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A Literature Review of Community Art Therapy with Youth in Inner City Communities of Color

Jennifer Habeeb
jhabeeb@lesley.edu

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In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Rebecca Zarate

A Literature Review of Community Art Therapy with Youth in Inner City Communities of Color

Jennifer Habeeb

Lesley University

May 5, 2020

Jennifer Habeeb

Specialization: Art Therapy

Abstract

This literature review was developed to synthesize the research surrounding community-based art therapy with youth who reside in inner city communities of color. Youth of color in inner city communities face a number of different challenges such as low socioeconomic status, social inequality, discrimination, and lack of political representation. There is currently little research on the impact of art therapy and expressive arts interventions with this population, however; these interventions have shown to be effective in a number of different areas. Literature revealed that community-based art therapy with inner city youth of color has shown to increase self-esteem, decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression, and improve communication and community relationships. The aim of this research is to use the findings from the literature to improve awareness about community-based art therapy with this population with the intention that more research and interventions will be conducted in the future.

Keywords: inner city, community-based, art therapy, youth, at-risk youth, urban youth, violence in communities, social action, systemic art therapy, multicultural counseling

A Literature Review of Community Art Therapy
with Youth in Inner City Communities of Color

Introduction

The majority of America's youth live in or just outside of urban areas, and as a result are exposed to higher rates of violence and crime (Office of Popular Affairs 2019). Over the course of the past twenty or so years in American history, urban youth have been greatly affected by social inequality, economic disparity, political changes, marginalization, and program alterations in education that emphasize containment of youth, rather than teaching them skills that allow them to be proactive (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). Because youth are too young to vote and participate in political changes within the democratic structure, they often feel discouraged, and unable to evoke real change within their communities (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005).

Due to these external circumstances, youth who reside in highly populated cities face many challenges regarding mental health and development. Urban communities are often isolated and can have different rules, norms, and values that affect youth (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2002). Youth in these settings are often perceived as being violent and disobedient, and they are also exposed to higher rates of violence in their communities which only perpetuate these norms and ideas (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). This exposure to violence can result in PTSD, aggression, depression, low self-esteem, and hopelessness among urban youth (Perez-Smith, Albus, & Weist 2001). In order to cope with these challenges, youth are prone to act out, and be labeled with behavioral difficulties or disorders; due to lack of financial stability and access to resources, they are unable to get help and resolve their trauma.

Expressive therapies, particularly art therapy, has been shown to be an effective intervention when working with at-risk youth in inner-city school districts. Research has shown that community-based expressive arts interventions with this population improve youths' intrapersonal skills, communication, ability to self-regulate, self-esteem, allow them to build stronger relationships within the communities they reside, and view their community in a more positive way (Rossetto 2012). Interventions such as group map-making allow youth to identify positive and negative factors in their community and work towards positive change (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller 2016). Youth who participate in youth public arts programs (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015), community mural making (Rossetto 2012), and other after school expressive arts programs (Kellner 2004), have also shown improvement spanning various areas of functioning after participating in these research studies.

If left without any strategic use of such research on expressive therapies within city communities, youth often feel as though they are not active members of their community who can create positive change (Kellner 2004). Community art therapy with youth can allow them to be active voices in their community, and improve not only their social and emotional well-being, but the social and emotional well-being of other members in their community. This topic is important because with expressive arts interventions, youth can be provided with the tools needed to break down economic, political, and social barriers that hinder their growth, development, and mental health. In addition to these benefits, violence in communities can be decreased, self-esteem and mental health of youth can improve, and youth will have a greater opportunity to succeed. Through my research and review of the literature surrounding this topic, I hope to gain a better understanding of the historical and current challenges that urban youth face, become aware of effective art therapy and expressive arts interventions that have benefitted

this population, and be able to implement these tools into my practice to create an expressive arts program for urban youth in the future.

Youth in Inner City Districts

When researching youth who reside in inner-cities, it is essential to be acutely aware of whom the population is comprised of. Borgman (n.d.) states:

““Urban in a restricted sense, refers to densely populated, lower socio-economic, inner city neighborhoods with a minimum of social services. “Urban youth” generally refers to young people, mostly minority, whose lives revolve more around the streets than school and home. (Borgman n.d.).”

