

Fostering Creative Capacity for Youth Living Homeless Through Their Engagement with
Community-Based Arts Organizations

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A Research Paper

in

The Department

of

Creative Arts Therapies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2016

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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This research paper prepared

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Entitled: Fostering Creative Capacity for Youth Living Homeless Through Their Engagement with Community-Based Arts Organizations

and submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Creative Arts Therapies; Art Therapy Option)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality as approved by the research advisor.

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September, 2016

Abstract

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This research project combines a systematic literature review and qualitative interviews with the goal of discovering how community-based arts organizations that serve youth living homeless foster and facilitate creative capacity, resilience and well-being for participants. Literature was analyzed based on its relevance to issues related to the experience of youth homelessness and marginalization, creative capacity, community arts organizations, or some combination of the three. Next, data from qualitative interviews suggest specific factors necessary for fostering and facilitating creative capacity. These include the importance of environment when working with youth living homeless, nuances in demographics and culture within street existence, sustainability of the organization, personal factors of identity and resilience building, and community connections and pathways out of homelessness. Factors of the organizational model were examined based on product and skill development versus process oriented frameworks. It was found that both models offer important resources for participants, but no model can meet the needs of everyone. Another critical factor drawn from the data is the importance of anti-oppressive practices that are rooted in the strengths of participants and participatory models of service delivery.

Acknowledgments

It goes without saying that the love, support and generosity of the people in my life was and is an integral part of my success in completing this research project and my Master's, but here I would like to name just a few of those very dear people.

To Janis Timm-Bottos for always supporting me throughout my time at Concordia. I feel that not only were you my biggest advocate and supporter, but my biggest source for learning and wisdom. I learned an immense amount from you and I am forever grateful for that.

To the amazing group of women I was lucky enough to call my cohort. You are truly an inspiring group of artists, therapists and friends. I would not have made it without your incredible support and friendship.

To my mother Ilona and my sisters Jennifer, Maeghan and Christa, for being my first example of what strong, intelligent and resilient women look like. For all the love that we have shared and all that you have taught me, thank you.

Finally, to Shane for your incredible patience, understanding, and love. You were my stability when I was shaky, and my confidence when I was lost. Thank you.

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I am talking about unleashing of the mind's most creative capacities, catalyzed by participation in struggles for change.

- Robin Kelley, *Freedom dreams: The black radical imagination*, 2002

Art can be considered as a behaviour (a ‘need’, fulfilment of which feels good) like play, like food sharing, like howling, that is something humans do because it helps them survive, and survive better than they would without it.

- Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo aestheticus: where art comes from and why*, 1992

Introduction

The central goal of this research is to determine how a community-based arts organization facilitates and responds to the creative capacity of youth who are experiencing homelessness and marginalization. Community-based arts organizations (CBAO, or plural CBAOs) work with artists and communities who are underserved or marginalized, using engagement with the arts to increase community development, participation, health and social justice (Chew, 2009). CBAOs are small to mid-sized in scale and act as hubs to nurture creativity, innovation and community connection. These initiatives emphasize the ability of the arts to heal individuals and communities, while seeking to change society into one that is more compassionate and connected (Chew, 2009).

creative capacity is described as an individual’s skilful ability to use creativity in order to produce novel, useful and/or meaningful outcomes for one’s life in order to increase their resilience and well-being (Kienitz et al., 2014). Canadian youth living homeless face marginalization, numerous adversities, and stigmatization and the community-based arts organization has the potential to offer a platform for strengthening positive identity, self-efficacy, the self-expression of marginalized experiences, and the nurturing of healthy relationships. I believe organizations that foster resilience and strength-based programming are providing an important platform along with those offering services based on needs such as housing, food, etc. I hope that this research will serve as a resource for those looking to start creative arts projects with and for youth living homeless as well as adding to a growing body of literature focusing on building strengths and resilience for youth living homeless.

Methodology

Collecting research on this subject required two steps. First, information was gleaned from the current literature on creative capacity, CBAOs, and youth living homeless. Second was to gather data from interviews with two professionals working with youth living homeless in order to more fully integrate these ideas into practice and to fill gaps that exist in the literature. Since little has been written directly on this subject, it was my belief that individuals working with creativity and youth living homeless on a regular basis are most equipped to answer pertinent practical and theoretical questions on the topic. Thus this research project was comprised of qualitative interviewing and theoretical literature woven together in order to answer the following research question: How do individuals working with youth living homeless perceive the creative capacity of this population as demonstrated through community-based arts organizations, and how do they perceive the organization fostering and facilitating this capacity?

This research took a strength based approach and focused on the resilience of youth living homeless in the form of their capacity for creativity and how a CBAO can structure itself in order to foster this strength.

Data Collection

Literature was reviewed based on three subjects, or a combination of them: youth living homeless, the concept of creative capacity, and community-based arts organizations. Based on this review the need for interviews was apparent as limited literature and research was found on this specific topic in order to answer the research question at hand. The interview questions for the two interviewees were then formed based on this literature review.

After approval from the ethics review board at Concordia University, an email was sent to two carefully selected practitioners who work and research youth living homeless and community-based arts organizations. The email outlined the research topic and invited them to participate. Consent forms were given to each interviewee at the beginning of each interview session to be reviewed and signed. This consent form contained: 1. Explanation of the nature and purpose of the interview 2. Explanation of the data collection method (e.g audio recordings). 3. Explanation of anonymity options (to be given a pseudonym or to be identified). 4. The participant's right to withdraw at any point during the interview as well as up until a specific date following the interview. 5. The participant's option to review data collected and to modify any information they did not want included (such as if they felt it may be misleading, unclear or

damaging to their personal or professional image). Specific time frames were outlined in the consent form in which the participant could withdraw or edit the information given in the interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured, open ended and audio recorded. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What do you identify as the creative capacities of youth living homeless and how are these capacities expressed?
2. Do you perceive creative capacity to be a resiliency factor for youth living homeless, and if yes, how?
3. What are the most important elements within community arts organizations that foster creative capacity for youth living homeless?
4. Does the youth gain an altered sense of identity based on their engagement with artistic expression?

