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A Trauma-Informed Socially Just Approach to Working with Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth Utilizing Expressive Arts Therapy

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Expressive Arts Therapy

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Abstract

Youth involved with the juvenile justice system often have a history of trauma and oppression resulting from their positionality and circumstances. Most juvenile justice-involved youth are boys, youth of color, low-income, LGBTQIA2S+, disabled, and traumatized. This literature review explores the history of the juvenile justice system, issues with the present-day model, and trauma-informed and transformative justice approaches to practice. The implementation of socially just, trauma-informed expressive arts therapy programs is proposed as a more equitable practice to replace commonly used punitive practices across the United States. More research is needed to understand the impact of such programs on this population within a system laden with inequities furthering the traumatization and oppression of youth.

Keywords: expressive arts therapy, transformative justice, juvenile justice-involved youth

Author Identity Statement: I, the author, identify as a bisexual, cisgender white woman from a high-income small town located in North Texas. Although I was raised in a lower-middle-class household and am presently situated in the lower class, my geographical location afforded me access to abundant resources. I acknowledge the position of privilege I am in, which undoubtedly made the pursuit of a graduate degree in the Northeast possible. My interest in juvenile justice-involved youth is centered around advocacy against the systemic injustices which carried me to the position I am presently in, while indefinitely harming the lives of so many young lives across the United States.

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The term "juvenile delinquent" is often utilized in literature to describe youth involved with the justice system. However, the term requires further consideration as it often carries an underlying negative and critical connotation. I believe such a label implies youth are responsible for the positioning and circumstances which led to their externalized behavior, rather than acknowledging the multitude of systemic inequities impacting their lives. Even the United Nations has opposed the use of the term, electing to refer to such youth as "children in conflict with the law" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). In the same vein, I have chosen to utilize the phrase juvenile justice-involved youth (JJIY) throughout the following review.

To truly understand the systemic issues that continue to thrive and plague youth today, understanding the history of the juvenile justice system (JJS) is paramount. Before the development of the JJS, youth were often confined alongside adults in jails and penitentiaries during the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice, n.d.). Due to public concern, houses of refuge were opened in urban areas across the United States to house youth whom authorities identified as delinquent. Eventually, these facilities became overcrowded and deteriorated into poor condition with many reports of staff abuse. Reform schools then began to open with a focus on an education-based alternative; however, these facilities eventually succumbed to the same issues faced by houses of refuge (Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice, n.d.). By the mid-19th century, cottage institutions, probation, and out-of-home placement were introduced as a new way to address youth behavior (Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice, n.d.). Until this point in time, youth were seen in criminal courts alongside adults. Out of similar

concern for the housing of youth, the first juvenile court was established in Cook County, Illinois in 1899 (Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice, n.d.). The court was founded on the legal doctrine of *parens patriae*, which translates to "state as parent." This doctrine gave courts the right to intervene if youth were deemed in need of help due to their life circumstances and/or behavior. As juvenile courts opened across the United States, the motive was to provide rehabilitation and supervision to youth in need. Hearings were conducted informally, and judges were given the freedom to exercise broad discretion in handling each case. Although the intention behind this design was to provide individualized attention to youth, concerns grew during the 1950s and 60s due to great disparities in treatment. In response, the Supreme Court made several decisions to formalize the courts and provide due process protections to youth (Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice, n.d.). However, when the tough-on-crime trend became popular in the late 1980s, many states passed more punitive laws. This more punitive approach led to an increase in confinement, which caused corrections facilities to become overcrowded and in poor condition once again. By the late 1990s, many states began to reduce the number of youths in corrections facilities as the efficacy of the congregate-style institution came into question (Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice, n.d.). Even so, detention centers are still the most prevalent type of juvenile facility today. Detention centers alone make up 45% of all juvenile facilities, with long-term secure care facilities making up an additional 10% (Puzzanchera et al., 2022).

This brief historical review makes it clear that the JJS was founded on subjectivity and bias at all levels by giving individuals the discretion to determine which groups of people deserved harsh treatment and which deserved freedom. Today, part of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) mission statement is to "[help] states, localities,

and Tribes develop effective and equitable juvenile justice systems that create safer communities and empower youth to lead productive lives" and to "set policies that guide juvenile justice issues at the federal level" (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.-a). Additionally, the OJJDP acknowledges that involvement in the JJS adversely impacts the ability of youth to secure housing, get a job, continue their education, and/or join the military (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.-c). The office also recognizes that these consequences often lead to recidivism and prolonged involvement with the system itself. Although the OJJDP advises juvenile justice practitioners to recognize and address the barriers to success that involvement creates for youth to fulfill their goal of rehabilitation and public safety, the mission and priorities established at the federal level have limited impact on actual facilities across the country (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.-c). Since each state has the right to determine the approach and framework its system utilizes, there is great variability in treatment and outcomes depending on geographical location. For instance, the OJJDP has funded research supporting the use of arts-based interventions with JJIY with little to no action for large-scale implementation of new programming (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.-b).

Studies at the federal level and beyond have staggeringly explored the use of individual arts modality programs with JJIY in recent years. However, research involving the implementation of expressive arts therapy (EXAT) interventions specifically is severely limited. Additionally, the application of trauma-informed and socially just approaches is often missing from the methodology of studies. Considering there is a prevalence of trauma and systemic injustices within the JJIY population, utilizing such approaches should be regarded as a necessity rather than an additive. The following literature review will explore the multitude of injustices

impacting JJIY and propose the use of trauma-informed, socially just EXAT interventions as a replacement for the existing punitive practices fraught with inequity.

