the need for robust data collection in arts therapy, the researchers noted serious concerns on low levels of quality in arts therapies research. Grebosz-Haring, et al, found that there was a lack of quantitative research studies in the field of arts therapy and proposed that this should be addressed by professionals. It was stated that there was an emphasis on qualitative data in arts therapy articles, which is important when trying to understand emotional processes and themes (Casebeer & Verhoef, 1997). However, adding quantitative data to the process of therapeutic qualitative data enables the arts therapy profession to understand more scientifically the causes and effects happening in interventions, provide evidence of change for commissioners and participants and to replicate the positive change happening in interventions. Combining qualitative and quantitative data will also allow art therapists to communicate with a wider professional audience, validated and evidencing the positive attributes and challenges of the work.

Interestingly, in the analysis of the articles outside of the arts therapy field (Kerr & Cossar, 2014; Drozd, et al, 2017; Harris-Waller, 2018), the criticism of data collection methods was also present. In particular, some interventions did not use an evaluation tool and others did not report on the results of the evaluation (Stam, et al. 2001; Gilkes and Klimes, 2003; Timmer, et al. 2006; Moore, 2010; Benjamin, 2010; Gilkes and Capstick, 2010; Henderson and Silver, 2010; Rushton et al. 2010; Faver and Alanis, 2012; Colonessi, et al. 2013). Several articles used evaluation tools that were not validated (Dozier, et al. 2006, 2009; McAlpin, 2013). The lack of consistent or meaningful outcomes measures across the articles, led to poor reporting of data and no clear way or consistent way to gather, report and highlight good practice.

Midgeley, et al (2018) used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data in their reporting. The research team used five robust questionnaires and provided experiential data from

participants about their therapeutic experience. Having a balance of data provided the reader with important numerical evidence on the areas of change in the participants and also added an emotional element so that phenomenological themes could be thought about.

Interrogation Questions:

I. What intervention was used?

There were 21 specific types of interventions being used with adoptive families (detailed in Table 4) with eight interventions focusing on building attachment bonds (Goulding and Picken, 2004; Moore, 2010; Laybourne et al, 2008; Dozier et al, 2006, 2009; Sprang 2009; Gurney-Smith, et al, 2010; Wassall et al, 2011; Midgley, 2018). With evidence highlighting the impact of the mother's attachment patterns as a positive or negative force towards the child (Farnfield, 2019), Kerr and Cossar (2014) echo this sentiment, quoting Zeanah, et al (2011):

“as attachment theory is concerned with relational functioning and the ability of caregivers to help children regulate emotions, interventions which target children alone are not in keeping with the principles of the theory”.
(Kerr & Cossar, 2014, pg. 428).

With this statement in mind, to help support secure attachment foundations in adoptive families, focusing on the child's symptomology is not enough. Parents should be included as building resilience and awareness of reactions in parents will elicit the longest, and strongest, sense of wellbeing and change (Crittenden, 2016).

In the focus of considering the impact of creative arts therapy interventions, Moore worked with the parents in parallel to the child (2010). Moore offered psychoeducation for parents and they not involved in the child sessions. The child sessions focused on storytelling and metaphor using water, clay, dolls and candles. The intervention was based on Crittenden's (1990) ideas of attachment although with the child sessions happening individually, the principles of attachment theory might not have been met. Moore did work with the child to understand somatised trauma memories and much has been written about the positive elements in this approach (Van Der Kolk, 2003).

McAlpin (2013) worked with child and parents in a creative arts theory mode. The aim of the eight weekly, community music sessions was to promote social skills and encourage bonding between parent and child through music. In addition to the weekly sessions, parents were asked to complete a 'homework' task, thereby encouraging parents to take the positive aspects of the sessions into their daily routines; creating more change in a natural way. When parents are included and engaged in their child's development, the child has a greater chance of success in that area (Levinthal, et al, 2021). This theory again compliments the research stated above that when thinking about relational functioning, i.e. between a parent and child in the home environment, it is imperative that both parent and child are included in the intervention.

Midgeley et al, (2018) used a mentalisation based intervention call Adopting Minds. In the article, little is written about what the intervention contains, with the focus of the research being the outcomes measures (in that instance). Kerr & Cossar (2014), Drozd, et al (2017) and Harris-Waller (2018) stated the names of the interventions used (detailed in Table 4) did not explore the procedures or protocols of the interventions.