Participants

Both participating individuals agreed to be identified as a part of the consent process. The first interview was done in March 2016 with Dr. Sean Kidd, the Psychologist in Chief at the Toronto Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and assistant professor at the University of Toronto in the department of Psychiatry. Kidd has worked and written extensively about youth living homeless, resilience, sustaining housing, suicide and homelessness and increasing community participation with these individuals (Homeless Hub, “Sean Kidd”, n.d.). In particular, his research into youth homelessness and the arts, and his involvement with organizations such as SKETCH and Covenant House with art-based interventions made his extensive knowledge of this specific topic invaluable.

The second interview was done in May 2016 in Toronto with Phyllis Novak. Novak is the founder and artistic director of SKETCH, now entering its twentieth year. Located in Toronto, SKETCH describes itself on their website as:

...engaging young people homeless and on the margins, ages 16-29, from across Canada.

SKETCH creates equitable opportunities for diverse young people to experience the transformative power of the arts; to develop their leadership and self-sufficiency; and to cultivate social and environmental change through the arts. (SKETCH, “Profile”, n.d.)

Novak offers many years of experience working with diverse individuals, spaces and models of

CBAOs and youth living homeless. SKETCH began as a project-based initiative until they moved to a physical location in order to serve as a drop-in open arts studio. In 2014 SKETCH moved to a larger facility, offering multiple art-forms from gardening and culinary, to music, dance, and visual arts.

Data Analysis

Interview recordings were done using a laptop computer and data was transcribed over several months in the winter and spring of 2016 using online transcription software and manually with open office software. These transcripts were then coded in part using Rubin & Rubin (2005) systematic approach to qualitative interview data that they refer to as the Responsive Interviewing Model. This method was used partially in the initial coding phase, however because of my limited volume of data, some of these systematic steps were superfluous. Once a code was placed on a word or sentence from the transcripts, it would be marked and placed into categories and subcategories within a text document. Concepts, themes, descriptions and theories were pulled out that were relevant to the research question. Emergent content, considered highly relevant, was coded and analyzed equally. Categories that were pulled from the interviews are presented, over a chronological outline of each interview.

Assumptions, Biases and Ethical Considerations

As a student of art therapy, I believe in the inherent value of art-making to increase individuals' self-understanding and self-efficacy. My own experience as an at-risk youth who utilized art making to cope with adversity, build healthy identities, and express difficulty, has greatly impacted my decision to conduct this research. I feel a kinship toward young individuals struggling to find footing in a world where they are faced with multiple barriers to well-being. I also believe that art making in a community will not only build healthy connections, a basic human need, but also offer a place to navigate multiple identities, perspectives and situations while collaborating, sharing and gaining inspiration. It is my belief that this journey enables the capacity for growth in understanding of the people who exist within our immediate environment and in our global community. Isolation and the loss of community, in my perspective, exacerbate the impact of an already challenging society, particularly when one struggles with mental illness and adversity.

An ever present ethical consideration for myself is the reality that this research does not engage directly with individuals who are or have experienced homelessness in their youth. The

direct voice of marginalized individuals is critical in understanding the experience as a whole and also the experience engaging with CBAO as a youth living homeless. Unfortunately, due to the scope of this project, time for such engagement was not possible for the present research. The subsequent data was collected based on the approval of my research to interview practitioners working with youth living homeless. These individuals were chosen in part based not only on their extensive academic knowledge of the field, but more importantly their first-hand experience with youth living homeless.

Review of Literature

Individuals living homeless (or sometimes referred to as street-involved) aged 16-25 make up 20% of Canada's homeless population (or roughly 30,000 people annually) and are often associated with previous home situations involving mental illness, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, as well as school difficulties, poverty and neglect (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter & Gulliver, 2013, p. 25). These young individuals face specific issues within the homeless population and often lack the skills, resources and life experience in order to care for themselves and live independently (Gaetz et al., 2013, p. 25). The present literature review will examine aspects that may precipitate youth homelessness, issues faced when living on the streets, as well as strengths and coping factors, including the important resiliency factor of creative capacity. Research on creativity and street involved youth is explored, as well as the creatively nurturing context of arts-based organizations geared toward this population.

Adversity & Youth Living Homeless

The circumstances at home that precipitate youth street involvement are varied, but often involve situations and experiences that are deemed unbearable to such an extent that living on the streets would be a preferable environment. In some situations, a young person may be forced to make the transition onto the streets after being kicked out of their house with no other housing options. In their research on the adverse circumstances a youth may experience in becoming homeless, Maclean, Embry and Couce (1999) explain specific terminology for youth living homeless depending on the situation that brought them to the street. A youth who has been forcibly removed from a home is termed a “throwaway” youth, and those who have decided to leave as “runaway” youth. Another descriptor used is a youth of the “system” who are forced to leave their current housing by government organizations because of safety issues. Often these circumstances include one or several factors such as parental discord and broken families,

addiction, poverty, the presence of physical and or sexual abuse, parental neglect and mental health issues. Maclean, Embry and Couce (1999) found that physical and sexual abuse rates were consistently high in a large majority of youths before they became street involved, finding 52% of participants in the study having a history of physical abuse and 55% having experienced sexual abuse (p. 183). Nearly half of the individuals who were surveyed were found to have high rates of victimization associated with a range of criminal activity such as assault and robbery, both before and during becoming street involved (Maclean, Embry and Couce, 1999). Particularly at risk are those youths who are placed in the “throwaway” category, having a 50% increase likelihood of suicide attempts, drug use and participating in criminal activity (Ringwalt, Greene & Robertson, 1998, p. 250). Buckner & Bussuk (1997) found that street involved youth were 67% more likely to have a series of mental health diagnoses such as major depression, anxiety and panic disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder, and others, when compared to control groups of the same age in the general population. Buckner & Bussuk’s (1997) findings also supported previous research on the significant correlation between poverty and mental illness, a large majority of the youth coming from families’ experience both mental health issues and poverty and, often times, in single parent households. Because of these factors, youth living homeless are up to three times more likely to attempt or commit suicide over the general youth population (Yonder, 1999).