Youth and their families who reside in inner city communities primarily identify as black, brown and latinx individuals. In the United States, 60% of low-income children are black, 59% identify as Hispanic, 32% are American Indian, 27% are white, and 40% of children of unspecified race (Act for Youth n.d.). To understand why communities that are labeled as “urban” are composed primarily of people of color, it is essential to be informed of the racial, systemic, and economic injustices people of color have historically faced. It is well documented that non-white communities have faced issues such as residential displacement, gentrification, redlining, discrimination, segregation, poverty, and lack of political representation for decades, even centuries throughout American history (Solomon, Maxwell, & Castro 2019). These challenges can result in low economic status and lack of affordable housing or ability to access housing. This creates a system in which families are left with few choices, and must live in urban, government funded housing, or substandard housing in areas with high crime rates, frequent exposure to substances, and lack of education and social services ((Solomon, Maxwell, & Castro 2019).

Risk Factors

Racism in America has limited the agency and ability to participate in democracy for African American youth as far back as the times of the Jim Crow laws which were in effect from 1870 to the mid 1960's. Today, the residual effects of legalized inequality can still be seen, particularly in the justice system (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). While youth crime has steadily decreased over the past two to three decades, the number of youths of color who are imprisoned has grown (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). Urban schools have contributed to the stigma surrounding urban youth with forced disciplinary policies such as metal detectors, security cameras, and additional security guards and or police officers. These polices target youth of color as the source of social problems within the communities they reside in, rather than support them to contribute positively and combat injustice (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005).

Two perspectives have arisen in regards to youth in inner cities as a result of social and economic factors.

The “problem-driven perspective is characterized by its central focus on youth problems such as delinquency, substance abuse, and violence... The possibility-driven perspective focuses on youth assets and strategies to support healthy and productive youth development. (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005).”

The problem-driven perspective views youth as problems to be solved, and emphasizes exertion of control over youth rather than restructuring of policies that will help youth succeed (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). Within the ideas of the possibility-driven perspective, positive youth development is an idea that aims to provide more resources that allow

youth to reshape their roles in the community in a way that emphasizes emotional well-being and empowerment (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005).

Economic Risk Factors

In addition to these political and social factors, urban youth also face a cycle of economic stress. Over the past few decades, the American culture has shifted to a system that highly values a college education. Where previously, one could hold a job that would allow them to buy a house and provide for a family with only a high school education, now it is virtually impossible to work at a low wage job such as retail and be financially stable (Ginwright & James 2002). Since youth have limited access to economic opportunities and support for college and career development, they are often unable to attend college. This cycle is only perpetuated if a child's family is already lower socio-economic status (Ginwright & James 2002). In families where there is already financial strain, the money that a youth is able to make in adolescence often goes to helping the family rather than towards their own future learning (Ginwright & James 2002).

Research has shown that high rates of poverty in urban areas has benefitted large corporations and businesses because it allows these companies access to low-wage workers that reduce their cost for services for their higher paid employees. (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). Rather than addressing the state's neglect of social welfare, the regression of education quality, unemployment spikes, and lack of access to healthcare; disenfranchised groups, i.e.: immigrants, urban youth, and or people of color, shoulder the blame for the decline of these services (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). Due to these numerous challenges and systemic set-backs, youth lack the support that would allow them to access services that could improve their economic position in society, thus perpetuating a cycle that does not allow for people of color to easily make economic gains.

Violence in Urban Communities

As a result of the aforementioned systemic and structural obstacles, research has shown that youth of color living in cities face higher rates of exposure to violence in their communities. In Perez-Smith, Albus, and Weist's (2001) study, it is documented that more than 90% of urban sixth graders have heard gun fire in their neighborhood, and or seen someone being assaulted or arrested (Perez-Smith, Albus, & Weist 2001). The research also shows that on average, male youth have a higher rate of exposure to violence than females, and more often than not, all children have been exposed to more than one violence incident (Perez-Smith, Albus, & Weist 2001). Exposure to any violence for children and adolescents can lead to a number of negative outcomes such as: aggression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness, anti-social behaviors, anxiety, and internalizing or externalizing emotions (Perez-Smith, Albus, & Wesit 2001).

