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Art Therapy with Juvenile Offenders-Building on Community, Strengths and Self-Esteem:

A Literature Review

Capstone Thesis

Lesley University

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Art Therapy

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Abstract

The Juvenile Justice System differentiates itself from the adult criminal justice system by running on a rehabilitative model for youth offenders as opposed to a punishment and deterrence model. It is not uncommon that the youth placed in these facilities suffer from many mental health issues and have extensive trauma backgrounds leading to their delinquent behavior and crimes. Juvenile Offenders are a population who are labeled as deviant and isolated from the world due to their behaviors often stemming from unhealed trauma. If left without care, these mental health concerns and unhealthy trauma responses may only perpetuate into their adult lives. This literature review explores the history of the juvenile justice system and its efforts to uphold the rehabilitation model for youth offenders. The implementation of art therapy with juvenile offenders is also examined as an expressive method to reinforce mental health care in these facilities. Different art therapy directives with this population were explored in helping juvenile offenders improve self-esteem, build on strengths, connect to the community and one another while also working to process their trauma. The literature suggests that more research and implementation of arts-based therapy along with rehabilitative models as a whole are necessary in the care of juvenile offenders while detained.

Keywords: Juvenile offenders, Juvenile Justice system, rehabilitation, art therapy, self-esteem, community connection, processing trauma

The author identifies as a straight, White woman from Massachusetts of mixed European ancestry.

Art Therapy with Juvenile Offenders: Building on Community, Strengths and Self-Esteem

The Juvenile Justice system and Art Therapy are newer concepts in their respective fields of criminal justice and clinical therapy although they each possess a unique development and history that have changed over the years. The Juvenile Justice system was first established in 1899 in Cook County, Illinois and was rapidly adopted by states across the country. *Parens patriae*, defined as the state's ability to intervene and act as a parent for any child who cannot properly care for the child, became the cornerstone of Juvenile Justice philosophy (Robbers, 2019). Although this concept has been greatly challenged throughout juvenile justice history. Much like the mental health system in America, the structure of the Juvenile Justice System varies by state in terms of age ranges, sentencing and types of programs. Krisberg (2005), referred to this practice as "justice by geography" (p.79). The current Juvenile Justice system is also guided by the philosophy of rehabilitation and child protection, differing from the adult system that runs on a deterrent model (Krisberg, 2005). The role of deterrence is to use the consequence of getting punished for committing a crime as a method to discourage the behavior (Blenan,1996). The rehabilitative model's role is to treat offenders for underlying mental illness or trauma that may have an effect on their behavior in order to reintegrate them back into society (Benson, 2003). Walgrave (2002) suggests that individual treatment, repairing harm, rebuilding relationships, increasing one's skills, and serving others to contribute to the common good are associated with a reduction of criminal behavior using the rehabilitative model. The ways that the rehabilitative model in the Juvenile Justice system is upheld and also falls short will be examined extensively throughout this paper.

Using the arts for healing is a universal and ancient concept that can be dated back to prehistoric artists carving fertility symbols, Egyptian painters using symbols for protection, African carvers of ritual masks, and many other historical representations of modern art therapy

practices (Rubin, 2010). The term ‘art therapy’ was first coined by Adrian Hill of Britain in 1942 who experienced the healing ability of art while using it during his recovery from tuberculosis (Hogan, 2001). Margaret Nuemburg and Edith Kramer, pioneers for art therapy in the United States began practicing and researching art therapy around the same time as Hill. Art Therapy as a therapeutic discipline is still growing in the field of psychology in comparison to much more developed disciplines such as psychoanalysis (Rubin, 2010). As the term art therapy became more widely used, many others disclosed using art as a technique in therapy around the same time as Nuemburg and Kramer first started introducing art therapy (Rubin, 2010). The field of art therapy has come a long way since its original roots and is still growing and developing today. The American Art Therapy Association (AATA) was founded in 1969 and is dedicated to the growth and development of this professional field. Art Therapy can be defined as:

an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.... Art Therapy is used to improve cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change. (AATA, 2017, p. 1)

There are many different approaches and interventions using the arts within the therapeutic space that can provide a unique experience tailored to each client’s specific needs including age group, diagnosis and differing abilities. The use of art therapy as a therapeutic approach will be highlighted throughout the presented literature.