II. Did the parents engage?

Moore (2010) referred to the parents who did engage well in the intervention in an anecdotal way. In the article it is unclear if all parents engaged in the psychoeducational aspect and follow up communications relating to their adoptive child. McAlpin's Kindermusik intervention was offered to 13 families, with 10 families completing the full intervention and the evaluation interviews (2013). The three families that did not complete the intervention all stopped due to child illnesses. The remaining families did engage fully; they completed the eight music sessions, wrote journals (as instructed by the intervention) and took part in the evaluation family interviews at the end of the intervention. Midgeley, et al. (2018) report that parents did engage in the intervention, however, it is not clear how many families completed the six session intervention. In explanation, Midgeley, et al. state that the evaluation questionnaires were offered to "*families who had completed at least six sessions of therapy....Eight families were contacted*" (pg. 25). The reader can assume that this meant that eight families completed the intervention out of the referred 36 families, but more information is needed. Furthermore, with the eight families contacted, three were not able to complete the questionnaires, leaving five families remaining for the evaluation process. Kerr

and Cossar (2014) Drozd, et al (2017) and Harris-Waller, et al (2018) did not report data relating to the engagement of families.

With only one article reporting well on parental involvement (McAlpin, 2013), it is difficult to ascertain any patterns to parental engagement. For the future of research with families, it will be important for professionals to understand and report on how parents completed the interventions and which activities they engaged with most freely. This will help therapists to plan and support parents with a good base knowledge of which activities work well, as a general theme.

III. What creative activities were used?

The literature search highlighted two creative arts interventions for adoptive families. Moore's planned sessions for children relied on the use of symbolism through creative acts (2010). When using water, Moore associated the symbol of 'love' because water is 'plentiful' and can "absorb [good] and dispose of the bad" (Moore, 2010, pg 5.). Clay was linked to strong emotional expression and Moore used this material to construct the child's family. The use of dolls and a house was helpful for children to reimagine and explore family relationships and placement moves. Moore finally offered a 'candle ceremony' where a candle was lit to represent individuals in the child's life. According to Crocker and Carr (2021) the ability to work in the framework of metaphor and symbolism is in equation to empathising, or being 'in touch', with another person or aspect of the self. Empathising with another, or with the self, means that the client can see the situation in several different ways; they become unstuck from their often-painful viewpoint and move towards understanding the motives of the other's behaviours. Being able to imagine the feelings or motivations of another person is important in family work as it allows a clearer way to communicate for all family members. Peter Fonaghy (2000) wrote extensively in this area. Fonaghy's idea of mentalisation has informed many family interventions including those described in this review (Goulding and Picken, 2004; Gurney-Smith, et al. 2010; Carnes-Holt, 2010; Wassall, et al. 2011; Baker, et al, 2015; Midgley, 2018). Although it is not explicitly stated, Moore also linked mentalisation to the parent psychoduction sessions provided at the start of the intervention where parents were encouraged to think about the impact of attachment, neglect and trauma on their child's cognitive development (2010).

McAlpin (2013) used an intervention called Kindermusik. The classes, held weekly for eight weeks, contained singing to explore musical genres and develop memory, movement to enhance coordination skills, stories to broaden language, musical concepts to share knowledge, improvisations providing the opportunity to share and play together and ‘at home’ learning materials to enhance child development. Each activity was planned and themed to engage children and parents alike. Alongside the interactive sessions, parents were asked to write a reflective journal throughout the week.

Several of the reviewed studies did include a ‘play’ element (Dozier, et al. 2006, 2009; Timmer, et al.; 2006; Ryan and Madsen, 2007; Carnes-Holt, 2010). Although this is not directly a creative arts therapy, the use of play with children and parents is important to build a sense of connection, as well as functional skills such as social interaction, problem solving and emotional resilience (Murray, 2018). During play – either through creative activities or traditional play, parents can also attune to the affects of the child – their rhythms, movements, gestures – which help the child feel secure and noticed. Affect attunement (Stern, 2010) is often the key to creating secure attachment relationships, which is the foundation for all family relationships (Swanick & Jacobsen, 2019).

