

Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts Theory of Change Literature Review

Introduction

In early 2016, Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts contracted with Wilder Research to develop a theory of change for Interact's model of making art. The main goal of this work is to document Interact's approach to doing its work and the intended outcomes of the work. This will allow Interact to evaluate the efficacy of its work as well as ensure that others who wish to use Interact's model are implementing it with fidelity.

To start this process, Wilder Research conducted a literature review of pertinent scholarship about making art with people with disabilities, with a particular focus on the outcomes for those making the art (the artists) and those experiencing the art (the audience).

Methods

Wilder Research identified 28 articles through a literature search of peer-reviewed studies and other published articles. After a brief review of these 28 articles, 12 were closely reviewed due to their relevance for this work. Articles were identified for close review if they focused on programs or organizations that were similar to Interact (that is, a theater and/or visual arts organization that works with people with disabilities) or if they reported findings from evaluations of programs or organizations that facilitated art involvement for people with disabilities. For example, some articles focused on arts inclusion from a primarily racial-cultural standpoint; these were not reviewed closely. Likewise, some articles were primarily program descriptions without a focus on outcomes; these too were not reviewed closely. The process for identifying articles for close review ensures that only relevant literature is reported in this report.

Art with people with disabilities

This section of the literature review highlights two of the primary viewpoints from the field regarding art with people with disabilities: art as healing, and valid art. These viewpoints are not comprehensively addressed here, but are mentioned to provide some context in which to place Interact in the field of art with people with disabilities. It should also be noted that these viewpoints are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and there are examples of programs or organizations approaching art with people with disabilities in a way that incorporates both viewpoints (Koh & Shrimpton, 2014).

Art as healing

The "art as healing" viewpoint places value on the personal or social outcomes of arts participation for people with disabilities. In other words, the process of making art – and the associated personal or social development – is valued more than the art itself. This viewpoint may reflect larger trends of evaluating the impact of the arts (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2013).

Art as therapeutic treatment for people with disabilities grew in recognition and practice in the U.S. in the early 1900s. At that time, the primary goal was socialization of people with disabilities (Aguilera & Anne, 2014; Fuller et al., 2008). To this day, socialization remains an important goal for art as healing (Schlosnagle et al., 2014; Darraugh et al., 2016; Stickley et al., 2012; Hacking et al., 2008; Aguilera & Anne, 2014; Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2010; Fuller et al., 2008). Theater, in particular, is regarded as an effective arts approach to address social isolation of people with disabilities because the making and presentation of theater is inherently social; it not only allows for participants to build relationships with their fellow theater-makers, but it also situates participants in a positive way in their larger social or community context (Darraugh et al.,

2016; Stickley et al., 2012; Aguilera & Anne, 2014; Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2010; Fuller et al., 2008).

In addition to socialization, the literature identified other outcomes of art-based healing with people with disabilities, notably personal healing and empowerment as well as cognitive skill development and disability management (Schlosnager et al., 2014; Darraugh et al., 2016; Stickley et al., 2012; Hacking et al., 2008; Sulewski et al., 2012; Faigin, 2010; Aguilera & Anne, 2014; Fuller et al., 2008). Of these outcomes, personal healing and empowerment outcomes – such as increased self-esteem – appeared most often in literature.

Valid art

The “valid art” viewpoint asserts that art created by people with disabilities is valuable as art, and does not need to stake its value in non-art-related outcomes (such as personal, social, or cognitive outcomes of making art). This viewpoint asserts that people with disabilities possess valuable perspectives and distinct strengths, and that the “abled” community benefits from experiencing such perspectives and strengths (Sulewski et al., 2012; Faigin, 2010). As such, in addition to outcomes for artists, there are also outcomes for audiences associated with the valid art viewpoint, such as learning about disability (Schlosnager et al., 2014; Darraugh et al., 2016; Koh & Shrimpton, 2014; Faigin 2010; Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2012).