Literature Review

This literature review will begin by exploring existing studies and publications on the various identities associated with and challenges faced by JJIY. Then, the utilization of trauma-informed and transformative justice approaches to expressive arts therapy will be considered as a replacement for the current punitive practices of the United States JJS.

Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth

The United States Department of Justice defines juvenile delinquent as a person under the age of 18 in violation of a law which would have been considered a crime if committed by an adult (Criminal Resource Manual, 2020). However, youth may also become involved with the JJS by committing status offenses (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023). Status offenses are only considered illegal if committed by youth, such as truancy, running away from home, curfew violations, underage drinking, or being labeled as incorrigible or ungovernable. However, each state can make statutes regarding what constitutes a status offense (Hockenberry & Puzzanchera, 2017). As a result, youth are held to a different legal standard depending upon their geographical location. From a global perspective, the United Nations recognizes status offenses as a failure to respect the rights and best interests of youth (Nowak, 2019). Considering the United States has the highest rate of youth incarceration compared to all other reporting regions and countries with 60.05 per 100,000 children being confined, it is imperative to question if the best interests of youth are being adequately considered (Nowak, 2019). With the presence of racial, ethnic, and gender disparities, and a prevalence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or agender, two-spirit,

plus (LGBTQIA2S+) youth, disabled youth, and traumatized youth, systemic inequities become astonishingly apparent. Furthermore, the inadequate and voluntary reporting measures coupled with poor outcomes for JJIY necessitate a new approach to replace existing practices.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities and the Intersection of Socioeconomic Status

Overall, youth of color (YOC) are much more likely to be involved in the JJS when compared to white youth at all levels of involvement. Concerning arrests, poor Black youth have the highest number of annual arrests compared to all other youth (Tapia, 2010). In high-income neighborhoods specifically, Black and Hispanic youth have a significantly higher risk of being arrested when compared to their white peers. On a national scale, Black youth are 2.3 times as likely, and Indigenous youth are 1.7 times as likely to be arrested compared to white youth (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2022). After arrest, the racial disparity amongst JJIY continues. Although Black youth only make up 15.3% of the United States youth population, they make up 48.4% of youth detained prior to their court date, 35.3% of all delinquency cases taken to court, and 37.2% of those committed to residential placements (Puzzanchera et al., 2021; Puzzanchera et al., 2023b; Puzzanchera et al., 2023a). Comparatively, white youth comprise 51.9% of the overall population while only making up 27.5% of those detained, 44.4% of cases, and 36.9% of those committed (Puzzanchera et al., 2021; Puzzanchera et al., 2023b; Puzzanchera et al., 2023a). In fact, all YOC were more likely to be detained and committed to residential placements than their white counterparts, except for Asian/Pacific Islander youth (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023). Black youth were almost five times as likely, Indigenous youth were about four times as likely, and Hispanic youth were 1.2 times as likely to be placed compared to white youth. Notably, Hispanic youth are 60% more likely to be detained prior to court and 40% more likely to receive residential placements

when compared to their white peers. Lastly, white youth are most likely to be diverted from formal processing in the JJS compared to all YOC.

Gender Disparity and the Intersection of Race and Ethnicity

Concerning gender, male youth are exponentially more likely to become involved with the JJS than female youth (Puzzanchera et al., 2021). Precisely, male youth make up 73.2% of delinquency cases despite making up 51.1% of the national youth population. Furthermore, female youth make up only 29% of arrests, 27% of cases taken to court, 21.8% of youth detained prior to their court date, and 13.9% of those committed to residential placements (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2022; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023; Puzzanchera et al., 2023a; Puzzanchera et al., 2023b). Moreover, male youth stay in facilities for longer periods when compared to their female counterparts (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023).

Considering the intersection between race and gender, only 17% of the United States male youth population is Black (Puzzanchera et al., 2021). However, 44% of all male youth in residential placement are Black (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023). Additionally, the likelihood of being referred to juvenile court is 2.89 times higher for Black male youth and 1.22 times higher for Indigenous male youth than white male youth (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Furthermore, all male YOC are less likely to be diverted from formal processing in the JJS, with Black male youth being about 45% less likely compared to their white male peers (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). In the same vein, male YOC are also more likely to be formally petitioned by the court and detained (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Moreover, Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic male youth are less likely to be given probation and more likely to receive placement compared to white male youth (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Black,

Indigenous, and Pacific Islander male youth are also more likely to be judicially waived to the adult criminal court than white male youth (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Specifically, Black male youth are 1.85 times more likely, Indigenous male youth are 1.34 times more likely, and Pacific Islander male youth are 1.07 times more likely. Notably, Black male youth are the least likely to be adjudicated when compared to all others (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). However, this may be the natural consequence of such a reduced likelihood of diversion and a greater likelihood of being referred, detained, and petitioned. By making up such a large proportion of youth involved in the early stages of the JJS, it is plausible that Black male youth would be adjudicated less often than other youth as a result.

Similar to the male youth population, only 17.2% of female youth in the United States are Black (Puzzanchera et al., 2021). However, 32% of female youth in residential placement are Black (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023). Additionally, Black female youth are more likely to be referred to juvenile court than all other female youth. Compared to white female youth, however, Black female youth are 2.63 times more likely, and Indigenous female youth are 1.64 times more likely to be referred (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Similar to male youth involved with the JJS, all female YOC are less likely to be diverted from formal processing compared to their white counterparts, with Black and Indigenous female youth being the least likely (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Furthermore, all female YOC are more likely to be detained and formally petitioned than their white female peers (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Female YOC are also less likely to be given probation rather than placement compared to white female youth, except for Pacific Islander female youth (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Individually, Hispanic female youth are 1.43 times more likely, Indigenous female youth are 1.28 times more likely, and Black female youth are 1.12 times more likely to be placed. Notably, female YOC are

less likely to be adjudicated when compared to their white counterparts, except for Indigenous female youth at 1.07 times more likely (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). As previously highlighted, however, this may be the result of increased involvement with the JJS at earlier levels for female YOC. Significantly, all female YOC are less likely to be waived to adult criminal court (Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Although this may be a more equitable statistic concerning population sizes, the appropriateness of sending minors to adult criminal court and subsequently to adult prisons warrants careful consideration of justness.