IV. What emotive themes were found in the results?

Moore, McAlpin and Midgley (2010; 2013; 2018) all reported on themes of acceptance from both children and parents. Moore (2010) described the children completing the intervention exploring therapeutic ambivalence (holding two feelings such as love and hate for another) and how this helped the children accept their birth and adoptive families more positively. In another example, Moore highlighted the use of the candle ceremony in the intervention and how a young person was able to ‘speak’ to his past family and therefore create an emotional space for his new adoptive family. McAlpin (2013) used the terms Healing Awareness, Acceptance Awareness and Compassion Awareness. Each of the three themes centred on acceptance: healing awareness related to the idea of accepting unresolved feelings, acceptance awareness was the parent accepting all aspects of the self (therapeutic ambivalence, as above) and compassion awareness was the process of the parents accepting their own childhood experiences and how they are affecting the present. Midgely (2018) echoed the expressed need from parents to understand and accept their own childhood and past experiences, as well as the importance of enabling a space where parents could share feelings and thoughts without feeling judged (acceptance of their own feelings). Baer and

Huss (2008) explain that acceptance is a willingness to hold or think about unwanted feelings without repressing or escaping them. Furthermore, as negative feelings are part of life, being able to accept them independently is part of building emotional resilience.

In nine of the reviewed articles in the systematic reviews, emotive themes were not used to describe the impact of the interventions analysed. However, this could be purely semantics as research teams did offer insights into reductions in parental stress (Selwyn, et al, 2009; Carnes-Holt, 2010; Holmes and Silver (2010)) and an increase in a sense of positive attachment in the family (Juffer (1997, 2005; Stams et al. 2002; Becker-Weidman 2006; Colonnese et al (2013). Other researchers found no positive or negative change at all in the family (Timmer, et al. 2006; Benjamin (2010).

V. Was there an increased use of positive words or feelings of positivity around the attachment relationship?

Moore (2010) observed changes in parental affection and warmth towards their child, a positive change in language and intonation when parents were speaking to children and a greater understanding for the impact of trauma on development. Moore also noticed an increased emphasis on the importance of creative play in the family, with parents' keener to engage with their adoptive children in this way. McAlpin (2013) found an increase in intentional time spent between parent and child (80%), a sense of stronger family relationships (20%) and a focus on positive times shared as a family in the intervention (10%). When thinking of creative art activities, 90% of families reported an increased use of voice and singing and an increased feeling of comfort within this. Families started to use music more in the home (10%) and 50% of families increased the use of instruments in the home to soothe and calm. A strong number of families (70%) felt they had gained 'creative tools' for supporting the child's development and attachment needs. From the five families that took part on the semi structured interview for Adopting Minds (Midgeley, et al. 2018), all families reported a positive change in their understanding of the family relationships in at least one area. Furthermore, the use of the parental efficacy questionnaire, Brief Parental Self Efficacy Scale, highlighted that all of the parents who completed the evaluation showed increased confidence and feelings of effectiveness in their roles as parents. The Brief Assessment Checklist also highlighted an increased sense of self-efficacy in parents as well as a reduction in emotional and behavioural problems in children. Midgeley, et al. (2018) found that as adopters may have low levels of trust around professionals, the use of Adoptive

Minds helped adopters feel listened to and supported, thus increasing feelings of trust towards professionals and a sense of safety in relationships. Kerr and Cossar, Drozd, et al. and Harris-Waller (2014; 2017; 2018) did not report on qualitative data from the use of the interventions analysed.

Areas of limitations and improvement, recommendations

With approximately 25% of adoption support funded therapy cases being creative arts therapies, it is important that best practice is shared with the wider profession and adoptive families so that families are given the best care possible (Swanick & Efthymios, 2022). However, for reasons that will need investigating (and are beyond the scope of this review), interventions and outcomes are not being reported in the academic field. Casebeer and Verhoef (1997) wrote about the strengths and weakness of concentrating on either qualitative or quantitative data and how, if researchers combine both methods, they galvanise the results. More recently, in an editorial piece, Bolte (2014) highlighted the lack of training for those working in caring professionals around the use of qualitative methods and that within certain professions, the use of either qualitative or quantitative methods was not welcomed. In the creative arts therapy field, and a theme which was hinted at in Bolte's editorial, therapists are less likely to use quantitative methodologies, preferring descriptive data when analysing the work (Silverman, 2008). Furthermore, leaning on qualitative research could be understood to emphasise the researchers opinions, whilst adding quantitative data to the descriptive offers a statistical confirmation of the themes and questions arising in the clinical work (Razafsha, et al. 2012).