According to Murphy et al. (2013) along with many other researchers, juvenile offenders often struggle with underlying mental health issues, previous and current traumas, along with

low self-esteem that leads to their criminal behavior. When in detention centers or other facilities, if these issues aren't being addressed, upon release these challenges may continue to affect their everyday life. According to Lamberti (2016) lack of treatment for underlying mental health concerns may lead to recidivism or other serious problems such as drug use. Art therapy along with other arts-based approaches can help process the juvenile's trauma while incarcerated in order to heal, improve themselves, and set them up to make better choices and see new possibilities beyond their life in the criminal justice system (Oesterreich & Flores, 2009). Art is currently being used by juveniles in detention centers without facilitation by therapists or teachers. Art making can be seen through tattooing, drawing for recreation or on letters home, graffiti and gang affiliated art. From this realization, a visual arts and strength-based practice was implemented by Oesterreich and Flores (2009), with incarcerated youth focusing on "the 5 C's". The 5 C's referenced in this study are connection, community, contribution, concentration, and completion. Through this program, the youth actively 'saw' themselves engaging in the 5 C's which helped them create a space of growth and new possibilities from the strengths they already possess (Oesterreich & Flores, 2009). Another study done by Murphy et al. (2013) focused on improving self-esteem through the use of art with incarcerated youth. The use of arts in this study indicated that art may be helpful to increase self-esteem and be an agent to help this population express themselves more as shown by improved scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale post-test (Murphy et al. 2013).

Further research examined the benefits and positive impact the use of art therapy had for juvenile offenders. Although a common theme throughout the research was that further research and implementation of art-based programs are needed to truly see the benefits in their entirety in use with juvenile offenders. As mentioned above, the juvenile justice system is said to be guided by a rehabilitative philosophy for the youth in their custody. According to Krisberg's (2004)

research, “There are few medical, behavioral or mental health services available to children in detention. Youths with serious mental health issues often deteriorate in these stark settings” (p. 76). Gussak (2020), reinforced this idea by stating that adolescents who act out due to confusing emotions or psychological conditions are sanctioned, isolated, and punished due to their behavior not meeting society’s standards. This in turn reinforces negative self-perception for the youth and perpetuates the negative labeling cycle (Gussak, 2020). It is evident that there is still work to be done in the rehabilitation and care of this population. Throughout the literature review, the use of art therapy with juvenile offenders as a way to increase their positive self-esteem and reshape their identities to help improve their future upon release will be examined. Specific art therapy directives that can best benefit this population will be highlighted along with ideas for future implementation of therapy within these facilities.

Literature Review

The Juvenile Justice System

As described above, different states have different specifications for how their juvenile justice systems are run. There are many ways the juvenile justice system and adult criminal justice system differ but there are also aspects of them that overlap. The main difference between the two systems is the juvenile justice system believes that youth are capable of positive change so therefore rehabilitation becomes one of the main goals. It also assumes the youth are part of a family and attempts are made to involve parents in the different aspects of the system (Krisberg, 2005). The Pennsylvania Supreme Court expressed the separation of the juvenile justice system from the adult system as,

It is to save, not to punish; it is to rescue, not to imprison; it is to subject to wise care, treatment and control rather than to incarcerate in penitentiaries and jails; it is to strengthen the better instincts and to check the tendencies which are evil; it aims, in the

absence of proper parental care, or guardianship, to throw around a child, just starting in an evil course, the strong arm of the *parens patriae* (Jams, 2019).

In contrast, the criminal justice system uses deterrence as the primary source of crime control and uses less of a rehabilitation model with adult offenders. Both systems recognize protection of the public as a main goal (Krisberg, 2005).

There are many alternatives used with juveniles in place of detention although they can be fairly limited depending on the jurisdiction. Some of these alternatives include electronic monitoring, day reporting programs, intensive in-home based visits, non-secure shelters, or residential programs (Krisberg, 2005). Although, some jurisdictions place minors in adult jails where they experience higher rates of violence and sexual exploitation. The youth placed in these settings have a much higher suicide rate than those in a specific setting for juveniles (Krisberg, 2005). The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 was partially motivated to end the abuse suffered by children in adult facilities (Krisberg, 2005). The national reform to reduce the jailing of children was a substantial success. By the late 1980s juvenile admissions to jails had declined to roughly 65,000 per year (Krisberg 2005). Overall, of the youth going on to be admitted into the juvenile justice system, slightly more than half go into formal court proceedings. In recent years, states have enacted more ways to transfer juvenile offenders to criminal courts which research has suggested is bad public policy and damaging to the youth (Krisberg, 2005).