The viewpoint that people with disabilities make valid art became more common in the late 1900s, and paralleled shifts in disability culture during the same time that promoted a sense of pride in disability identity (Faigin, 2010). Considering art and theater, this pride is underscored by playing a valued role in a community – the role of artist, actor, and culture producer – with a specific artistic outlook that others might learn from (Sulewski et al., 2012; Faigin, 2010; Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2010). This represents a stark contrast with the “art as healing” viewpoint, in which the outcomes are experienced solely by the person with a disability.

Literature that described programs or organizations with a “valid art” viewpoint often included outcomes for audience members, such as increased understanding

of disability. As such, programs that view the art of their participants as valid in their own right were more likely have political or social goals to their art as well (Schlosnager et al., 2014; Darraugh et al., 2016; Koh & Shrimpton, 2014; Faigin, 2010; Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2012).

A specific approach used by programs that viewed their participants’ art as valid was, in Wilder Research’s language, a “creative collaboration framework” approach. This approach is characterized by a framework or structure for art-making that facilitates the creative input of abled and disabled artists alike (Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2010; Shah et al., 2015; Fuller et al., 2008). Often this entailed abled artists facilitating or leading disabled artists in creative exploration. In these cases, the relationship among the artists was characterized as egalitarian rather than hierarchical, meaning that those facilitating viewed the ideas of participants as important as their own (Faigin, 2010; Shah et al., 2015; Fuller et al., 2008). In other words, in this approach artists with disabilities actively contribute to the direction of a piece of art alongside artists without disabilities. A strength of this approach is that it allows artists with disabilities to contribute in ways that they feel comfortable with (Faigin, 2010; Fuller et al., 2008). Additionally, it was noted that this approach is often marked by supportive environments and a shared understanding among all artists regarding the purpose of their art (Faigin, 2010; Fuller et al., 2008).

Outcomes

A primary goal of this literature review is to identify research-based outcomes of programs or organizations that facilitate art-making with people with disabilities, both for those making art (the artists) and for those experiencing it (the audience). It should be noted that while the “valid art” viewpoint sees art as a primary outcome, other outcomes that are not arts-related (such as personal or social outcomes) were still identified by literature that focused on “valid art” programs or organizations. While Interact is aligned with the valid art viewpoint, this finding points to the importance of measuring other outcomes associated with Interact’s work as well.

For artists, outcomes are grouped in four categories: Personal, Social, Cognitive, and Artistic. For the audience, there is only one category (“Outcomes for audiences”) due to the smaller number of audience outcomes identified by this review. For each list of outcomes, Wilder Research coded more specific or detailed outcomes in order to synthesize outcomes among the multiple articles reviewed.

Personal outcomes for artists

Much literature focused on personal outcomes for artists (Figure 1); it was noted by some articles that such outcomes were examined because it is documented that people with disabilities sometimes experience poor self-image (Stickley et al., 2012; Aguilera & Anne, 2014). Personal outcomes for artists include: increased self-esteem or self-worth, increased confidence, improved self-image, more instances of happiness, and increased self-power, self-efficacy, or autonomy. Coming to identify as an artist and being viewed by others as an artist can contribute to these positive personal outcomes for people with disabilities (Koh & Shrimpton, 2013; Stickley et al., 2012; Sulewski et al., 2012; Faigin, 2010).

1. PERSONAL OUTCOMES FOR ARTISTS

	# of articles
Increased self-esteem or self-worth	7
Increased confidence/Willing to try new things	7
Improved self-image or perception of self	5
More instances of happiness or joy	5
Increased self-power, self-efficacy, or autonomy	4

Social outcomes for artists

As was mentioned previously, socialization has been a primary goal of art with people with disabilities since the early 1900s (Schlosnagle et al., 2014; Darraugh et al, 2016; Stickley et al., 2012; Hacking et al., 2008; Aguilera & Anne, 2014; Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2010; Fuller et al., 2008). This review identified the following social outcomes for artists: increased sense of belonging, increased relationships or social connections, increased socialization (being

around people), and increased interactions with wider community. Literature points to a connection between social and personal outcomes, such as more instances of joy (a personal outcome) because of increased number of relationships (a social outcome) (Darraugh et al., 2016; Stickley et al., 2012; Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2012; Aguilera & Anne, 2014). See Figure 2 for social outcomes for artists.