Neighborhood Affiliation, Poverty, and Violence

Community and neighborhood affiliations throughout cities also play a large part in youths' exposure to violence. The economic and social influence of the neighborhood environment that youth live in have proven to have influence in shaping a child's development, as well as their familial structure (Perez-Smith, Albus & Weist 2001). Another important factor in regards to neighborhood influence on youth is their perception, affiliation, and attitude towards their neighborhood. Perez-Smith, Albus, and West's (2001) research found evidence based on surveys that particularly adolescents level of affiliation in their community could predict their exposure to violence (Perez-Smith, Albus, & Weist 2001). The research showed that in city areas with high-crime, high-poverty, youths perceived affiliation with their neighborhood increases their risk of experiencing violence (Perez-Smith, Albus, & Weist 2001). Without

services that allow youth to positively impact the communities in which they live, it can be hypothesized that this trend will continue.

Community Violence and Mental Health

Exposure to violence in city communities can lead to a number of challenges, especially if that violence is chronic and frequent (Duncan 1996). Chronic trauma, particularly consistent and unrelenting exposure to violence in the community, can create a cycle wherein the child exposed to repeated violence may become violent themselves, develop PTSD, and experience feelings of despair due to inability to change their environment (Duncan 1996). Research shows that adolescents who experience violence are 20-60% more likely to develop anxiety or PTSD (Kellner 2004). While there are a number of ways to combat the negative effects of chronic trauma, interventions that boost self-esteem and provide the space and support for youth to express their feelings, communicate, and build positive relationships with others in their community have proven to be particularly helpful in symptom reduction (Duncan 1996).

Research also shows that familial practices have no influence on whether or not youth in urban areas are exposed to violence (Sheidow, Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry 2001). However, youth who reported witnessing violence also reported that they had also witnessed violence within their family (Sheidow, Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry 2001). In Sheidow, Gorman-Smith, Tolan, and Henry's (2001) study, they examined the correlation between family functioning, neighborhood dynamics, and exposure to violence. The results of the study revealed that violence exposure can only be linked to family functioning in environments that are significantly poor. This is because impoverished communities lack the services for youth that can act as a safety net for youth such as after-school programs, residential areas without violence, and safe spaces within schools (Sheidow, Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry 2001). It is important

to note that there are a number of similarities between the impoverished communities described in this study, and the majority of urban areas where people of color reside.

The Justice System and Urban Youth

In addition to exposure to violence, youth in urban areas, particularly youth of color are more likely to be charged with crimes than their white counterparts, even though they are statistically not engaging in more illegal activities (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). Past research from the 1960's shows that delinquency crime rates in primarily black communities exceeded the crime rates of the cities in which the communities were located; however, 90% of youth in those communities did not come in contact with the law (Clark 1965). This research shows that over the course of the past sixty years, little progress has been made in the perception of urban youth and their communities.

Another negative effect of high crime and incarceration rates among youth in urban communities is that it often results in frequent police presence (Clark 1965). Currently, in the United States, black individuals are three times more likely than white individuals to be killed by police, and in the year 2017, of the 1,147 people killed by police, 25% were black, despite making up only 13% of the population (Mapping Police Violence 2020). Despite these statistics, the level of crime in US cities do not determine police violence (Mapping Police Violence 2020). This research would suggest that police brutality is not linked to violence, but rather it is more correlated to race and perception of crime and violence.

Multicultural Counseling

The majority of America's youth come from a wide range of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Because this population is so diverse, one way to approach counseling that has proven to be beneficial is through a multicultural lens. Multicultural counseling refers to a

philosophy that guides the counseling and psychotherapy process with clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds (Jackson 2006). This philosophy incorporates skills for counseling with various races, genders, sexual orientations, and physical abilities by using three key principles: knowledge, awareness, and obtaining skills (Jackson 2006).

In order to best understand multicultural counseling and how it can help the urban youth population, it is essential to have a basic knowledge of the differences and similarities between race, culture, and ethnicity. Race can be defined as a set of biological characteristics that separates one group from another (Jackson 2006). Ethnicity can be defined as a group or groups of people that share a geographic place of origin, and share nonbiological similarities such as religion, language, and traditions (Jackson 2006). Culture is defined as the framework that organizes an individual's use of language, values, belief systems, social roles, and historical and present information (Jackson 2006). Knowledge of these terms is necessary to the application of the multicultural counseling perspective because an individual's race, culture, and ethnicity can influence their functioning, development, environment, and social roles.

