

Crafting together for sustainable wellness in Australia: How do informal groups for older women meet the needs of individuals as well as society

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Introduction

Informal domestic craft groups for older women in Australia are common though under recognised within communities and, in particular, within formal health and social services. The potential of these groups to enable healthy ageing, wellbeing as well as community connectivity, has not been explored by authors in the literature. Both the medium of domestic craft and the participant population are rendered invisible from the market economy (McLeod, 2005).

Objectives

The objective of the study was to explore whether participating in informal domestic craft groups generates levels of social and emotional wellbeing that ameliorate the need for older women to access formal health and social services. The study investigated how an expanding and disenfranchised subgroup of the population creates opportunities for empowerment and inspiration. We use an occupational perspective to conceptualise how these craft groups facilitate wellbeing for older women.

Methods

This qualitative study was a funded pilot study undertaken by Occupational Therapy and Social Work staff at Deakin University, Geelong, Australia. Participants were from two informal, local groups in this regional community. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with five members from each group. The interviews explored the experience of participation in informal domestic craft groups and its relationship to health and wellbeing.

Results

Results are reported using a Doing, Being, Belonging and Becoming occupational model which we will discuss. 'Doing' involved intrinsic and extrinsic rewards derived from participating in both craft and a regular informal group. 'Being' involved the role of productive team member sharing and developing skills. 'Belonging' involved experiences of interdependence and mutual support. 'Becoming' involved contributing craft specific skills as well as collective wisdom and experience to meet current and future community needs.

Conclusion

Older women experienced wellbeing, belonging and community inclusion through their capacity to create and to contribute by participating in informal domestic craft groups.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

Participating in craft groups generates levels of social and emotional well being that ameliorate the need for older woman to access formal health and social services.

McLeod, R. (2005) *Thrift to Fantasy*. HarperCollins Publishers (New Zealand).