Stigma and Self-Concept

The process of stigmatization and labelling for a youth living homeless may begin well before entering street life. As the following literature indicates, youth living homeless often come from disruptive and damaging pasts, possibly having mental health or academic issues due to abusive, unstable or impoverished experiences at home all which contribute to stigmatization and an altered self-concept. When the young person does become street involved, stigmatization is an entrenched aspect of becoming labelled a “street kid” (Kidd, Miner, Walker & Davidson, 2007). Kidd et al. (2007) states that common stigmatizations of this population are that individuals are lazy, criminal, or drug using. After speaking with front line workers, Kidd, et al. (2007) found that many of these youth faced dehumanizing treatment at the hands of the public and police, and the experience would often lead to an internalization of such stereotypes, sometimes resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy of these now internalized beliefs (p.24). Stigmatization can profoundly

impact the self-concept of the youth, and instil a feeling of isolation, otherness, low self-esteem, loneliness, a sense of being trapped, and suicidal ideation (Kidd, 2009).

Coping, Resilience and Strength

Current research on youth living homeless has shifted focus to the resilience and strength of these individuals (Perron, Cleverley, & Kidd, 2014, Kidd & Davidson, 2007, Kolar, Erickson, & Stewart, 2012). Wathen et al (2012) describes resilience as a “dynamic process in which psychological, social, environmental and biological factors interact to enable an individual at any stage of life to develop, maintain, or regain their mental health despite exposure to adversity” (p. 684). Psychological resilience includes coping strategies that youth employ to survive on the streets. Cleverly & Kidd (2011) conceptualize two kinds of coping strategies youth utilize. First, “problem focused coping” appears closer to what is typically thought of as resiliency factors, such as a sense of self-efficacy and agency, allowing support of others, having an action-oriented approaches to adversity and adaptable thinking (p. 1050). Perron, Cleverley & Kidd (2014) found more specific resiliency factors for youth living homeless such as independence and knowing how the culture of street life works, a sense of personal mastery, adaptability, and less reaction to and internalization of the opinions of others. Second, “emotion focused” and “disengagement” strategies were other types of coping conceptualized by Kidd and Carroll which focused on reducing the distress, but not engaging with the problem directly. This second category of coping strategies were found to be associated with higher levels of risk and distress for the street involved youth (Kidd & Carroll, 2007). Some of these emotion focused strategies involved disengagement when youth utilized social distancing in order to cope, which resulted in a higher levels of substance abuse and depression (Kidd & Carroll, 2007). Kolar, Erickson, & Stewart (2012) addressed the issue of coping strategies and referred to them as a “double edged sword” (p.749) because youth often employ coping strategies that appear detrimental to their health, such as violence and self-imposed social isolation, yet in some ways are key to their survival on the streets (Kolar, Erickson, & Stewart, 2012, p. 757). With severely limited resources, youth are using whatever method available to cope with such extreme environments where their physical and psychological integrity is constantly challenged. This is what Kolar, Erickson, & Stewart, (2012) refer to as a “reasoned response to risk”, despite these coping strategies appearing very harmful in other contexts (p.744).

Creative Capacity as a Form of Resilience

Because of the challenges street involved youth face, the importance of fostering healthy resilience is imperative. Creative capacity is a resiliency factor that has been addressed in several fields of study, ranging from finance to psychology (Choi, Anderson, & Veillette, 2009 & Kienitz et al., 2014). Creative capacity is described as one's ability to utilize creativity in order to produce novel, useful and/or meaningful outcomes for one's life (Kienitz et al., 2014). Creativity has been linked to factors of psychological well-being and resilience in the face of serious difficulties and traumas (Prescott, Sekendur, Bailey, & Hoshino, 2008; Corley, 2010; & Metzl, 2009). Corley's (2010) qualitative research into holocaust survivors and creative expression found that these individuals, having experienced trauma, as well as very limited resources, utilized their creativity to heal, find meaning, and strengthen their identity when little other options were made available to them. In his important writings on the psychologically beneficial outcomes of creative thinking, Csikszentmihalyi, (1996) argues that creativity is associated with adaptable and flexible thinking when facing day-to-day life demands. Prescott, et al (2008) argue that creativity has a reciprocal relationship with resiliency by supporting other aspects of resilience such as self-esteem, coping skills and focusing on positive attributes of the artist in an environment where they get little positive attention. Metzl (2009) found in her research on individual's recovery from their experience with hurricane Katrina that specific aspects of creativity, such as flexible thinking and originality, appear most important in the development of emotional resilience. Metzle (2009) states: "Resilience, as a process in which normal or above normal levels of adjustment are noted despite exposure to adversity, is facilitated by creative thinking and art making" (p.122). Based on this research it can be suggested that adaptability is a strong component of creative capacity which Perron, Cleverley & Kidd (2014) found to be a central resiliency factor for street involved youth. Metzl (2009) argues that creative thinking should be added to existing models of resilience. One theory that does include creativity as a vital component to resilience is from Wolin and Wolin (1993). They posit that there are seven main strengths or resiliencies that bolster individual outcomes after experiencing adversity in childhood. Creativity is included as an aspect that allows individuals to find a refuge from external stress where they can find comfort in channeling negative emotions and regain a sense of control. Wolin and Wolin (1993) go onto conceptualize the power of creativity by explaining

that it enables the individual to reconstruct and reassemble what is fragmented, becoming a powerful metaphor for change and self-efficacy in the individual's life (p.165).