Multicultural counseling is an important framework through which to look at helping urban youth. Cultural norms and ideas can have a large impact on an individual's mental health, expression, and behaviors (Jackson 2006). When behaviors or ideas fall outside of what is considered a norm for a particular culture, it can result in significant challenges in functioning and feelings of distress. Multicultural counseling attempts to recognize differences across cultures, adjust treatment to incorporate cultural ideas and values, understand the impact of one's culture, and normalize cultural differences (Jackson 2006). Youth residing in city districts come from a variety of diverse backgrounds and are heavily influenced by family culture, and the cultures of those around them. Due to these high rates of diversity, urban areas are a melting pot where

various cultures come together or collide. Understanding these differences can allow service providers to help communities function cohesively.

Expressive Arts Community Programs

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development (PYD) is a strengths-based approach derived from developmental systems theory that focuses on the strengths of children and adolescence, in order to allow them to be resources for themselves and in their community (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner 2005). Research for PYD also comes from comparative psychology, life-span development psychology, life-course sociology, and evolutionary biology, and recognizes the possibility for systemic change throughout development (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner 2005). Perhaps the most important source of PYD comes from community psychology which surfaced in the 1960's, and emphasized addressing emerging strengths and building skills rather than preventing behaviors and treating already existing pathologies (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner 2005). A major area in which the positive effects of PYD can be seen are community-based programs.

In order to utilize PYD within a community-based program, PYD utilizes 5 principles that direct goals called the five C's. They are: Competence, Connection, Character, Confidence, Caring (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner 2005). Each of these components emphasizes the importance of creating healthy relationships with others, believing in one's self, caring for others, giving back to communities, and maintaining values and integrity (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, & Farrarone 2016). The research shows that the five C's are most likely to

develop in programs that have positive and healthy adult-youth relationships, activities that build skills, and opportunities within the community (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner 2005).

Through the PYD framework, the narrative for youth shifts from needing resources, to becoming resources that can help themselves, their communities, and their families (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, & Ferrarone 2016). Programs for youth that incorporate positive youth development aim to expand youths' opportunities, create constructive social relationships with peers and adults, and engage in social activities that are safe within their communities (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, & Farrarone 2016).

Expressive Arts Programing and Positive Youth Development

Expressive arts can be defined as a variety of art disciplines including dance and movement, visual art, writing, drama, and music. These modalities can be used either singularly or multimodally to express oneself, catalyze change, increase self-esteem, socialization, communication, and heal emotional or physical trauma and distress (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, & Farrarone 2016). Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, and Ferrarone's (2016) study explored the effects of expressive arts with urban youth from low-income areas by using a positive youth development framework (PYD). In their research, Forrest- Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, and Farrarone (2016) synthesized the framework of positive youth development and examined the effects of expressive arts intervention with urban youth in low-income neighborhoods. For the method of study, 40 middle school aged participants were recruited from an after-school program that aids youth who live in public housing areas with high crime and poverty rates (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, & Bassett 2016). Groups of participants were arranged by

neighborhood and were composed of African, African American, Asian, Latinx, and 8.7% unspecified youth.

Results of the research were studied using a quasi-experimental design and data was collected via surveys before and after four-week expressive arts workshops (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, & Bassett 2016). The intervention for the study used Phoenix Rising poetry workshops, which allowed youth to write and perform their own poetry with a guest poet (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, & Bassett 2016). The research revealed that the majority of youth had improved academic efficacy, social skills, decreased performance anxiety, and increased self-esteem upon completion of the four-week workshop series (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, & Ferrarone 2016).

Simialrly to Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, and Ferrarone's (2016) research, other literature continues to show that expressive arts have proven to be beneficial with youth of color in city communities. Kellner's (2004) research examined the efficacy of a community arts-based program called Voyagers on youth who have experienced violence within their homes and communities (Kellner 2004). Expressive arts workshops ran over the course of six to eight weeks and included poetry, songwriting, belly dancing, and weekly in-depth writing sessions (Kellner 2004). The original program planned also included sculpture, textile design, and jewelry design, but funding was cut and these programs were not included (Kellner 2004). The program was run by a co-coordinator who held a Master's degree in counseling, a foster parent, and a percussionist and songwriter (Kellner 2004).