Socioeconomic Status and the Intersection of Race and Ethnicity

On a national scale, 15.3% of youth under the age of 18 years old live at or below the poverty line (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023). Unfortunately, the percentage of JJIY living at or below the poverty line is not documented at the national level and is often overlooked at the state level. Nonetheless, a longitudinal study by Jarjoura et al. found that the level of poverty a child experiences impacts the likelihood of delinquency (2002). More specifically, a higher level of delinquent involvement is related to persistent and chronic poverty. Additionally, experiencing poverty earlier in life has a greater impact on the likelihood of delinquent behavior later on. Another longitudinal study compared the relationship between neighborhood context and the social characteristics of children at the age of three, to the behavior and social competence at the age of 15 (Wang, 2020). The lack of cohesion and control, diminished collective efficacy, and parental stress in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty levels was found to be associated with poor social skills, delinquency, and behavioral problems in adolescents. Collective efficacy can be defined as formal and informal support through advice-giving, access to material resources, parenting information, and the shared supervision of children (Wang, 2020). Moreover, mothers who reside in high-poverty areas experience many

stressors due to living in unsafe areas, having limited resources, less social support, and weak cohesive social networks (Wang, 2020). Dealing with such stressors can lead to an increase in the level of parenting stress in mothers, which may cause more problematic behaviors and lesser social skills in children. These findings support the idea that adverse childhood experiences within the home occur more often in disadvantaged neighborhoods with social and economic stressors. This study is not without limitations, however. Self-reporting measures were used, the behavioral outcomes of children were assessed only at the age of 15, and the role of fathers and other caregivers, school quality, peer influences, and teacher interactions were not considered.

Another study by Paik and Packard assessed the impact of JJS fines and fees on families in Dane County, Wisconsin (2019). The case study utilized 100 total interviews from 20 families and 10 victims across two jurisdictions. Reported legal financial obligations (LFOs) ranged from $180 to $4,500 related to youth time in detention centers or group homes, neighborhood supervision, competency evaluations, restitution, and public defender costs. Through the interviews, LFOs were found to have negative emotional and material impacts on families. Parents of JJIY youth experienced a variety of negative emotions due to the added financial strain, such as worry, stress, anxiety, frustration, and anger. Frustration and anger were felt due to a lack of care and the experience of injustice from the court system for recognizing already fragile financial situations and still applying LFOs regardless. Both parents and youth also reported negative impacts on their relationship with one another, such as increased conflict and a loss of trust. Additionally, youth reported not being able to spend time with or be there for their siblings, while parents reported younger siblings missing their “role models.” Families also reported that the severity of financial strain may even result in having to choose between LFOs, rent, and transportation. However, nonpayment of LFOs could result in money being taken from

parent tax refunds, parent wages being garnished, bills being sent to collections, driver's licenses of both parents and youth being suspended, warrants for arrest being issued for both parents and youth, and extended court supervision for youth.

Lastly, the intersection of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status highlights ongoing inequity within the system as YOC are much more likely to be in poverty. Hispanic youth specifically are more than two times as likely to live in poverty when compared to their white and Asian/Pacific Islander counterparts, and Indigenous and Black youth are three times as likely to live in poverty compared to white youth (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023).

LGBTQIA2S+ Youth and the Intersection of Race and Ethnicity

In 2021, the Division of Adolescent and School Health found that approximately 15.1% of high school age youth identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB). When considering those who may be questioning, the percentage increases to about 24.1% of youth. Contrastingly, the Williams Institute found that in 2017 about 9.54% of youth ages 13 to 17 years of age identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender (Conron, 2020). Notably, the former measure does not include transgender youth and the latter measure does not include youth identifying as questioning. Nevertheless, measures of LGBTQIA2S+ youth are inherently problematic due to the dependence upon youth disclosure. Youth may choose to conceal their gender identity and/or sexual orientation out of concern for their safety.

By contrast, a study by Wilson et al. found that about 12% of youth in custody identified their sexual orientation as LGB (2017). Based on gender, 39.4% of female youth in custody identified as lesbian or bisexual. When also considering those who identified as "mostly straight," the percentage of female youth increases to almost 58% (Wilson et al., 2017). Of youth

identifying as LGB, females were about two times as likely to also identify as Hispanic/Latina. Another study of youth in seven detention centers across the United States found that about 20% of youth identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, transgender, or gender nonconforming (Irvine & Canfield, 2016). More specifically, 7.5% identified as straight and transgender or gender nonconforming, 4.8% identified as LGB and transgender or gender nonconforming, and 7.7% identified as gender conforming and LGB. Similar to the aforementioned study, about 40% of female youth identified as lesbian, bisexual, gender nonconforming, or transgender (Irvine & Canfield, 2016). Additionally, about 85% of JJIY identifying as LGB and gender nonconforming were YOC (Irvine & Canfield, 2016). It is important to note, however, that it is not a federal requirement for states to report rates of JJIY identifying as LGBTQIA2S+.