Youth Living Homeless and Fostering Creative Capacity

Limited research has been done on creativity and street involved youth. Conrad and Kendal (2009) conducted arts-based participatory action research with street involved youth at an organization called ihuman Youth Society in Edmonton, Alberta. The research aim was to uncover personal stories of the experience of being street involved, document empowerment through the arts, and discover the social context of their experiences. They found that through the art-based process the participants became empowered to find a vocabulary for the injustices they suffered and enabled an awareness of the socio-political and economic contexts that shaped their lives (p. 262). One participant described the experience of expressing herself creatively as "a refuge and a survival tactic" to her life on the streets (p. 259).

A second study was done using mixed methods by Prescott et al. (2008). Participants included 112 street involved youth at an art drop-in centre in Seattle, Washington. The researchers looked at resiliency factors and hypothesized increases in resiliency factors for participants accounting for varied levels of attendance over a span of 5 years. They found a positive correlation between life achievements and participation in an arts-based drop-in centre. They also found that participants who attended regularly had a higher likelihood of ending drug-use, obtaining housing, finding empowerment and increasing their sense of community. The quantitative component found an increase in pro-social skills and an enriched sense of community amongst the participants after the drop-in program was complete.

Finally, a study done by Kidd (2009) explored the artistic expression of 209 homeless youth in both Toronto and New York. He examined the personal meanings given to the youths' artwork, which included art as being a "transformative process, self-exploratory, communicative, and a redirecting of emotional energy into an artistic medium and expressive process" (p. 345). He compared much of the art made by the street involved youth to the Outsider Art movement. Outsider Art refers to those who have no formal training in the arts and may eschew the artist identifier (MacLagan, 2009). Outsider art and the artist that make it are also described as having perspectives that oppose or differ from dominant society, as many individuals creating such work are on the margins and do not fit the social or psychological or artistic norms (MacLagan, 2009). In many ways these artists offer a critique of both the dominant culture and the notion that art is

held by the educated and elite (Maclagan, 2009). In the case of Kidd (2009) the young individuals utilized artistic expression as a mean of identity formation within the context of otherness or marginalization from the mainstream culture. He sees that this outsider perspective, which is often extreme and critical of dominant culture, as a unique strength for many of these youth. Kidd went on to write about this phenomenon further:

Although this “view from the outside” was developed, in many instances, at tremendous cost, and I did perceive instances and aspects of narrow and rigid thinking, I often became thoroughly engaged in conversations with persons able to flexibly look at issues from multiple perspectives and have complex and sophisticated views on any number of personal or social issues. This is something that I would suggest is less readily found among youth who have not faced these kinds of challenges. (Kidd & Davidson, 2007, p. 235)

These researchers point to the reality that street involved youth may have a unique capacity for flexible, creative and critical thinking, which can be fostered through artistic exploration and may enable them to survive in enormously adverse circumstances.

Community-Based Arts Organizations

Many models and definitions exist for the concept of community arts. Brandt (2008) describes it as “the engagement of people in representing their collective identities, histories, aspirations in multiple forms of expression...” (p. 351) Barndt’s conceptualization consists primarily art making that is “democratized, and reflecting the community rather than the individual” (p. 351) She believes the separation of art and community came from the commodification of art, and the individualistic and capitalistic pursuits of Western culture, but historically, particularly in indigenous cultures, art-making practices and community were intimately fused (Brandt, 2008). Brandt (2008) also points out that community arts can be used in the western art world as a marginalizing term, where it is viewed as lesser quality over the historically valued genius of the individual artist to produce “high art”. Chew (2009) also implies this when he describes community-based arts: “once viewed as less attractive distant cousins to the “big boys”, [community arts] has emerged at the center of this more expansive vision of the arts.” (2009, p.1) Historically, community arts has been linked to political and social movements and mobilization. Watkins and Shulman (2008) outline numerous art forms used by communities, often marginalized, to reclaim their identities, cultural practices and community

cohesion. These include storytelling circles, the theatre of the oppressed, participatory photography such as photovoice and visual arts practices. Many organizations in North America exist for both the public and specific groups, emphasizing visual arts but welcoming other modes of expression inclusively. Chew describes features of community arts practices:

[community-based arts organizations] are located in impoverished and blighted neighborhoods seeking affirmation, rebirth, and a new sense of identity. Others work nationally as touring companies that practice community-based work in partnership with local organizations. Some are situated within colleges and universities, but extend their reach far beyond the campus setting. These arts organizations include people of color and other leaders with a deep commitment to diversity and who hold as fiercely to values of tolerance, equality, empowerment, and audience participation as they do to the pursuit of artistic excellence. (2009, p.1)

Another community-based arts organization, Art Hives (arthives.org), started in 2011 as a network of community studios primarily based in underserved communities in Montreal, across Canada and the United States. These small, independent and grass roots spaces operate on diverse funding models that include university partnerships, private grants, social enterprise, cooperatives, and shared economies, including material donations for creative reuse. Art Hives are places where collaborative practices and skill sharing are encouraged, and individual art practices also nurtured. Referred to as “public home places” these third spaces provide opportunities for individuals with diverse backgrounds to dialogue, share skills and create art (Timm-Bottos, 2005). Some community art studios operate to serve specific populations.

ArtStreet, a project located at Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless in New Mexico exists as an open art studio for individuals and families living homeless. Janis Timm-Bottos (1995), the founder of ArtStreet, describes it as “a group of artists, art therapists, and intentional community members who want to use art to build community and increase personal self-esteem, self-sufficiency, and hope among individuals and families who are dealing with homelessness” (p.184). OFFCenter Arts, also located in downtown Albuquerque, grew out from ArtStreet in order to respond to economic needs of people living on the streets by opening a gallery (Timm-Bottos, 2006). Although ArtStreet and OFFCenter Arts operate under an open art studio model, artists who are experiencing homelessness are paid to run workshops and creative writing classes for both community members and the larger public (Timm-Bottos, 1995; 2006). The model,

although geared towards anchoring individuals experiencing homelessness, also encourages participation from a diversity of community members who also offer wisdom and experience from myriad of cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, professions, ages and abilities (Timm-Bottos, 2006).