The arts-based study aimed to help youth increase self-esteem and encourage communication with peers about challenging topics through the expressive arts, particularly

through poetry writing (Kellner 2004). Participants involved in the study included 10 adolescents ages 13-16, and data was collected over the course of eight months; however, membership participation in the program ranged from 2 weeks to 8 months (Kellner 2004). Data for this study was collected by projective tests, self-reports, art making, and semi-structured interviews (Kellner 2004). Parents/ guardians of the participating youth were informed of the research and signed the appropriate consent forms (Kellner 2004). Arts-based data in this study included having participants draw a person, finish sentences, write a poem or short story about hope, and write a narrative about what it is like for them to live in their community (Kellner 2004).

Participants who completed the program and participated in the final interview found the program to be a positive experience. They reported feeling more confident seeking help, less judgmental of others, and they felt able to work through difficult emotions (Kellner 2004). The program allowed youth to identify positive and negative factors in their communities as well as safety concerns (Kellner 2004). Youth also reported feeling more able to express themselves and more prepared to work towards future goals (Kellner 2004). While the results of Kellner's (2004) study gleaned positive results, it is important to note that there were limitations to consider. One limitation in particular was that the study did not have a consistent set of participants. The study explained that due to unforeseeable circumstances, many participants had to leave the study, and some joined the program late. While this may have resulted in inconsistent data, it does not minimize the positive experiences that many participants reported. Another limitation is that only one of the program leaders had a master's degree in counseling. Results could have been improved if there had been more counselors, expressive therapists, or social workers running the program. It is also extremely important to note that the original program proposal included more expressive arts modalities, but due to low funding, these programs had to be cut. This is a

consistent disadvantage that this population faces. Low funding and lack of resources is a major obstacle to providing adequate expressive arts programs which have the potential to greatly improve the quality of life for inner city youth of color and their communities.

Systemic Theory and Art Therapy

Similarly to multicultural counseling, systemic theory as an approach to art therapy attempt to define problems or lack of resources as an unjust allocation of power and discrimination and oppression (Huss, 2015). In order to solve or reframe these problems, systemic theories work to rearrange roles within social systems, repossess internal and external power and resources, and support individuals to become active agents in fighting for more power (Huss 2015). Using art in conjunction with systemic theories can allow individuals and communities to define their experience within a system, and communicate with others who are facing a similar reality (Huss 2015). Huss (2015) states:

“Art enables us to indirectly and non-violently resist or destabilize the existing power relations. Art analyzed through a social rather than psychological meta-theory enables power relationships to become visible, and situates art as a culturally contextualized [language] rather than universal language in itself (Huss 2015).”

Art and the process of art making provides a number of benefits within the systemic framework. Art allows individuals to define their experiences and roles in the system, and explore cultural values, roles, and family history; all while equalizing and creating a safe space for individuals (Huss 2015). Art can also provide individuals with a means to process how they feel within the system, particularly in regards to discrimination and oppression. Through the process of art making, individuals are able to reframe this narrative and reclaim power in their system while also improving their self-esteem (Huss 2015).

Social Action Art Therapy

There are a variety of ways in which art therapy can be practiced. One of these ways is a practice and philosophy of inclusion and equity known as social action art therapy. However, when it comes to youth who identify as a marginalized individual, social action art therapy provides a framework that allows individuals as well as communities to identify and understand their world, determine what their needs are, and identify strengths. This allows them to make changes in their lives that improve their well-being, their community, and make strides towards social justice (Golub 2005). Art therapists who practice social action art therapy must be aware of any bias they may have towards specific groups or systemic structures, and attempt to create spaces for expression while challenging oppressive ideologies (Kaplan 2007). It is important to note that while social action art therapy touches upon many social justice issues, it differs from political activism. Social action art therapy addresses the psychological and emotional needs that arise from systemic and social injustice, and works towards making changes in individuals and their communities (Hocoy 2005).

Art Therapy and Community Based Practice

Art- Based Programs

Within the umbrella of expressive arts, visual community-based visual arts programs have proven to be a valuable tool in aiding youth of color who live in metropolitan areas. Averett, Crowe and Hall's (2015) research examined the interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes for at risk youth who participated in The Youth Public Arts Program (YPAP) (Averett, Crowe, & Hall, 2015). YPAP is a community-based arts program that aids at-risk youth in North Carolina and provided youth with art education, mentorship, case management, group sessions, and community opportunities (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015). The study researched youth's

developing art skills, social skills, and community engagement among participants, and aimed to help youth make a positive impact in their communities, allow for self-expression, and build constructive relationships with peers (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015). The program met bi-weekly for sessions for five hours on Saturdays, and two age groups would run at the same time (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015).