Disabled Youth

A study by Quinn et al. found that the prevalence of incarcerated youth diagnosed with a disability varied by state between 9.1% and 77.5%, with a national average of 33.4% (2005). This is particularly alarming considering only 8.8% of students between the ages of six and 21 were served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act during the same year the study was conducted (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). A major limitation of this study, however, is the generalizability to present-day JJIY. Although more recent nationally representative studies are not available, current state-level studies have found similarly worrisome levels of prevalence. For instance, Kim et al. found that 39.6% of youth involved with a county juvenile court system in Washington had at least one diagnosis qualifying them for special education services (2021). Of those, 42% of youth were found to have two or more qualifying diagnoses. More specifically, 19% of youth had diagnoses related to behavioral problems, 19.5% had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, 22.2% had a learning disability, and 0.7% had an

intellectual disability. This prevalence is considerably significant as only 14% of public-school students at the national level had special education needs in 2019 (McFarland et al., 2019). Furthermore, youth on probation that qualified for special education were significantly more likely to re-offend (Kim et al., 2021). Similarly, another study by Mallet in Cuyahoga County, Ohio also found a prevalence of JJIY with disability diagnoses (2009). Of youth on probation, 32.5% had a disability that required special education services, 39.8% had a mental health diagnosis, 32.4% had a substance use diagnosis, and 56.2% had previously been a victim of maltreatment. Of those detained or incarcerated, 39.4% had special education disabilities, 68.2% had mental health diagnoses, and 49.5% had substance use disorders. Researchers also determined that more than 50% of JJIY were involved with either the substance use or mental health system, and more than 40% were concurrently involved with the special education system (Mallet, 2009). This suggests that one system alone is not sufficient to meet the needs of this population. Furthermore, youth involved with more systems were less likely to have successful outcomes with probation and had higher detention and incarceration rates (Mallet, 2009). Youth without disability diagnoses were two times more likely to successfully complete probation without receiving placement from the court (Mallet, 2009). A limitation of each of these studies, as highlighted by Quinn et al., is that disability diagnoses data of JJIY is dependent upon each state's desire to obtain school records and assess youth upon entry (2005). Therefore, it is likely that the prevalence of youth with disabilities is underestimated due to underreporting.

Trauma

The most recent study utilizing a nationally representative sample to assess the prevalence of trauma in JJIY found that 70% of youth in custody reported some type of previous trauma experience (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). It is important to note, however, that the

present-day generalizability of this study is limited as the survey used was completed in 2003. Comparatively, Abram et al. found that 92.5% of youth arrested and detained in Cook County, Illinois had at least one trauma experience (2004). Considering Cook County includes the city of Chicago as well as surrounding suburbs, this study highlights the integral role geographical location plays in the variability of trauma across the United States. Concerning gender, this study found that about 93.2% of males and 84% of females reported at least one trauma experience (Abram et al., 2004).

Youth involved with the JJS are also at risk of experiencing further traumatization resulting from sexual victimization perpetrated by other youth as well as staff while in juvenile facilities. In total, 7.1% of male youth and 6.6% of female youth in juvenile facilities have reported incidents of sexual victimization (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2021). Of male youth, 1.6% were perpetrated by other youth, and 6.1% were perpetrated by staff. Of female youth, 4.7% were perpetrated by other youth, and 2.9% were perpetrated by staff. White youth are the most likely to be victimized, with 8.5% reporting (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2021). Black youth, however, are the most likely to be victimized by facility staff with 6.7% reporting. Regarding LGBTQIA2S+ youth, those identifying as lesbian, gay, questioning, or another sexuality were substantially more likely to report incidents perpetrated by youth (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2021). More specifically, 12% of youth identifying as lesbian, gay, or another sexuality, and 6.2% of youth questioning their sexuality reported incidents. Additionally, transgender youth and youth questioning their gender identity were significantly more likely to report incidents perpetrated by other youth and staff. Of transgender youth, 19.1% reported and 26.8% of youth questioning their gender identity reported. Lastly, the likelihood of youth being

victimized is positively correlated with the length of time spent in juvenile facilities (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2021).

Another noteworthy study by Williams et al. explored the impact of oppression on a diverse group of participants using the Trauma Symptoms Discrimination Scale, a self-report assessment evaluating the impact of discrimination by measuring symptoms of anxiety related to trauma (2023). This study is unique in that it expanded the focus population beyond the experience of racism to include other marginalized identities such as income, education, gender, and LGBTQIA2S+ status. However, it is important to mention that the participants were all adults over the age of 18. Although the participants were not JJIY specifically, the impact of oppression over a lifetime is valuable when considering cumulative trauma related to the various identities discussed in this literature review such as race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQIA2S+, and socioeconomic status. Results showed that recent or past experiences of racial microaggressions and discrimination increased symptoms of trauma (Williams et al., 2023). However, lifetime discrimination had a stronger relationship to trauma symptoms than experiences occurring within the last year. Experiences of trauma also differed across ethnoracial groups with Black and non-white Hispanic participants reporting the highest rates, and non-Hispanic white participants reporting the lowest rates (Williams et al., 2023). Additionally, being a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community was found to significantly increase the risk of traumatic discrimination (Williams et al., 2023). Notably, no statistical difference in trauma symptoms was found between women and men (Williams et al., 2023). However, women were found to have a higher percentage of discrimination experiences. While the authors suggested this could be the result of an improving social climate, exploring the difference in how genders internalize and experience persistent discrimination may provide a more adequate explanation in future research.

Importatnly, intersectionality and the presence of multiple marginalized identities were found to lead to an increased risk of trauma (Williams et al., 2023). The more marginalized identities a participant had, the more likely they were to experience traumatic discrimination. Specifically, non-white Hispanic and LGBTQIA2S+ individuals experienced the largest impact and were found to have comparable or greater trauma than their counterparts with non-specific intersectional identities. Lastly, trauma symptoms resulting from discrimination were found to be associated with PTSD, depression, and anxiety in participants (Williams et al., 2023). Simply put, this study found that all forms of oppression are traumatizing. Thus, it is vital to consider the impact when approaching clinical practice with marginalized populations.