Community-Based Arts Organizations for Youth Living Homeless

Fostering creative capacity can be done within organizations that welcome youth living homeless. Kidd (2009) states that although there is little academic research on the topic, art-making “strongly resonates with this group” (p. 354) and is evidenced by the findings in his study, by the underground art world scene in self-published zines and in hidden performances/shows, as well as arts-based intervention projects such as Toronto-based SKETCH (p.354). SKETCH is a community-based arts organization that has been operating for twenty years and provides a range of services for youth living homeless through a variety of arts-based programming. Their goal is to enhance participant skills though arts-based methods, as well as increasing wellbeing with a life-affirming and empowering stance against the stigma and marginalization of homelessness (SKETCH, “Theory of Change”, n.d.) They operate under a three-stage model for street involved youth, the first is called, “Arts Engage”. This includes programs that inspire creative discovery and exploration in an open studio model. Next, “Arts Incubator,” involves programs focused on self-care and relationship building through peer and artist mentorship. The third stage is “Arts Platform” where street involved youth develop skills for the workforce or education opportunities and “assert their creative contribution in our community” (SKETCH, “Theory of Change, n.d.). SKETCH utilizes the creative capacity of the youth involved not only to increase well-being and identity, but also to build transferable skills and leadership if the participant transitions out of homelessness. Their mission states:

This journey is grounded in our long-held belief that if young people living on the margins or homeless engage and develop in the arts, they will increase their resilience and capacity to live well and lead in building inclusive and creative communities.
(SKETCH, “Theory of Change”, n.d.)

Creative capacities of youth can become a major source of strength in the face of multiple adversities. Through deeper and expanded research on this topic, and by increasing opportunities for increasing creativity through CBAOs, the expressive capacity of youth living homeless can be nurtured and strengthened.

Findings

The Organizational Frame

Based on interview data, it was found that an integral component to the foundation of a CBAO for youth living homeless which fosters and facilitates creative capacity is the organizational model and frame. This will be the fertile ground with which creative capacity can be nurtured, and resilience and self-exploration tended to. The relevant topics relating to the organizational frame include: aspects relating to the environment of the CBAO, participants, the facilitators, the physical environment, as well as the organizations sustainability and health.

Environment. Both the location and internal space are critical in fostering creative capacity for youth living homeless in a CBAO, particularly when considering the nuanced implications such environments have on participants.

Physical and psychological accessibility, such as being within an arts institution, or being located in a shelter, are important factors for where the CBAOs are located. SKETCH is currently located in Toronto's Artscape Youngplace, a hub for various culture and arts-based organizations. SKETCH occupies a large portion of the basement, where it houses art studios, a kitchen, a dance studio and a sound recording studio. Novak states that integral to the location of SKETCH is the partnerships it has with practicing artists, organizations and galleries. Kidd and Novak emphasize the importance of facilitating opportunities for youth living homeless to connect with potential pathways out of homelessness. Both interviewees describe these pathways as being connected to the outside world over what Kidd calls the "youth services ghetto", and have an arts-first, over shelter-first, emphasis (Kidd, Interview, March 3, 2016). Kidd states that an arts-based organization can run successfully within a shelter-first environment, but there are specific advantages to working outside of that frame. Situating the CBAO within the 'real world', amongst other artists encourages connections and allows the young person to envision new possibilities and pathways out of homelessness. This benefits youth living homeless because it holds space in a mainstream environment for those who are often pushed to the fringes of society.

While SKETCH exists within a mainstream arts space, benefiting from the connectivity to the arts, this location may affect who attends. Novak states that one challenge with SKETCH's current location is the fact that it is in a heritage site and external signs are not permitted, limiting

the visibility of the organization. Adding to this, participants often have to cross through several doors and busy corridors of businesses, potentially intimidating the youth and deterring them from entering. However, Novak states that once youth have entered the location and experienced the space, they are more comfortable attending and sustaining participation. These considerations are also closely tied to the demographics of the youth who attend.

The impact of the physical location on the organizational frame and the way the participants interact with the space is another important aspect worth considering. Novak states that the spaces that SKETCH previously inhabited had distinctive qualities that affected participants. Starting at an intimate storefront studio, SKETCH moved into a 6,000 square foot warehouse space. This space encouraged liveliness and creativity, but Novak says its large size sometimes became chaotic and unmanageable for facilitators. SKETCH's current, more structured model would have been difficult to implement in a large drop-in space which Novak referred to as "unwieldy". Their current space, although large, has specific rooms for each activity or artistic practice. Novak believes this organization of the space aids in moving participants to the skill building structure they now operate under, which Novak says deepens SKETCH's ability to determine participant's capacity and growth.

Demographics. Gender, ethnicity and street culture also play an important role in shaping the organization's frame and programming. Novak states that when SKETCH was first operating on a drop-in basis in an oversized warehouse, the participants were primarily white males. Novak connects this to the increase of community drop-ins with the aim to engage young males after the deinstitutionalization of mental health facilities. In this setting, women, and particularly women of colour, did not feel comfortable attending and participating at SKETCH. She states that since then, SKETCH has performed a gender-based analysis on the program, and as a result began to offer more structured programming which they found was an important aspect when women engaging with the space. SKETCH now offers ten-week workshops focused directly on specific arts practices. To this, Novak explains:

Young women that are from racialized communities have fed back to us that things are different for them in terms of navigating marginalization. It's like 'if I don't know I'm going to get something out of what I'm doing when I come to you [SKETCH] then I'm not going to come because I have other places I can go and hang out. But if I'm going to make the trip to you I want to know things get done'. (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016)

SKETCH made the transition to a more structured model in order to draw in a larger pool of participants. Novak stated SKETCH found that when female participants engage in skill sharing initiatives they had the highest levels of engagement and leadership amongst any participating demographic.