Gussak (2020), used a downward spiral as a metaphor to explain the path of delinquency. The label of 'deviant' stems from what society implies as unacceptable behavior or actions by its citizens. These behaviors can then lead to the imprisoning of the juvenile in order to help keep the community safer, in turn, resulting in a cycle of marginalization and alienation (Gussak, 2020). When thinking about deviant behavior often associated with this population, it is

important to note the underlying causes. Gussak (2020), highlighted these underlying causes established in a previous study as “risk factors that lead to deviance include a combination of social interactions—poor parenting, peer influences, negative experiences in school, and impoverished and crime-ridden neighborhoods—and psychological difficulties.” (p. 134)

It is natural for adolescents to impulsively act and react, sometimes to release confusing emotions involving anger and other times due to psychological stress. When this behavior becomes ‘deviant’ and the youth are isolated and punished, a negative sense of self is further created and reinforced for them (Gussak, 2020). In Gussak’s (2020) experience detailed in his writing, juvenile offenders who have been in the system longer train newer offenders for survival, which creates and reinforces their identity associated with life behind bars.

The juvenile justice system differs from that of the adult justice system due to its emphasis on the rehabilitative model. The upcoming literature details how this is a goal that often falls short in the juvenile system. Briggs (2020) outlined the difficulties the juvenile justice system has experienced in maintaining the rehabilitative model, the difficulties starting in the 1950’s and 60’s due to the resources needed to provide individual treatment and the rising rates of juvenile delinquency. As the juvenile crimes rose, the policies began to steer away from the rehabilitative models and move towards more resources for prosecution offices and tougher penalties. Rehabilitative programs started to be deemed expensive, time consuming, and ineffective in reducing recidivism rates by the 1970s (Briggs, 2020). By the 1990s and early 20th century, as juvenile crime rates fell and scientific research showed more insight on adolescent development, policies not taking maturity and age of the offender into account became less favorable. Briggs (2020) reported that “By 2014, public opinion seemed to favor juvenile justice policies with a renewed focus on rehabilitation” (p.2). The shift in public opinion has caused the

juvenile justice system to be overburdened and fragmented. Juvenile residential programs have also become places for scandals, violence and abuse rather than healthy diversion (Briggs, 2020).

Jams (2019) stated that the belief that the current juvenile justice system can rehabilitate youth is costly, inaccurate and leads to the youth being worse off. For example a youth who committed a status offense such as running away can be brought for proceedings due to their parents' request. This can cause the child-parent dynamic to worsen and become more hostile while the system is unable to live up to the claim of rehabilitation (Jams, 2019). Krisberg (2005) also reinforced this claim stating that juvenile courts were not given appropriate resources or appropriate training to diagnose or implement rehabilitative services to this population. Juvenile offenders often come into facilities with histories of abuse, neglect, disability and instability. Jams (2019) stated, in fiscal year 2017, forty-six percent of juveniles committed to Missouri DYS had a history of prior substance abuse. The Missouri Department of Youth Services (DYS) system that was discussed in this article, offers services such as individualized care, day treatment services, residential treatment services, education services, aftercare services, family engagement programs and empirically-based risk assessment to create a "Comprehensive Individual Treatment Plan" to help the juveniles in their care (Jams, 2019). Lamberti (2016), attested that relying on surveillance and punishment alone has been ineffective at preventing recidivism in the criminal justice system as a whole. This is a negative outcome in decreasing crime rates. Behavioral treatments that research has shown to be positively impactful in the criminal justice system include- case management, various forms of counseling, self-help programs, bibliotherapy, pet therapy, acupuncture, and yoga (Lamberti, 2016).

Art Therapy with Juvenile Offenders

Building Self-Esteem and Strengths

Oesterreich and Flores (2009) stated that art is being used in juvenile detention centers on a daily basis whether it be through tattooing, letters home, graffiti or gang affiliated art. There are also arts-based programs being implemented as activities for the youth. Oesterreich and Flores (2009) conducted a study in juvenile correctional facilities which outlined how the prominent use of art can be developed into healthier and productive programs to facilitate positive growth and change in juvenile offenders. In their study, Oesterreich and Flores (2009) focused on using strength-based practices in visual arts education with incarcerated youth to focus on the “5 C’s” mentioned above. This study took place over two years serving 46 young men who were incarcerated. The program was offered four different times and spanned over 12-20 weeks. Each session was two and a half hours long, totaling around 30-50 contact hours each semester (Oesterreich & Flores, 2009). “Youth receive skill acquisition and support in sketching, drawing, art history, painting, design, video, desktop publishing and digital photography. Each course is culminated with a major collective work building upon these skills,” facilitated by a multidisciplinary team (Oesterreich & Flores, 2009, p. 150). Connection is facilitated by engaging with one another and adults in a non-violent manner while also connecting with one’s art and the group’s art. Youth were given opportunities to connect to the community by displaying their art outside of the facility, and commissioning work for places such as a local legal aid office (Oesterreich & Flores, 2009). They contributed to the community and also contributed responsibility in creating a contract of what is expected of them and also what they expect from facilitators. Lastly, the program works on helping those with learning disabilities on task concentration and completion through art making. Through this program, the youth were