Expressive Arts Therapy

Expressive arts therapy can be defined as the intermodal use of all creative modalities to facilitate healing at the individual and community levels such as visual art, movement, drama, poetry, music, etc. (Levine, 2011). This flexibility of intervention makes it suitable to meet the vast varying needs of JJIY with consideration for their diverse interests and abilities. The intermodal use of the arts sets EXAT apart from each individual arts-based therapy modality as it centralizes the sensory experience of the whole body during the creative arts process. As explained by Richardson, "[i]t is the body, mind, and soul in harmony or chaos finding a way to be witnessed, heard, healed, changed, challenged, deepened, discovered, or surrendered" (2016, p. 6). This dynamic relationship with the arts activates intellect, the body, and our senses to provide an outlet for possibilities to become apparent regardless of the various barriers that typically make them unavailable in our everyday lives (Richardson, 2016; Levine, 2011).

Application with Traumatized Youth

A study by Lyshak-Stelzer et al. assessed the effectiveness of a trauma-focused EXAT intervention in reducing symptoms of PTSD in youth at an inpatient psychiatric facility (2007). To determine the impact, participants were randomly divided into the EXAT treatment and a standard arts and crafts treatment activity. Researchers found that a reduction in the severity of PTSD symptoms was much greater for those involved in the EXAT intervention compared to the standard treatment. Another study by Hylton et al. evaluated the impact of a two-week creative arts therapy summer camp on 44 high school students and recent graduates affected by a school shooting in Parkland, Florida (2019). Assessments for depression, generalized anxiety disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and positive and negative affect were given on the first and last days of the program. To assess the participant's satisfaction with the camp, pre- and post-camp questionnaires were utilized. Each student had the opportunity to choose whether they would prefer to participate in drama, visual art, or music therapy. Each session began with a warm-up activity from a different modality, then students joined their modality-specific small group. The drama therapy group had a significant impact on the reduction of PTSD symptoms, while the results of music therapy and visual art groups were insufficient. The researchers theorized that the intermodal nature of the drama therapy group provided participants with an opportunity to process through both their bodies and verbally, likely contributing to their healing experience.

In addition, the impact of New Vision Wilderness, a trauma-informed wilderness therapy program utilizing additional EXAT interventions, on struggling youth ages 13 to 17 was explored in another study (Johnson et al., 2020). The program was a backcountry wilderness expedition with multimodal practices, including trauma-informed yoga, expressive art and

writing interventions, brainspotting psychotherapy, and canine therapy. Of the participants, 35.2% had a trauma or stressor-related disorder, 25.4% had a depressive disorder, 16.7% had a substance use disorder, 15.8% had an anxiety disorder, and 4.1% had a disruptive behavior disorder. Following the completion of the program, participants and caregivers reported reductions in overall distress, including significant reductions in somatic distress, emotional distress, problematic social behaviors, clinically critical problems, relational problems, and behavioral dysfunction. More specifically, only somatic distress, social problems, and emotional distress remained in the clinical range for distress and dysfunction for most youth at discharge. Additionally, significant improvement in family functioning was reported by both participants and caregivers. Participants reported moderate to large improvements in psychological functioning, while their caregivers reported large improvements. Although the results of this study are significant and the reporting of participant diagnoses was necessary, it is worth recognizing that pathologization of natural responses to traumatizing and oppressive circumstances such as stress, depression, substance use, anxiety, and behavioral challenges is innately problematic. Just as the term "juvenile delinquent" puts the onus on individual youth, pathologization places the responsibility of change on youth rather than on the system causing harm.

Application with Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth

Existing research on the utilization of EXAT with JJIY is extremely limited; however, some recent studies exploring the benefits of individual arts modalities provide a valuable starting point. An art-therapy-based study by Murphy et al. assessing the impact of a mural program, The Emmanuel Project, found overall improvements in the self-esteem of incarcerated youth (2013). The most significant improvements, however, were found in youth scoring in the

low range of self-esteem assessments on the pre-survey. The program itself involved the collaborative creation of "murals of hope" between incarcerated youth and Emmanuel Martinez. With a history of involvement with the JJS himself, Martinez was in a unique position to relate to those he served in a culturally responsive way. In addition to the creation of murals, the program provided each facility with training and art supplies for teachers and students to continue the work in classrooms and during art therapy activities. This study has good generalizability to youth of varied geographical locations as the Emmanuel Project was assessed in five states across the country. Similarly, a case study exploring the use of sand-tray therapy with an incarcerated 15-year-old Latino male found that it provided an opportunity to process trauma experiences and a desire for safety without having to verbalize, which resulted in increased self-efficacy (Parker & Cade, 2018). In addition, a pilot study exploring the impact of a 10-week mindfulness program on 32 incarcerated male youth ages 14 to 18 years old at a facility in the San Francisco Bay Area resulted in significant improvements in self-regulation and perceived stress (Himelstein et al., 2012). Qualitative data also showed that a majority of participants were open and accepting of the mindfulness interventions, and found their experiences to be educational, meaningful, and beneficial.