Kidd pointed out that the CBAO location, space, and structure all affect who participates. Starting out, SKETCH's drop-in model drew in youth that Kidd refers to as more "street entrenched", often bringing a punk, chaotic energy to the space. Kidd states that since SKETCH moved into a more structured model, the demographics has shifted from these 'street' or 'traveler kids' toward a more diverse set of marginalized youth who do not necessarily come from the street culture. As Kidd indicated, it is a difficult task for a CBAO for homeless youth to be a one-size fits-all model. He states that in an ideal world, a CBAO would have multiple entry points and approaches within the organization that meet the diversity of needs and cultures that are present in the broad category of youth living homeless and marginalized.

SKETCH's own research found that in addition to homelessness, participating youth experience multiple forms of marginalization such as poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, traumatic histories, violence and criminalization (Arts Engagement and Quality of Life: A SKETCH Arts-Based Research Project, 2013). Such adverse experiences can dampen and compete with creativity, says Novak. Physical and psychological survival is an ever-present reality when living on the streets. The youth may experience stigma and marginalization on a daily basis along with the trauma and adverse events from their past. The experience of youth homelessness can enable of view of society that may be different from youth who have not had such experiences, which necessitates critical thinking and creativity. Novak states that, although its important not to glorify this experience, individuals who have faced adversity such as homelessness, and the situations that precipitate it, bring a particular perspective and creative capacity to spaces like SKETCH. Navigating adversity, Novak says, causes a unique creative energy, or what she refers to a "third eye", an intuition for creativity. Novak states this need for creativity appears in diverse situations, not just in the experience of art-making directly:

And I would say that [creativity] ranges from the most creative shoplifting idea, to these phenomenal alternative living arrangements, to creating your own housing if just for a night in a very non-traditional way, to also seeing yourself and society in a different way. There's something that I believe, obviously that's what this is all about to me, which is

really shifting the paradigm to how we respond to youth who are homeless or on the margins, not an 'Oh my gosh we've got to help you figure out all your things' but rather approaching it from 'Oh my gosh, we know you are an intrinsically creative human and you have the capacity to contribute to the community in a way that no one else like you can.' So that's the kind of reframe that SKETCH is going for. (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016)

Kidd explores this idea as well, stating that although he also wants to distance himself from romanticization of youth living homeless, the experience of being on the margins of society affords a perspective that can lay the groundwork for an ability to express and explore creatively that can be more substantive than the average young person that has not had the experience of outsiderness or marginalization.

Sustainability of the CBAO. The individuals running the CBAO are important figures who offer a platform to facilitate creative capacity for youth living homeless. The health of the staff of a CBAO was a topic of conversations in both interviews. Kidd states that many individuals who work in the model of "I am a service provider, you are a service recipient" quickly become burnt out by the experience (Kidd, Interview, March 3, 2016). He states that one of SKETCH's strengths is that facilitators are made up of arts practitioners and educators and not community case managers which lessens the likelihood of staff burn out. Kidd says that many times staff witness youth struggling with mental illness, cycling in and out of homelessness, in crises, youth who are suicidal, or in some cases, the death of a young person. Staff health is essential for the sustainability of an organization's health, and although Kidd says some training is helpful in dealing with difficult situations, an important aspect of maintaining facilitator health is to ensure staff remain focused on arts-based facilitation and not cross boundaries into case manager or counselor roles.

Intimately tied with staff health is the organization's health and funding. Kidd states that many individuals over thirty years of age do not work in the youth services sector because of the lack of consistent funding for organizations and income for workers. This relates closely to individual sustainability, as the stress of not knowing how long your job will be maintained is a big factor in burnout: "If you're trying to have a family and have a healthy work life you just can't live never knowing when the rug is going to be pulled out, so stability of funding is essential" (Kidd, Interview, March 3, 2016). Organizations like SKETCH are challenged to find

consistent funding, most of which comes from grants and private donors. Novak states that demands, such as grant writing, are ever present for CBAOs, and funding is a “machine that drives us” a reality she would like to see challenged (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016).

Another aspect she would like to see challenged is the need for an organization to be an “expert”, which she relates directly to staff burn out: “What burns people out is the desire to be right”, she says, but instead we must have a commitment to humility in learning from others, collaboration, openness to sharing ideas and growing the field (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016).

Finally, Novak emphasized the importance of strong Human Resources practices within an organization for its health and resilience. Strong management practices, administration, decision making, reviews, and systems of accountability are essential. SKETCH’s annual and quarterly reports, as well as financial audits done by independent companies, ensure that the organization is accountable and running effectively. Novak states that these areas are something that the field of CBAOs do not give enough time to, stating she is concerned at the lack of formal training in the area of arts administration: “If it’s going to be a robust field and actually have long-term outcomes with diverse population across the country, then we have to be intentional about education, training and internship opportunities...” (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016). Novak advocates for more formal training is needed in order to ensure funds and operations are well managed, in order to sustain a CBAO for youth living homeless.

The Youth Participant Experience

Moving from the frame and structure to the individual, the ways in which the participant experiences and grows from their interaction with a CBAO will be examined. This section will describe how creative capacity enables resilience building and the formation of healthy identities observed by Novak and Kidd with their experience in CBAOs.

Building Identities. SKETCH’s (2013) research on arts engagement and quality of life states that many of their participants feel that factors of their marginalization also mean more barriers to engaging in self-expression and understanding. However, the adverse experiences and realities of street life can also construct a perspective of the world that fosters a critical perspective and promotes creative capacity. Through various means of surviving on the streets such as creative ways to establish safe housing or making money, youth living homeless may understand themselves as adaptive and resourceful. This perspective and adaptability may also be tied to a street identity that can have detrimental effects for the youth. The experience of

marginalization may start at a young age when identity formation is at its height. This makes it difficult to develop healthy resiliencies and self-concepts. Kidd states that the process of engaging in the arts is unique and important because these young people have fewer opportunities than average to be creative or have positive ways to consider themselves, their life, and the world around them. Kidd believes creative engagement is important to construct identities other than those formed on the streets. Exploring and trying on different identities in the process of art making enables this growth.