able to grow and see new possibilities from the strengths they already have and the engagement with the 5 C's through the arts. (Oesterreich & Flores, 2009).

As mentioned by Oesterreich and Flores (2009), juveniles may already be using art for example through graffiti. Gussak (2020) further explained that the use of graffiti is often used to communicate and identify territory within gangs. These taggers develop a sense of identity and respect as they become well known for their graffiti and it becomes a way for them to express themselves creatively (Gussak, 2020). Gussak worked with a juvenile offender to transform the criminal behavior of graffitiing into using art therapeutically with the juvenile. Gussak tailored the art therapy experience to mirror that of the graffiti experience in order to help the youth engage. He did this by allowing him to build structures out of cardboard that looked like walls from the city. The youth reflected on the actions he took while graffitiing and then recreated some of his images on the newly built walls in the art space (Gussak, 2020). As time went on, he moved to using canvas and became much less hasty with his work, his paintings were much more detailed, careful and expressive. Since graffiti is closely linked with gang affiliation, the process used was to slowly separate the youth from the previous group identity using the art. This allows for them to have opportunities to create singular works of art and use metaphoric labels that promote individuality (Gussak, 2020). Gussak (2020) stated that through this type of work with art therapy, by using the art, a new social dynamic can be created as the children begin to redefine themselves, even if they have difficulty connecting with others. He goes on to say "Paradoxically, through creating together, the individuals' previous labels fade and are replaced by new ones. A new sense of self solidifies. This is accomplished through healthy interactions." (Gussak, 2020, p.135). If individuals begin to work with art mediums for the first time through art therapy, the mastery they can achieve may also create a new sense of self-worth and identity outside of their previously deviant and hostile labels (Gussak, 2020).

Another study by Hirsch (1974) explored shifting arts and crafts based programs in juvenile detention centers to art as therapy programs instead. The program developed for this study moved from a product based model to an art program whose objective was to develop one's self-respect and confidence with an additional focus on social consciousness (Hirsch, 1974). The groups consisted of eight juvenile offenders, ages ranging from 12-18, with the length of art-making lasting one to two hours, occurring three to four times a week. Student teachers were asked to set out oil pastels, three to four colors of tempera paint, no.4 or no. 6 brush, oil based clay, pencils and large sheets of white printing paper (Hirsch, 1974). This study used observational methods of the group. Hirsch (1974), reported viewing the children involved being reluctant in the beginning of the program showing limited self-respect, using harsh language and stating they can't draw or participate. As the program progressed and they realized they would not be tested or ridiculed, the interest level and participation rose. An observed improvement in self-control, self-respect, confidence, and attitude towards others during the classes were made in the children (Hirsch, 1974).

Miner-Romanoff's (2016) article "Voices from Inside: The Power of Art to Transform and Restore" also highlighted the use of arts in increasing this population's self-esteem along with other benefits as well. The article introduced "Voices from Inside", an art program for incarcerated adolescents that holds community exhibits and allows for charitable sales of their artwork. At the time of this article, there had been three years of this exhibit from 2012-2014, and the study focused on quantitative and qualitative results from the 2014 program (Miner-Romanoff, 2016). The intended benefits of this program were to increase self-esteem, positive social bonds, self-efficacy, healthy expression, and motivation, while also allowing developing their own personal narrative from their experience and having the community view their stories (Miner-Romanoff, 2016). The Youth Exhibitor Survey and Interview Questionnaire

was given to the artists while another survey was given to the community involved as well. The most frequent benefits to the program reported by 86-87% of the participants were the ability to achieve a goal, the increase in art skills and the sense of accomplishment (Miner-Romanoff, 2016). Overall, “The majority of the participants felt the exhibit provides positive outcomes in terms of emotional, behavioral, and logistical impacts of creating and exhibiting their art” (Miner-Romanoff, 2016, p. 65). The results of this study compared to the year prior also showed increased benefits which may be attributed to a cumulative effect from recurring participants. The juvenile offenders involved in the program showed clear benefits of using art and connecting with the community through this research. The hope for further research expressed in this study was to determine whether art programs improve behavioral occurrences in the facility and the long term effects upon release (Miner-Romanoff, 2016).