Another study by Wolf and Holochwost evaluating the impact of a voluntary choral residency program on incarcerated youth found a significant reduction in externalizing and antisocial behavior (2016). Additionally, participation resulted in positive assessments of mood, self-esteem, and engagement in music. Participants included 54 incarcerated adolescents ranging from 14 to 17 years old at facilities located in a northeastern city. Although the participants were not adjudicated, they were incarcerated while awaiting their court dates. In line with a socially just approach, a control group was not utilized as researchers posited it would contradict the

framework of the study to deny vulnerable youth an opportunity to participate in a program they were interested in and could benefit from. This music-therapy-based program took place over two weeks, consisting of 12 two to three-hour sessions. The director of the program had professional experience in a historically minority area of the same northeastern city where the facilities were located, and the assisting senior choir members had similar backgrounds to the participants. This ensured the facilitators of the program were adequately equipped to respond to the needs of the participants. Themes of resilience and social change were the basis of songs participants rehearsed throughout the program, as well as the original songs written by participants. To bring the program to a close, a concert was held for residents, families, and staff to attend. With a similar purpose, Greenbaum and Javdani assessed the impact of a writing therapy program, WRITE ON, on 53 detained youth ages 12 to 17 in a short-term detention facility awaiting court decisions (2017). WRITE ON was a six-week group program with one-and-a-half-hour sessions occurring twice a week. Participants were given two culturally relevant and sensitive writing prompts that encouraged cognitive and emotional reflection through narrative construction. To ensure autonomy, participants who opted not to respond to the writing prompts were offered fill-in-the-blank poems or word searches. Youth were also given opportunities to share and receive feedback from the group, receive written facilitator feedback, and/or keep their writing private. When evaluated alongside the results of a comparison support group, positive mental health attributes showed a significant increase for WRITE ON participants. More specifically, increased resilience and high satisfaction with the program were apparent.

By contrast, a study by Ezell and Levy evaluated the impact of a multimodal arts-based program, A Changed World (2003). Various artists facilitated two-week to two-month long

workshops with incarcerated youth, such as musicians, videographers, photographers, poets, sculptors, graphic designers, and more. The program resulted in the development of vocational skills, positive feelings associated with goal accomplishment, and significantly improved behavior. Additionally, youth commentary and observations made by the facilitating artists found connection, expression, learning, and discovery were commonplace in each workshop. Youth were given opportunities to develop meaningful connections with artists and each other, as well as with their emotions and past experiences. Not only did the workshop curate an experience of success, but the value of youth experiences and voices was highlighted. Although this program was not intermodal in nature, the multimodal design shows the benefit of a variety of arts modalities on the same participants. This informs future research in that it is reasonable to suggest that the intermodal use of the arts has the potential to be beneficial as well.

While it is evident that individual arts modalities often result in a variety of benefits, the capacity of EXAT to appeal to and be utilized by a broad range of creative interests and abilities with limitless flexibility makes it uniquely equipped to meet the needs of JJIY with consideration for their complex positionality. However, research is needed on the intermodal use of the arts to empirically support its implementation within communities as a replacement for punitive practices.

The Value of Applying a Trauma-Informed Approach

Trauma is experienced through the spirit, mind, and body as a result of direct or indirect experiences or events (Richardson, 2016). More specifically, it is experienced through implicit memory, which is unconscious and associated only with sensations and images. Considering the absence of words, traumatized individuals often struggle to express their experiences verbally. For JJIY in particular, finding the right vocabulary to describe their trauma can be quite difficult.

A study by Bryan et al. found that 66 to 90% of adjudicated JJIY presented with language skills below the level expected for their age (2007). More specifically, about 46 to 67% scored in the language skill categories of poor or very poor. Of the general adolescent population, only 9% fall within this category (Bryan et al., 2007). Considering the prevalence of trauma and literacy challenges within the JJIY population, EXAT interventions provide a unique opportunity to process experiences when words are not accessible. However, it is imperative that a trauma-informed approach underlies all interventions and systems to enhance resilience through a strengths-based framework by assisting with a variety of interpersonal, emotional, cognitive, and physical challenges (Malchiodi & Perry, 2015).

To integrate a trauma-informed approach effectively into EXAT interventions and juvenile justice systems, there are six key principles to adhere to. The first principle of safety requires that the organization, staff, and people served feel physically and mentally safe (SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014). One important piece of establishing safety is understanding what it means to the youth being served with consideration for their lived experiences. As the system currently functions, researchers, facilitators, and clinicians must also consider how to create a safe space within a system that further contributes to the traumatization and oppression of youth. The next principle of trustworthiness and transparency states that all operations and decisions are made transparently to build and maintain trust with staff and with those served. The third principle of peer support highlights the value of safety, trust, hope, and collaboration amongst peers to promote healing. Next, the principle of collaboration and mutuality advises the power dynamics between staff and people served be leveled as healing happens amid shared power and decision-making. The fifth principle of empowerment, voice, and choice recognizes the strengths and experiences of the staff and those served. Lastly, the

principle of cultural, historical, and gender issues requires responsiveness to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of those served.

Recidivism and the Application of a Socially Just Approach

The previous discussions of race, gender, socioeconomic status, LGBTQIA2S+, and disabilities highlight deeply engrained issues within the United States JJS. While the systemic issues go far beyond the capacity of this literature review to examine, the topic of recidivism is an invaluable addition to this discussion. In the United States, about 20% of state juvenile corrections agencies do not track youth recidivism rates at any level (Seigle et al., 2014). Out of the states that voluntarily report recidivism rates, most do not consider the various ways in which youth can come in contact with the justice system, such as being rearrested, adjudicated, or reincarcerated at either the juvenile or adult level. However, comprehensive reviews of state recidivism rates have found that rearrest rates after confinement can be as high as 70 to 80% within two to three years after release (Mendel, 2011; Seigle et al., 2014). Additionally, 45 to 72% of youth are adjudicated or convicted as either a juvenile or an adult within three years of being released from juvenile corrections facilities (Mendel, 2011).