Participants in the study were referred to YPAP by professionals such as school or court counselors and other mental health specialists (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015). Participants were divided into two groups by age. The two groups were comprised children ages 8-11 and children ages 12-16 (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015). Groups were led by two professional artists, three social work student interns, a volunteer coordinator, the director of education of the agency, and an external consultant. The group sessions included art instruction as well as sketchbook sessions where participants would explore their feelings through the use of different art mediums (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015). Some of the topics explored in the sketchbook sessions were: relationships, violence, anger and other emotions, bullying, and goals for the future (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015). Data for the study was collected from 38 participants that included the youth, their parents, and staff at the program. A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted upon completion of the program for each group, and the research team also carried out phone interviews with participants' sources of referral (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015). The results of the research showed that participants had improved interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, enhanced communication within their families, increased self-esteem, augmented ability to self-regulate, and improved relationships within the community (Averett, Crowe, & Hall 2015).

Open Studio Method

The Open Studio Project (OSP) is a non-profit, social action organization created by three art therapists in the Chicago area that aimed to meet the need for an afterschool art program in the community for at-risk youth (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005). The OSP process is a multi-step program that allows youth to create art as an outlet for emotions in safe space that is free from external pressures, allowing them to self-express (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005). A group of youth was selected to participate in the 9-12 week program, and consisted of varying ages from middle school to adolescence (Block, Harris, Laing 2005). The group would begin with individual youth setting an intention for the session to guide them and hold them accountable. The intention would be recorded in a journal that they would use throughout the duration of the program (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005). Then, the youth would transition into artmaking. This step consisted of a demonstration of simple art techniques, and an opportunity to explore materials (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005).

After the youth has had the opportunity to engage in the art-making process, they participated in witness writing as a way of reflecting on their process and art piece (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005). At the end of each session, participants are encouraged to share either something about their art piece, or what they have written. This process allows youth to create a space of empathy and nonjudgement for the group (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005). Another important component of the OSP process, is that facilitators not only provided art instruction to youth, but they also participated in art-making alongside youth (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005). Through this method, any power barriers between adult and youth were broken down. Youth were then able to have a greater level of empathy for the adult facilitators because they were able to view them as a fellow human being instead of a figure of authority. This process also helped youth to take more risks as artists and feed off of more experienced artists' work which allowed

them to expand their skill set and creativity (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005). The results showed that the effectiveness of the OSP is due to the role model relationship between youth and adults, the safe space created among youth, and the tools and guidance provided that allowed youth to freely self-express (Block, Harris, & Laing 2005).

Metaphor Map Making

Another arts-based intervention that has positively impacted youth of color in city communities is group metaphor map making. Foster, Deafenbaugh, and Miller's (2016) arts-based study researched the effects of group metaphor map making in an integrated arts-based focus group (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller 2016). The research aimed to allow adolescents to use map making to identify positive and negative factors in their community that affect their emotional wellbeing and stress levels (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller, 2016). Participants were referred to the study through various community agencies, and included a variety of youth from differing neighborhoods and cultural backgrounds (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller, 2016). The research included a total of 99 participants ages 14-22 from a variety of neighborhoods, and economic and racial backgrounds (Foster, Deagenbaugh, & Miller 2016). 21 groups with three to seven participants were created and broken up by race, age, and gender, and were assigned two facilitators per group (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller 2016). In their groups, youth were asked to create a visual map of their community, identify positive and negative factors in those communities, and reflect on the impact those factors had on their emotional well-being, stress, and relationships (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller 2016).

Data was collected for this study in the form of individual surveys, metaphor maps, interviews, and verbal reflection on the images created (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller 2016).

The research showed that participants were able to express how their experiences affected them emotionally, mentally, and physically through art making (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller 2016). The process of map making for this study also allowed youth to participate in a project with peers who had similar experiences. This positively impacted their perception of their community (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller 2016). One limitation of this study that is important to note is that there is no evidence as to whether or not group facilitators were mental health counselors or social workers (Foster, Deafenbaugh, & Miller 2016). When bringing up such emotionally charged topics such as violence in communities, it would benefit the study to include this information or use licensed counselors in the future.