Mural Making

Research done by Murphy et al., (2013), highlighted the importance of building self-esteem as it is often something that is damaged within this population. The focus on self-esteem in this study, as briefly mentioned, was with the intention of reducing the rate of recidivism and keeping the youth out of the adult system while also allowing them to see “who they are and who they can be” (Murphy et al., 2013, p. 45). The article presents the Emanuel Project as an arts-based approach with this population to build self-esteem as they participate in ‘murals of hope’ at their facility (Murphy et al., 2013). The results from the mural project demonstrated that “juveniles in the ‘normal’ range on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale pre-test had a 1.6 point increase from pre- to post-test while juveniles in the ‘low’ self-esteem group showed an increase of 7.4 points from pre- to post-test” (Murphy et al., 2013, p.46). The use of arts in this study indicated that creating the murals of hope effectively increased self-esteem and

improved communication and self-expression. However, the sample size of this study was small and more research is necessary (Murphy et al., 2013).

Several other mural projects with this population were detailed in Gussak's (2020) literature including one he conducted himself with students who were removed from their schools and were one step away from being part of the juvenile justice system placed in court ordered schools. The group was composed of 60 students ages 12-18 year olds, mostly African American who had poor impulse control and sometimes out of control behavior (Gussak, 2020). Although not in a corrections facility, some of the youth were awaiting sentences for charges such as larceny, assault and drug violations and often belonged to gangs or aspired to be in one (Gussak, 2020). Smaller-scale art activities done with these youth before the mural project aimed to help with anger management, impulse-control, problem-solving, and socialization skills. These students were often territorial, therefore relationship building and teamwork took a lot of time to establish in order to help this behavior improve. When the mural project was introduced, guidelines and a workable plan to have all the youth involved were needed so they could plan, organize and have a part in the painting (Gussak, 2020). They were divided into smaller groups to plan a proposed drawing for the mural and took turns painting the mural in these groups. Each group's drawing had a consistent theme throughout the beach which became the basis for the mural. When it came to painting the mural, there were some presenting issues of the group being territorial over the painting. Although they were able to accept the painting belonged to everyone and changes to their parts may happen. Gussak (2020) recalled that "One student—who previously was seen by the staff as incorrigible, obstinate, and hostile—became a leader, offering to help some of the younger students" (p.143). Using mural making as an art therapy intervention provided an opportunity to reverse this population's deviant label. The youth showed a developed

sense of pride and identity through the work and building upon this increase of self-esteem and acceptance can help with further negative label reversal (Gussak, 2020).

Venable's (2005) article also focused on mural making as a beneficial intervention for this population. The article highlighted the connection between youth who do poorly in school and juvenile crime. Venable (2005) stated in the article that youths who stop their education before completing high school are three and a half times more likely to be arrested than their graduating peers. The author also stated that over 35% of students with learning disabilities drop out of school, twice the rate of those without learning disabilities. Of juveniles incarcerated, 70-87% suffer from learning or emotional disabilities (Veneble, 2005). More recent statistics from the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) (2012) showed similar data stating that a 2011 study in Texas showed that 10% of students who received a disciplinary action dropped out of school and students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension. The CJJ stated "The same study found that 23% of students involved in the school disciplinary system also were involved with the juvenile justice system, compared to only 2% of students who did not have contact with the school disciplinary system." (Fabelo et al., 2011, p.66).

Venable (2005) noted studies that have shown improvements in different imprisoned populations due to the use of art therapy. One was a study done by Milligan (1997) which used art therapy with adolescents in a maximum security prison setting. From this study, Milligan was able to observe art being used as a container to safely express anger for the youth. Venable goes on to mention that art therapy, art and art education can be seen on a continuum and that they all may be beneficial in use with those incarcerated. He elaborated that art making in any capacity facilitates communication by accessing visual language that provides a mental escape from confinement (Venable, 2005). Two of Venable's art education students suggested working

with juvenile offenders on a mural project due to interest from a recent field trip to a detention center. The ‘detainees’ were initially asked to create a sketch of their ideas for the mural. A few trials were done before coming to the concept of a space theme for the mural (Venable, 2005).