Of note, between 26 to 62% of youth are re-incarcerated within three years of their release (Mendel, 2011). Missouri is the only outlier with a rate of 16.2%, however, which is regarded to be the result of a unique statewide therapeutic treatment-based framework (Mendel, 2011; Seigle et al., 2014). The Missouri Division of Youth Services (MDYS) does not utilize cells, pepper spray, armed guards, prolonged isolation, strip searches, or face-down restraints like many facilities across the country (Seigle et al., 2014). Some of the most impressive aspects of the MDYS approach are the assignment of one strengths-based case manager to each youth throughout their involvement with the JJS; small dorm-style housing facilities with maximum

capacities of 40 to 50 youth; the freedom to wear their own clothing and keep some personal items; regular engagement with group counseling and peer support; staff recognition of positive behaviors; and an accredited school district run by MDYS providing opportunities to complete high school credits, graduate, and/or begin taking college courses online. Overall, the focus of the MDYS approach on therapeutic rehabilitation rather than punishment through confinement has resulted in the lowest rate of reported recidivism across the country.

Through the acknowledgment of the ways in which the JJS is engrained with inequity and injustice, it is critical to utilize a socially just approach when working with JJIY. Historically, art as a facilitator of change has been thoroughly explored in the EXAT field. Estrella (2011) even argues that the use of the arts outside of and within systems specifically to promote social change at the societal, community, family, and individual levels is the heart of the profession due to its unique ability to give a voice to those suffering under oppressive and unjust systems. Hocoy summarized this idea as "images can concurrently heal personal-collective wounds while demanding a response to injustice" (2007, as cited in Estrella, 2011, p. 48). Additionally, the intermodal nature and creative process of EXAT makes new possibilities apparent that would otherwise not be available due to the barriers that exist in everyday life (Richardson, 2016; Levine, 2011). Therefore, EXAT is a particularly useful tool in the process of social change as meaningful change is only possible when communities are aware of the resources available to them, and they believe in their capacity to act and rebuild the world around them. Thus, the integration of a socially just approach to EXAT to hold clinicians, participating professionals, agencies, and systems accountable to the individual and the collective is vital. The transformative justice (TJ) model specifically would be fitting as it seeks to bridge the gap between violence and what the justice system fails to do (Kaba, 2021). This model aims to create

support and safety for those harmed, determine how the context was set up to allow harm to occur, and how to change the context so that such harm is less likely to recur in the future. At its core, this framework recognizes that all humans experience and cause harm. Therefore, it is essential to respond to harm without causing more harm.

Method

The method for this literature review was founded on the utilization of the tools and resources made available and accessible by Lesley University. In addition to the @LL Lesley database, I also utilized Google Scholar. To begin my search, I focused on the disparities faced by JJIY. Then, I began searching for literature to define and describe approaches to practice. On both platforms, some of the terms I searched for were juvenile justice system, juvenile corrections, juvenile detention, incarcerated youth, juvenile delinquents, juvenile offender, expressive arts therapy, creative arts therapy, expressive therapies, trauma, trauma-informed care, trauma-informed practice, mindfulness therapy, nature therapy, art therapy, music therapy, dance movement therapy, dance, movement, writing therapy, poetry therapy, transformative justice, socially just, race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQIA2S+, disability, disabled, disabilities, intellectual, and developmental. In selecting articles, I ensured they were peer-reviewed and applicable to the population within the context being discussed. I also took advantage of the Ask A Librarian tool for assistance with my search for articles and to ensure any articles I chose were peer-reviewed. Lastly, I utilized the Lesley Center for Academic Achievement to have my paper reviewed before the submission deadline to ensure all necessary edits were complete.

Discussion

This literature review highlights the injustice and inequity deeply embedded within the fabric of the JJS by examining the history of the system, the prevalence of trauma, and the most

at-risk identities of involvement. Existing research and publications show that the JJS can be characterized by the presence of racial, ethnic, and gender disparities, and a prevalence of LGBTQIA2S+, disabled, and traumatized youth. Thus, already vulnerable populations face an increased risk of involvement with a pervasively inequitable system found to exacerbate trauma, financial strain, and oppression. Concerningly, YOC are significantly more likely to be involved with the JJS compared to their white counterparts at all levels and across various intersecting identities. While male youth are significantly more likely to be involved concerning the identity of gender, male and female YOC are more likely to be involved compared to white youth when considering intersectionality (Puzzanchera et al., 2021; Puzzanchera et al., 2023c). Furthermore, YOC are more likely to be in poverty in the United States, placing them at higher risk of delinquent behavior resulting from persistent and chronic poverty (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2023; Jarjoura et al., 2002). Additionally, the application of LFOs further exacerbates already strenuous financial situations for many JJIY and their families by resulting in negative emotional and material impacts (Paik & Packard, 2019). Moreover, most JJIY identifying as LGBTQIA2S+ are YOC in addition to the existing prevalence of the community itself being involved with the JJS (Wilson et al., 2017; Irvine & Canfield, 2016). The youth most at risk of involvement with the JJS also are more likely to have traumatic discrimination experiences due to one or more marginalized identities (Williams et al., 2023). This further supports the reality that the presence of trauma in JJIY is between 70% to 92.5% depending upon geographical location as oppression is associated with trauma symptoms (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010; Abram et al., 2004). Furthermore, by simply being involved with the JJS, youth are at risk of being further traumatized due to the threat of sexual victimization perpetrated by other youth and/or staff members (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention,

2021). When considering the identities of youth, those in the LGBTQIA2S+ community are significantly more likely to report incidents of victimization. Although discussions of the identities most at risk of involvement with the JJS are imperative to the transformation of current practices, inadequate and voluntary reporting at the state and federal levels likely results in underreporting and further erasure of the lived experiences of marginalized populations. The lack of mandatory and uniform reporting processes of socioeconomic status, LGBTQIA2S+ self-identification, and disability diagnoses of JJIY results in the continuation of deepened inequities within the system. Moreover, the ability of each state to determine the reporting and treatment of youth involved with the system results in varied outcomes for youth depending upon geographical location.