...so much is the process of having this buffered space where you can play around with aspects of yourself, try things, screw things up, in a safe environment. Arguably all of that stuff is very, very hard to access in the range of street existence. (Kidd, Interview, March 3, 2016)

Street existence affords little time for identity exploration, self-expression, voicing outsiderness, or communicating who you are to other people. This is why spaces like SKETCH are critical, Kidd says. He believes that the notion of building a healthy identity through engagement with organizations like SKETCH and leaving behind a street identity may be too binary, but the idea that one can explore new ways of being in the world, keeping some aspects of the old self while leaving behind other, more harmful versions, is possible. Kidd says that many street youth come from experiences of sexual and physical violence, then forming identities based on street culture. He states that for many, identity exploration may be about gaining back an identity that is other than this street identity, but for many others, it is about starting to build healthier identities and self-concepts from the ground up: "The arts is a chance to play around with what is this other stuff, 'What am I? What could I be? What is the space outside of being good at dealing crack or being tough on the street?' (Kidd, Interview, March 3, 2016)

Building Healthy Resilience. Constructing a street identity and adapting to the extremely challenging environment of homelessness is closely tied to the ability to be resilient in adverse circumstances. Kidd states that he differs from traditional resilience scholars, who hold the view that in order to possess resilience an individual must move towards increased psychological well-being. Kidd says resilience, especially in the reality of street existence, is much more dependent on context. Street existence requires being good at adapting to dangerous situations. This often means building skills around illegal or potentially harmful behaviours, such as selling drugs or becoming involved in the sex trade. In this way Kidd sees adaptability on the

streets as two sided: On one hand, a young person who is adaptable to the streets will more likely succeed in staying on the streets, staying in adverse situations for a longer amount of time. On the other hand, if a young person is less adaptable to the streets, he or she may take help that is being offered to them. He states that through adapting to street life you add things that are useful in the street context but can be profoundly un-useful when trying to move off the street into mainstream society. In order to build resilience that is in the direction of healthier outcomes, Kidd cites a need to “move the foundations over” so that a youth living homeless does not see their value and abilities only in how well they survive on the streets, but also form other, healthier aspects of self into that identity. Kidd states that it is necessary to apply the adaptability and resilience learned on the street toward productive construction of a healthier, more fulfilling life while exploring the self and where one’s value resides.

Novak speaks of resilience-building as a subtle process for participants, happening over long periods of time, which may be difficult to see: “When do these moments happen where the dials just turn up and you see someone’s experience suddenly allow them to be more themselves or knowing how to navigate and cope with challenges?” (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016). She says these subtle moments do occur, however: “Their struggles get refined and mixed with appropriate injections of goodness, and they start to refine and shift how they can manage stress and the challenges and dynamics of other humans” (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016). She goes on to say that she sees participants strategize to overcome barriers through their engagement with SKETCH. The arts allow a young person to “pencil and sketch” their way through new ideas, self-concepts and strengths (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016).

At the heart of this process of building healthy resilience is an increase in self-understanding and tools for self-expression. As Kidd pointed out, street existence is an unsafe place to express certain aspects of the self. Places like SKETCH offer a safe haven to explore and voice one’s story so a deeper knowledge of oneself and one’s strengths can be cultivated.

Community: Building Relationships

Strengths and self-understandings can be built within the context of an arts community. Kidd stated that it is very difficult to build a healthy life when one has limited ability to trust others. This is a product closely tied to coping with the instability of street existence. He states that venues such as CBAOs can be a way to explore the idea of trusting others, and building appropriate boundaries when needed, something difficult to do when living on the streets.

Peer Mentorship, Skill Building and Sharing. The structure of SKETCH necessitates interactivity with others by their innovative model of peer mentorship and leadership. Novak states that after some time participating at SKETCH, youth are invited to mentor and share skills with other participants in youth led activities, which the facilitators support. Novak says there are three areas that SKETCH hopes to affect: well-being, skill building, and connections. Embedded in this is an educational aim, not just in arts education. Novak says that education comes with learning what she terms “hard and soft skills”. For example, a hard skill is learning how to build and use a silk screen, but the underlying soft skill will be learning how to share space with other people. She continues:

When you design and collaborate on a screen print that leads directly to working in community spaces, you know how to manage conflict, navigate personality challenges in the workplace and those are all things that can give you strength, help you to recognize challenges and how to overcome them. (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016)

Through the process of community arts engagement, a young person can also learn the skill of navigating shared spaces with others and has the potentially healing effects of building relationships that may otherwise not have a chance to form. Furthermore, peer mentorships and skill sharing enable participants to broaden perceptions of the self, others, and foster possibilities for change.

Pathways out of Homelessness. Facilitators of art-based workshops and community art studios are not only peer mentors but also practicing artists themselves. Just as the location of SKETCH opened up opportunities for young people to feel connected with a wider arts community, so does engaging with the artists and arts educators who mentor participants. Kidd states: “It’s not just the bubble you go when you make art and then the rest of the world is one thousand miles away”, but says that SKETCH’s mentorship for participants and internships of other artists directly facilitate this connectivity with the world and vertical opportunities which could lead to a pathway out of homelessness (Kidd, Interview, March 3, 2016).

Kidd refers to the arts not only as a vehicle that can connect the young person with the ‘rest of the world’ but also toward pathways that lead to other services. Kidd described a key benefit of CBAOs which happens on the “sidelines”. Often by engaging with arts and building connections, conversations occur that can cue facilitators to other issues and services the youth may need. He says that through this dialogue it may also help the youth reconnecting with family

members, an important step in transitioning out of homelessness and beginning to heal childhood wounds.