The participation of this mural was completely voluntary, so groups fluctuated daily. Groups of three would rotate out of their cells to participate in the mural on an hourly basis (Venable, 2005). The group was supervised by prison guards and the inmates' behavior affected whether they were allowed to participate at any given time. The students involved recounted that the juveniles had changeable moods, at times talking about their crimes in a bragging manner and at other times expressing their regret and remorse for the harm they caused (Venable, 2005). Rates of learning disabilities among these inmates were high as reported by the special education specialists. Accommodations with aspects of the mural such as simplified coloring and mixing for the project were made as necessary. Once the mural was completed, an exit survey indicated a sense of pride, accomplishment and indication that the project positively increased their mood since they were able to leave their cells. All of the surveys showed gratitude for the opportunity (Venable, 2005). Venable noted that other benefits of this program included, the opportunity to build positive relationships with an adult, participate in a constructive activity, and learn some elementary concepts of color mixing, painting technique, and composition. He also stated that “they enjoyed some modicum of control, in this escape from a world that affords them very little.” (p.5). Although this study was more arts education based, it is still helpful in showing the positives that the arts can bring to a juvenile detention facility.

Processing Trauma and Dreams of the Future

An arts-based therapy program was introduced to a juvenile detention center population as mental health issues from the pandemic skyrocketed for youth in and out of detention facilities (Dodd, 2021). The mental health counselor at the facility advocated for the use of art instead of

the ‘scared straight method’ as she cited the use of the arts to guide them in a better direction and promote self-expression (Dodd, 2021). The program employed was called the Art Dojo, facilitated by Jordan Chaney in 2021 who used the motto “Don’t waste your pain(t)” (p.1). He met with the youth via zoom and they began creating a vision board exploring, “what their home and family life will be like, hobbies they’ll have, work or dreams they’d like to pursue and personal, mental and physical health conditions.” (Dodd, 2021, p. 1) The groups started with a mental health check in each week referred to as ‘bugg’d’ exploring one by one their bad and ugly, their "good and grateful" and then their "dope for the week”. This led to the topics they would explore through the artwork and as sessions progressed they were observed as becoming more calm and comfortable within the space (Dodd, 2021). They first began writing poems about their young life experiences and finished by creating a cohesive mural project together with the word “dream” as determined by the group and their shared experiences. Through these arts-based experiences determined through observational methods, youth began to process trauma, establish goals and dreams, have roles and connect with one another and view themselves and their potential differently (Dodd, 2021).

Hongo et al (2015) explored how art therapy with an older female population provided a therapeutic space for expression and releasing feelings of stress and emotions in this isolating environment. Six art expression workshops were held with 20 adult female offenders ages 50-76. They lasted 1.5 hours and consisted of an “Introduction workshop, Name Embellishment, the Left-Handed Day, My First Home, White-Paper Sculpture, and the Interactive Group projects” (Hongo et al., 2015, p. 203). Questionnaires regarding the processing of trauma through the art work were given at the end and analyzed. Emerging themes from the artwork itself were also taken into account as data for the study. Researchers established five themes commonly shown through the arts-based method and the questionnaires being; the potential to dream, feeling

connected, mutual understanding, releasing feelings, and developing empathy (Hongo et al., 2015). These themes that appeared throughout their art showed the benefits art therapy had in use with this population. There was an overall shared feeling by the participants that these art-based methods helped cope with their trauma as derived from the ending questionnaire.

Adult offenders may also benefit from art therapy and express themselves similarly and differently to juvenile offenders as evident from the Hongo et al. (2015) study. Through these arts-based methods, the common thread seen emerging in these two populations is the exploration of one's trauma. It is important to note that both populations' artwork naturally developed the theme of "dreams" over the course of their program. Perhaps this is more than a coincidence and is something worth exploring as more arts-based and art therapy programs are researched with incarcerated populations. In this oppressive environment, it can only be imagined how important 'dreams' of the future may be upon returning back to regular society.

Self Portraits

Beccera et al. (2022) explored different art directives to reduce anxiety including self-portraits. Self-portraits are self-reflections that may depict an individual's emotional, spiritual, and/or physical self (Beccera et al., 2022). They stated that, "drawing one's self can be a powerful way of strengthening one's sense of identity (Carr, 2014); promoting self-expression and self-reflection (Muri, 2007); and creating a narrative of one's self which can enhance emotion regulation" (Beccera et al., 2022, p. 34).