As a proposed replacement for the more punitive approaches commonly used across the United States JJS, trauma-informed and socially just approaches to practice were reviewed as a necessary complement to expressive arts therapy interventions. Considering the prevalence of trauma, the likelihood of traumatic discrimination experiences, and the risk of subsequent trauma from sexual victimization while involved with the JJS, a trauma-informed approach is crucial. Furthermore, the clear inequities impacting certain populations necessitate a socially just approach to ensure JJIY are served adequately based on their needs. Particularly, the TJ approach would pair well with EXAT interventions as it aims to close the gap between violence and failures of the system (Kaba, 2021). At its core, this approach believes it is imperative to respond to harm caused without inflicting more harm on individuals and/or communities.

Although a combined trauma-informed, TJ framework to EXAT has not yet been studied with JJIY, Project NIA demonstrates an accessible and potential intervention that could be facilitated across the United States. Project NIA – translated from Swahili, “nia” means “with

purpose" – is an organization based in Chicago working to provide an innovative way to think about violence and crime through restorative and TJ principles (Kim & Djagalov, 2020). One strategic goal of the organization is to end youth incarceration as a whole and reduce the societal reliance on arrest and confinement. To disseminate information and initiate discourse within communities, the Restorative Posters project was created. Predominantly Chicago-based artists created posters available for free download with the intention of the general public accessing and hanging around their communities, as seen in the figures below.

Figure 1

"What is needed to make things right? How have you been affected? Who else has been affected? How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?"

Fig. 1. Restorative Poster by Damon Locks.

Figure 2

"If you caused harm, ask Who was affected by what you did? and What do you need to do to make things right?"

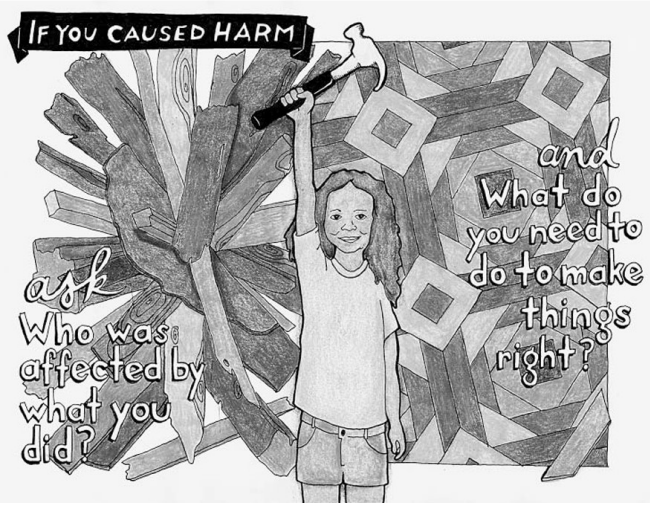

Fig. 2. Restorative Poster by Katy Groves.

Figure 3

"What exactly are you sorry for?"

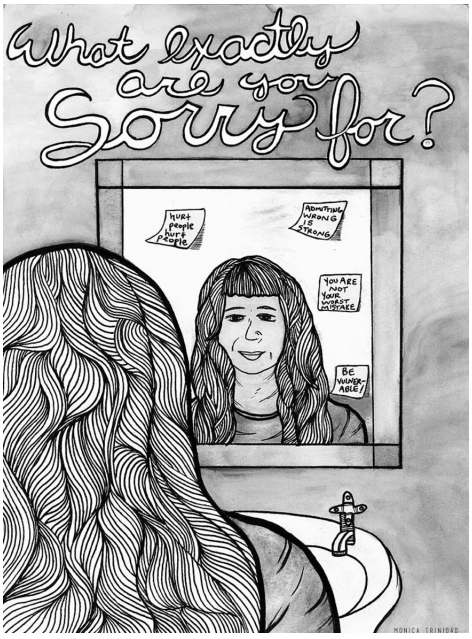

Fig. 3. Restorative Poster by Monica Trinidad.

To transform this project into a possible trauma-informed, socially just EXAT intervention for JJIY, youth currently or previously involved with the JJS could create posters, poetry, short films, dances, and more through intermodal group therapy workshops. The group therapy program itself should utilize the six key principles of a trauma-informed approach previously discussed to ensure all participants feel safe (SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014). The focus of the artwork could be on the personal experiences of youth within the JJS to initiate community discussions regarding the deeply engrained systemic inequities that continue to cause harm. In line with the Restorative Posters project, the group closure could be the act of making all creations publicly available online for free. This step would be vital to break down the very real walls between confined youth and the outside world, and to give a voice to those whose experiences are often erased.

Further research is needed on the use of intermodal expressive arts therapy interventions with JJIY. Although multimodal programs have been explored previously, modalities were separated into individual workshops rather than utilized intermodally. Furthermore, future research with this population must consider the prevalence of trauma and inequity within the JJS. Great care and consideration must be given to the methodology and programming to ensure safety is provided in ways that make sense for those being served through a trauma-informed, socially just approach.

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Student's Name: Ciara Carr

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Title: A Trauma-Informed Socially Just Approach to Working with Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth Utilizing Expressive Arts Therapy

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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.

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