A recommendation for the future creative arts therapy research, based on the findings of this review, would be for creative arts therapists to be actively trained in using mixed-methods data collection to evidence the work that is being undertaken. As Bolte (2014) states, qualitative methods help us to deepen our understanding of the human experience and qualitative supports the testing of these questions whilst enabling therapeutic care to be relayed to wider populations.

Midgely, et al (2018) presented in a thorough mixed-methods way, with plenty of numerical and anecdotal evidence on the positive elements of the intervention. This created a successful article with useful information on therapeutic progress as well as the client experience. When the focus is on purely quantitative data, the emotive experience of families is lost and as

adoptive families are facing more difficulties in this area, the reporting process loses its impact on the audience. Both Kerr and Cossar (2014) and Harris-Waller (2018) highlight the lack of data reporting systems in adoption therapy, emphasising that the quality of articles available is low. Drozd, et al. (2017) acknowledge that the field of adoption therapy is still young and feel to create quality research on interventions that do work, researchers need to “plan and conduct smaller, high quality studies” (pg.352) to create a solid foundation. Drozd, et al. also acknowledged the lack of research for adult adoptees and how their adoption has affected their sense of identity and life after childhood. As adoption brings up different family struggles when compared with birth families, adoptive families need interventions created with their needs in mind (Baden, et al. 2013).

Discussion

The aim of this review was to understand the impact of planned creative arts therapy interventions with adoptive families. With the limited number of articles meeting the search criteria, it is difficult to support or dispute, if arts therapy interventions are useful when supporting adoptive families even though there is positive clinical anecdotal information in the profession. Research has shown that although psychotherapy is recommended as a good way to manage mental health and relationship problems, 50% of clients do not experience positive change, whilst 5-10% of clients experience a deterioration (Braga, et al. 2019). It becomes important for therapists to understand why positive progress does happen (when it does) and how this can be reproduced in other contexts as a way to support clients coming to therapy for help. Several of the articles reviewed stated that the quality of data collection and reporting was low (Kerr and Cossar, 2014; Drozd, et al. 2017; Harris-Waller, 2018) and the impact of this on the adoptive work means that any positive outcomes are not being represented in the profession. McAlpin (2013) and Midgeley, et al. (2018) both reported strong quantitative outcomes alongside qualitative information, and although they both had small sample sizes, there is a positive argument for the use of interventions with adoptive parents.

Nearly all of the interventions discussed here used mentalisation as the base theory. Some interventions stated this (Goulding and Picken, 2004; Dozier, 2006, 2009; Gurney-Smith, et al. 2010; for example) whilst other interventions inferred the use of Fonagy’s key concept of mentalisation (2000), it is interesting that this method of building empathy between parent

and child was the most frequently used theory. Camoirano (2017) conducted a literature review on studies using mentalisation as a core tool. It was found through the results that parents who were more able to empathise with their child's emotional state were more able to provide adequate parenting and had secure attachments with their children. In the context of 'good enough' parenting, children were found better at regulating themselves and also empathising with others, creating a positive cycle of attachment.

Recommendations

Using qualitative and quantitative outcomes measures to highlight positive and negative change can help therapists to think about how to support their clients in the best way – both in the present and for the future. A sense of compassion as well as science is needed as families want to feel 'non judged' (Midgeley, et al. 2018) as well as heard and seen by their therapists (Swanick and Jacobsen, 2019). The process of mentalisation that needs to be fostered in the home dynamics, begins with being modelled between therapist and parent, with the therapist acting as a transitional attachment object to both child and parent (Crittenden, 2016). Furthermore, an adoptive parent may be carrying much loss and grief and helping them to resolve this trauma will create more capacity for parenting their child, strengthening their attachment bonds through an ability to empathise (mentalise) with them (Dozier, 2009; Midgley, et al. 2018; Farnfield, 2019).

Therefore, it is proposed that creative arts therapists are encouraged to use validated outcomes measures alongside clinically led interventions and report well on the data through academia. This could start with specific training by institutions and organisations on how to use outcomes measures, how to write findings of research and share those findings with the community. Drozd, et al (2017) and Harris-Waller (2018) believed that there were too many interventions and outcomes measures being used, and so streamlining those available to creative arts therapist initially, in order to ascertain which work best may be a good step forward. Drozd et al. (2017) also acknowledge the unique challenges faced by adoptive families and suggested that interventions and outcomes measures are tailored to those needs. Helping creative arts therapists to share ideas of best practice and to understand that replicability and evidencing the work they are already doing is imperative will help the profession to move forward to a wider commissioning and client audience.