Murals

Perhaps the most frequently used community arts intervention with inner city youth of color is mural making. Rossetto's (2012) hermeneutic phenomenological study researched the effects of community mural making and social action art therapy (Rossetto 2012). The research aimed to examine traditional art therapy applications, as well as social action art therapy applications, and the process of mural making in various communities (Rossetto 2012). Participants in the study were recruited by referral and included eight adults who had experience creating community murals with youth (Rossetto 2012). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews about each participants' experience creating community murals. These interviews were conducted over the phone or in person (Rossetto 2012). Following the interviews, participants were able to ask any additional questions regarding the study or the interview (Rossetto 2012). Data from the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, coded for themes, and organized into diagrams (Rossetto 2012). The research showed that traditional, Western art therapy approaches are rooted in concepts such as autonomy, the future, and the

integrated self, where as social action art therapy is rooted in concepts such as community building and focusing on the present moment (Rossetto 2012). Rossetto's (2012) research revealed that mural making is more closely linked to social action art therapy methods, and as a result, mural making has the potential to foster connection and collaboration within communities, particularly communities who have a high exposure to violence.

Further research conducted by Sieber, Cordeiro, and Ferro (2012) explored the community benefits that mural making by youth has had on low-income communities of color, particularly communities that receive negative media coverage for violence, in the greater Boston area (Sieber, Cordiero, & Ferro 2012). The community murals created by youth aimed to combat the negative stigmatization of the community as well as increase the self-esteem of youth who have historically felt defined by violence in their community (Sieber, Cordiero, & Ferro 2012). The murals throughout Boston were created in group settings, and groups were led by a community muralist who is an artist as well as a community programmer (Sieber, Cordiero, & Ferro 2012). Together with the artist, youth would decide on the theme for the mural, connect with other members of the community through interviews, and then design and execute the mural (Sieber, Cordiero, & Ferro 2012). Sieber, Cordiero, and Ferro (2012) stated that the content of the murals included:

“Images of multi-cultural, multi-racial, multiethnic youth living, interacting, and playing together in harmonious ways, and advocacy of inter-group peace and harmony, including gang peace; pride over their diverse ethnic histories and heritages; overt aspirations for success, and for overcoming perils and barriers to achievement and personal and community advancement; solidarity across the generations; and, a positive view of the neighborhood's historical trajectory. (Sieber, Cordiero, & Ferro 2012 p. 270).”

Through the experience of mural making, youth were able to create a positive narrative of the history of their community, create intergenerational solidarity, improve self-esteem of youth, and allow youth to feel a sense of pride and strength within the community (Sieber, Cordiero, & Ferro 2012).

Results

The results showed that interventions such as poetry writing, open studios, metaphor map making, and murals have shown to improve youth self-esteem and ability to communicate with others, decrease anxiety and depressive symptoms, and allow youth to access challenging emotions in a safe space. In addition to these changes, youth were able to perceive their communities in a positive light, create positive peer and adult relationships, and better access services.

Taken together, the results revealed that ‘imagining’ and ‘imagery’ were valuable mechanisms to support identity development, and empowerment.

The table below shows how specific methods within art therapy came through in the literature as the most prevalently researched.

Table 1.

Specific Methods within Art Therapy

Art Therapy Method	Multi-cultural Lens	Benefits Supporting Individual Growth	Benefits Supporting Individual-Community Growth
Youth Public Arts Program	At-risk youth in North Carolina	Sketchbook sessions	Group art instruction and material exploration
Open Studio Method	At-risk youth recruited by art therapists	Poetry writing	Witness writing

Metaphor Map Making	Youth from different neighborhoods and cultural backgrounds	Independent lists of positive and negative factors	Group map making
Murals	Working in communities with high rates of violence	Incorporating personal experience into mural	Interview members of the community

Discussion

The purpose of this capstone thesis was to review the literature surrounding expressive arts and art therapy in a community-based framework with youth who live in inner city communities of color. In the process of reviewing the literature surrounding this topic and population, the intent was to form a deeper understanding of the population and the challenges they face, as well as gather evidence for the efficacy of arts-based interventions. As the results demonstrate, the research has shown that this population has an acute need for community-based art interventions due to external set-backs such as: discrimination, social inequality, high rates of incarceration, economic inequity, political changes, lack of access to supports and programs, and violence in communities (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera 2005). In addition to these challenges, youth of color who live in inner-city communities also face internal struggles as well. These internal struggles include: PTSD or stress related trauma from witnessing violence, low self-esteem, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and feelings of hopelessness (Perez-Smith, Albus, & Weist 2001).