2. SOCIAL OUTCOMES FOR ARTISTS

	# of articles
Increased sense of belonging/Increased social acceptance	6
Increased relationships, social connection, or network	5
Increased socialization (i.e., being around people)	2
Increased interactions with wider community	1

Cognitive outcomes for artists

Fewer articles focused on cognitive outcomes for artists, but cognitive outcomes were still featured prominently in the literature (Figure 3, on the next page). Cognitive outcomes for artists include: improved stability and disability management, improved cognition, improved communication, and improved memory. Because these outcomes closely relate to mental health outcomes, one study used the Clinical Outcomes in Routine Examination (CORE) to measure these outcomes (Hacking et al., 2008). It was of particular importance for this same study to analyze outcomes by taking participants’ pre-existing disability conditions into consideration. It is Wilder Research’s recommendation to use already-existing and validated assessment tools whenever possible and appropriate for the evaluation of Interact’s outcomes, as well as for Interact to document or otherwise have access to pre-existing condition information for artists. As we continue this theory of change process, it may be that the CORE tool is not deemed useful for Interact; Wilder Research recommends working with Interact’s care coordinators, and perhaps with artists’ external case managers or caregivers, to identify useful and already-existing tools and data sources to measure cognitive outcomes.

3. COGNITIVE OUTCOMES FOR ARTISTS

	# of articles
Improved stability and disability management	4
Improved cognition	3
Improved communication	3
Improved memory	2

Artistic outcomes for artists

Literature also focused on artistic outcomes for artists, though there was less variety in terms of type, resulting in two artistic outcomes: improved art skills and increased knowledge of art (Figure 4).

4. ARTISTIC OUTCOMES FOR ARTISTS

	# of articles
Improved art skills	4
Increased knowledge of art	1

Outcomes for audiences

In line with the “valid art” viewpoint, a number of articles identified outcomes for audiences of art with people with disabilities (Figure 5). The outcomes for audiences include: developed positive view of disability, was engaged by art, and increased understanding of disability. While two of these outcomes are directly related to art within a disability context (developed positive view of disability, increased understanding of disability), one outcome – “Was engaged by art” – is focused solely on the art produced. In this way, this outcome exemplifies the “valid art” viewpoint. It should be noted, however, that if art is compartmentalized from its context of being made by artists with disabilities, it may be less likely to achieve outcomes that are directly related to this context (that is, the other two audience outcomes: developed positive view of disability, and increased understanding of disability) (Koh & Shrimpton,

2014). While it is important for audiences to perceive such art as valid in its own right, programs or organizations that explicitly note an artist’s disability when engaging audiences are more likely to achieve outcomes related to changing public perceptions or understanding of disability (Schlosnagle et. al., 2014; Darraugh et al, 2016; Koh & Shrimpton, 2014; Faigin 2010; Gjaerum & Rasmussen, 2012).

5. OUTCOMES FOR AUDIENCES

	# of articles
Developed positive view of disability	5
Was engaged by art/Acknowledged validity of art	4
Increased understanding of disability	2

Moving forward

With this literature review, Interact can reasonably expect to achieve these research-based outcomes (depending on the alignment of Interact’s model with findings presented in this review, which will be assessed in the next step of this theory of change process).

The next step of this process includes conducting interviews with stakeholders of Interact’s work to identify the activities, outputs, and guiding values of its model. After the details of this model are outlined through these interviews, Wilder Research can begin the process of visually representing Interact’s model including activities, outputs, guiding values, and expected outcomes (which were identified through this review). Using the to-be-developed theory of change, Interact can self-evaluate their efficacy by measuring the outcomes identified in this review (and perhaps other outcomes identified through this process), and will also be poised to assist others to implement the Interact model by clearly outlining its activities, outputs, and guiding values.

For more information

This short report presents findings from the *Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts Theory of Change Literature Review*. For more information about this project, contact Ryan Evans at Wilder Research, 651-280-2677.

Author: Ryan Evans

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Research**

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451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700

www.wilderresearch.org



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