The study discussed three different ways to create- a "self-portrait", one being the literal self-portrait which consists of drawing one's face and/or body. The second self-portrait technique used was creating a mandala to represent the self through images, symbols and colors. The third way to use self-portraits was a free expression drawing where the individual created a drawing through free association of whatever comes to mind without filtering (Beccera et al., 2022). This

type of drawing would reflect the client's unconscious mind such as dreams, fantasies, fears and unresolved conflicts in forms of symbols and imagery (Beccera et al., 2022). Through self-reported data, participants reported feeling a little anxious when asked to draw but after completing the drawings reported it as enjoyable, and helped them feel relaxed. This study concluded that the process of doing any one of these self-portraits reduced anxiety (Beccera et al., 2022).

Joseph Iacona (2017) worked with adjudicated youth, trauma impacted teens, and young people impacted by homelessness and the foster care system. He discussed the power of self-image and self-esteem and how they can be damaged as a result of trauma, abuse and oppression leading to one lacking confidence and becoming self-conscious (Iacona, 2017). He used self-portraiture to explore empathy for oneself with this population. Iacona stated that the project

allowed the students to be truthful and honest, without fear of dismissal. Many of them have been labeled by their community and the larger society—judged according to stereotypes of juvenile offenders, victims of abuse, or homeless people and what these types look like, feel, value, and are capable of—without regard to their uniqueness as individuals (p. 1).

Students were able to proudly display their self-portrait work for an exhibit and showed confidence without fear of reservation like the “Voices from Inside” exhibit in Miner-Romanoff's (2016) article.

Discussion

From examining the literature on the developing juvenile justice system to the present-day system, it is clear there has been ebbs and flows in shifting from punishment and deterrence models to rehabilitative models. However, the rehabilitative model for juveniles has shown

plenty of shortcomings in the implementation process. These shortcomings in the current system include limited resources, training, funding, and continual shift in public policy (Briggs, 2020; Jams, 2019; Krisberg, 2005). The effect of these shortcomings on the youth has been far from beneficial, oftentimes leading to further abuse, scandals, and violence in addition to their pre-existing unresolved trauma (Briggs, 2020). There is evidence to support that the alternative option of surveillance and punishment alone does not help juvenile offenders remain out of the system upon release as Lamberti (2016) attested. Gussak (2020) also reinforced this point in stating that the punishment of these youths for behavior not meeting societal standards reinforces negative self-perception and perpetuates this cycle that often leads the youth to these environments. In facilities where higher standards of care in rehabilitation, such as noted in Jams (2019) and Lamberti's (2016) research, were used, a more positive impact was made for the offenders in their care. The aim was not just to deter and punish but also to help and rehabilitate. These therapeutic approaches included various forms of counseling, self-help programs, bibliotherapy, pet therapy, and yoga, day and residential treatment services, education and aftercare services, family engagement programs and empirically-based risk assessment to create a "Comprehensive Individual Treatment Plan" (Jams, 2019; Lamberti, 2016). While rehabilitating any criminal offender is not a perfect science or guarantee, the abundance of literature made it clear that the 'rehabilitative model' in the juvenile justice system is not being appropriately upheld in the United States and there is a severe need for improvement (Briggs, 2020; Gussak, 2020; Jams, 2019; Krisberg, 2005; Lamberti, 2016).

As noted in beneficial approaches to rehabilitate offenders by Lamberti (2016), various forms of counseling and therapy can be used. From examining the literature on the use of art therapy with this population, the studies above showed the tangible impact using the arts can have on juvenile offenders. Throughout most of the literature, there was a common theme of the

impact of low self-esteem and how art directives and processing can have a positive impact on uplifting the perception of self within the incarcerated youth. Using the arts in a different way that defies their “deviant” label such as moving from graffiti art that may be a factor in their detainment to more explorative and expressive arts helped reshape their identity and self-perception (Gussak, 2020). Interacting with and developing a new skill through the use of art materials that can be built upon over time also increased confidence and built on the youth’s strengths they already possess (Hirsch, 1974; Oesterreich & Flores, 2009). The research on using mural making as an art intervention with juvenile offenders also showed an improvement in self-esteem and group interactions between inmates, with adults and with the community when the project is community-based (Gussak, 2020; Murphy et al., 2013; Venable, 2005).