The results provide data that supports the potential for an art therapy framework through which to address these issues within communities through expressive arts and art therapy

interventions with youth. It also speaks to the lack of research on training approaches and illuminates the need for considering a specific way of training and professional development of art therapists. Training needs to be scaffolded within a critical-cultural-clinical art therapy framework, such as complex trauma, identity, politics, and culture (Jackson 2006). The results indicate that this needs to be considered through a multi-pronged perspective which includes; Multicultural, individual (internal identity), and individual-community (external identity) lenses (Huss 2015). Furthermore, the results highlight specific methods in art therapy that could contribute to a framework of clinical best practices with the use of open studio, metaphor mapping, and mural methods.

Through the application of the results, the field of art therapy may be able to understand youth in a different, more informed way by first acknowledging the cultures they come from, and how those cultures have affected their development and experiences. In addition to the ideas multicultural counseling provides, the systemic theory in relation to art therapy looks at the systems that affect and individuals and works to help individuals change their role within the system to create positive change (Huss 2015). Within the framework of systemic theory, social action art therapy allows individuals to identify their needs, meet those needs, and work towards social justice. When these concepts are used in conjunction with positive youth development, we see a beneficial change in youth and in their communities. Positive youth development (PYD) is a strengths-based approach that allows youth to be agents of change in their own communities (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, & Farrarone 2016).

When multicultural counseling, systems theory, social action art therapy, and PYD are applied to community-based expressive arts interventions, the change within youth and their communities is perceptible and impactful. The research shows that interventions such as poetry

writing, open studios, metaphor map making, and murals have shown to improve youth self-esteem and ability to communicate with others, decrease anxiety and depressive symptoms, and allow youth to access challenging emotions in a safe space. In addition to these changes, youth were able to perceive their communities in a positive light, create positive peer and adult relationships, and better access services (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Bassett, & Farrarone 2016). As this research continues to grow, communities have the potential to become safer and more inclusive places for youth to live. Youth would benefit from increased programs that provide the multi-pronged lens, as a means to help them grow to be more confident in themselves and successful later in life because they will be better able to self-regulate, work through difficult emotions, and build positive relationships wherever they are.

Table 2.

Framework for Considering Program Development

Approach	Strengths	Limitations
Multi-cultural counseling	Addresses impact of culture on individuals Treatment incorporates cultural ideals and values	There are many ways to treat various cultures Culture is only one part of a person’s identity
Systemic theory	Focus on all factors impacting an individual such as culture, environment, politics, economics, family structures etc. Define roles and experiences Reclaim power within system	Individual trauma experiences Experiences of individual
Social action art therapy	Gain a better understanding of the world Individuals are able to determine their needs and identify strengths	Counselor must be aware of biases Counselor must challenge oppressive ideologies Not social justice

	Addresses psychological and emotional needs.	
Positive youth development	Strengths based Building skills instead of preventing behaviors Healthy peer and adult relationships Become resources	Communities may lack resources Results depend on youth investment and participation.

This research has the potential to bring awareness to expressive arts and the needs of youth in inner-city communities of color. Already I have begun to witness the effects of this research on local youth in communities of color. As the program coordinator for a music for children with special needs program, this research has informed my approach in creating a therapeutic program as well as my approach to working with youth. It has provided me with a framework with which to address the needs of youth and making the program curriculum accessible. It has also informed my approach of helping youth increase self-esteem and become active participants in their community by creating connections with others and learning new skills. In the future, this research has the potential to inform a program that incorporates all the expressive arts modalities.

While the current research has made great strides in showing the efficacy of community-based art therapy with youth in inner-city communities of color, there is still improvements to be made as well as ways this research can be expanded. Due to lack of financial resources available to these communities, it is difficult to obtain funding for programs and maintain consistent data (Kellner 2004). This research will hopefully bring awareness to the acute needs of this population so that they can have more opportunities available to them. Another limitation that is important to note is that much of the research conducted with this population is not facilitated by a licensed art therapist. In the future, consistent research with a licensed art therapist would be

ideal to glean more reliable data. However, the research that does exist regarding community-based art therapy with inner-city youth of color has shown to have substantial positive results, and youth would greatly benefit from further interventions.

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