The idea of improving self-esteem along with negative label reversal and positive self-perception was salient throughout the art therapy research with juvenile offenders. Improving self-esteem was also a common goal in using self-portraiture as an art therapy directive with many other populations as well. Self-portraits can be used as a way to reflect on and strengthen one’s identity, provide self-expression and offer visual narratives of one’s identity or perception of self, allowing tone to emotionally regulate (Beccera et al., 2022; Iacona, 2017). The themes this intervention may address were also themes seen in frequent clinical goals to be worked on with this population as displayed in the different studies mentioned (Gussak, 2020; Hirsch, 1974; Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Murphy et al., 2013; Dodd, 2021). This art directive may have benefits to this population when used as an art intervention but further research is necessary.

Arts- Based Exploration of Literature

To further explore the idea of using self-portraits of Juvenile offenders, I created my own self portrait in response to the literature depicted below Figure 1. Although my art making was

not facilitated by an art therapist or in a clinical setting, I still mentally reflected on my own inner world and challenges I have faced in my life. This process wasn't as quick as I expected and took several weeks of reflection and processing to determine how I could depict some thoughts, feelings and experiences I had in mind in a self-portrait format. This may take several sessions for an individual to process and come up with how they want to depict themselves, if reflecting on their emotions rather than a realistic self-portrait. Sessions may include writing down their thoughts and reflections and creating different sketches of visual ways they want to represent themselves. It is also possible that someone can reflect in the moment and know exactly what they want to create as they connect with themselves and their emotions directly during the process. Once I was finally able to create my self-portrait, I entered a state of flow and got totally immersed in the art making. As I was creating and connecting with the subject matter, I was able to process the state of mind I was attempting to depict more objectively than before.

Having a tangible piece of artwork to review as a reflection of this time has been beneficial to me since I am able to see how my emotions allowed me to be creative and positively express myself. This portrait is a reflection of a time in my life I wanted to visually explore and express my emotions around. I would also like to explore doing a portrait of my “present” self and “future” self. This is a way a self-portrait directive can be built upon and used in a more in-depth way. Although this was not a



clinical exploration and was a self-guided reflection, I was still able to experience some benefits in reflecting on myself and creating an artwork to depict a time that shaped my identity. More research using self-portraits as an intervention to examine the positive or negative effects with this population could be important for future methods involving improving their sense of identity and self-esteem.

Conclusions

Detainment of youth offenders to a juvenile detention center is a very isolating experience that prevents community interaction at a very young age. While this is a regular practice in incarceration, it can also have harmful effects at such a young developmental level as Gussak (2020) noted. The use of arts as a therapeutic method or skill building experience with juvenile offenders offers a way to bridge the gap between isolation and community integration. As seen in studies mentioned such as Iacona (2017), Miner-Romanoff (2016), Oesterreich & Flores, (2009), and Venable, (2005), the youth were able to connect to the community through displaying their work in art shows, exhibits and other public means has a positive impact. Exhibits created with Juvenile Offenders artwork were also impactful for those observing the art. The narratives the juveniles were able to tell through their artwork had an impact on the viewers seeing this population in a different light (Miner-Romanoff, 2016).

In all corrections facilities, inmate violence and socialization was a concern due to gangs, and constant exposure to others in a small, isolating environment (Krisberg, 2005). Through group art therapy methods, positive interactions between inmates were seen over time as they created artwork alongside one another and collaboratively through mural projects (Gussak, 2020; Hongo et al., 2015; Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Oesterreich & Flores, 2009; Venable, 2005; Dodd,

2021). Positive interactions with adults are also developed overtime through using the arts methods in these studies as they provide a safe place for processing and expression for the youth in a controlled, punitive environment. In some arts-based experiences, they also were able to form healthy relationships with students of similar age that help facilitate projects such as in Venable's (2005) mural project. The reinforcement of positive interaction and community connection may be beneficial to the youth once they re-enter society.

Research on the juvenile's life upon re-entry after being a part of art therapy groups in detention opposed to not may be beneficial in getting a clearer understanding of the long-term impact it may have. While the positive impact art therapy has with juvenile offenders is highlighted throughout this literature review, the need for more research and implementation of arts-based therapy methods is indicated in a majority of the literature (Hongo et al., 2015; Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Murphy et al., 2013; Oesterreich & Flores, 2009). The research indicated that the rehabilitation model as a whole needs to be properly implemented within this population; art therapy may be a way to enhance this model and the juvenile offenders' healing due to the benefits indicated in the research (Dodd, 2021; Gussak, 2020; Hongo et al., 2015; Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Murphy et al., 2013; Oesterreich & Flores, 2009; Venable, 2005).

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