Discussion

Product and Process

An ever-present concern throughout the interviews was the question of what organizational model and approach is most beneficial for youth who are marginalized or living homeless. It became clear from the interview that no one perfect model exists for CBAOs. The culture and gender of the youth directly affected their participation in certain models, and balancing this proved to be a challenge. A large difference in these models was their focus on product versus process. In this context, product refers to tangible artistic products and skill building, but also the concrete outcomes such employment opportunities, artistic success and what Novak referred to as “hard skills”. Process refers to the “soft skills or the results of engaging in creativity and self-expression. This process includes the participant’s exploration and self-understanding that creativity can enable. Kidd and Novak point out that both components are necessary and both present specific problems and benefits. Product-focused activities allows increased opportunities for pathways out of homelessness by connecting the youth to a greater arts community and increasing the perceived quality of the art production within the participants’ artistic repertoire. Gaining these skills and leadership directly relates to the potential for future employment. SKETCH’s gender based analysis points to the importance of this more structured model in reaching individuals that may not be interested in, or able to, engage in a drop-in model. This also relates to an important aspect for Kidd. A CBAO has the potential to be a vehicle for pathways out of homelessness, ensuring that the organization is situated in a place that is connected to the resources and opportunities in mainstream society.

Conversely, both Kidd and Novak brought up the important issue of participant disappointment. Novak described an email she received from a participant who was deeply disappointed that they did not succeed as an artist in the way they had expected. Kidd mentioned the potential pitfalls of participants believing their art products, such as a CD or original art work would bring them mainstream success. It's understandable that a CBAO wants to become what Kidd refers to as, “more vetted by the arts community” through increasing aspects of arts-education and hard skills, as well as being more appealing to funding bodies. However, it

appears that CBAOs who focus on homeless youth may need to be cautious about producing unrealistic expectations for participants.

Kidd repeatedly emphasized that CBAOs should be process-oriented when it comes to youth living homeless and engaging with the arts:

It's less about what you land in, like the piece of art you've got or the career and not having a career, but so much is the process of having this buffered space where you can play around with aspects of yourself, try things, screw up things in a safe kind of environment... (Kidd, Interview, March 3, 2016)

Going back to identity formation, Kidd states that the process of creativity is connected closely with a state of playful exploration he often refers to, which occurs within a community arts context. The few opportunities youth living homeless have to consider new identities in a safe way is done when they can engage in what Kidd calls, "the dynamic and flexible medium of the arts". Because street existence requires a certain identity and behaviours in order to survive, having a space where real world consequences are suspended allows the youth living homeless to explore, or as Kidd refers to it, "play" with new possibilities for their lives and their identities. The drawback to process over product is of course the underdevelopment of concrete skills built in a more structured model. To this Novak says:

...sometimes we are over satisfied with just engagement and not actually, not really serving or respecting people for their capacity because I've found after 20 years a lot of people that I've seen cycle back into homelessness or cycle back here or they're older and still don't know what they're doing. I do feel anxiety and I think 'I wish you could have been involved at younger age and I wish you could have received a bit more attention.(Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016)

Novak makes an important point about the tension between wanting to see measurable and visible results from arts engagement for youth living homeless, yet, on the other hand this process may take away from other valuable outcomes that are less tangible, and far more basic for the development of the individual's self-concept. Both Kidd and Novak pointed out that SKETCH lost members who were more street entrenched after they shifted from a drop-in model of service delivery to a more structured and arts-education based organization. As Kidd states, CBAOs are not a catch all, and thus far, no perfect model exists.

Accessing Voice and Advocacy

An embedded benefit of community engagement is enabling self-expression and enhancing communication. Just as places like SKETCH offer an avenue for identity exploration and resilience building, Kidd says it also offers a platform to communicate one's feelings of outsiderness, and other aspects of the self to a world that may not be interested and often not willing to listen. Art making affords a young person a platform to express and concretize stories of the self, and share the experiences of marginalization. One of the greatest strengths of the creative arts is its ability to provide a vehicle for hidden stories to be spoken, sung, danced or visualized. It both enables a deeper understanding of the self, but also allows others to experience these personal stories of marginalization. This can become an enormously powerful platform for advocacy for youth living homeless and the issues they encounter.

Humility, Anti-oppression and Strength-based Models

Both an explicit and implicit paradigm of how Novak and SKETCH work is a commitment to anti-oppressive practices by focusing on and cultivating strengths. Youth living homeless face many levels of stigmatization and marginalization. Novak states that in her past experience of working with community arts, many privileged individuals wanted to engage marginalized groups, and although they come with good intentions, they ultimately maintain the status quo of a social service provider model. Novak and SKETCH now embrace a model that moves away from ideas of the service provider to a model that is based in humility, learning, and letting go of the idea of the “expert”. Kidd states that the notion that “I am a service provider; you are the service recipient” often precipitates losing energy to engage with a challenging population (Kidd, Interview, March 3, 2016). Novak instead advocates for a “learning frame of practice” that has a “sheer love and curiosity for humans” (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016). Similarly, Watkins & Shulman (2008), in their writing on the Psychologies of Liberation offer a framework that emphasizes identification, supporting, and nurturing the attempts of marginalized groups to re-author their own sense of identity. They state:

‘Expertise’ will be in the negative: learning how to empty one’s self of already learned identifications and specializations to create space for listening and imagining, where one can dream new scripts and alternative ways of being in the world. (p. 47)

Ultimately, Novak advocates for shifting the paradigm of how youth living homeless or on the margins are responded to. Her stance is not for a view of helping an individual figure out and fix

all the obstacles that they face, but instead approaching another individual with the view that the person is intrinsically creative human that has the capacity to “contribute to the community in a way no one else like you can” (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016). Novak states that this commitment to equity, humility and anti-oppression is built into the structure of SKETCH. The organization takes up space in a location that is dominated by art-world privilege and insists that marginalized artists work alongside culturally mainstream artists. This is a political statement in and of itself. Second, their encouragement of participant leadership, skill sharing and peer mentorship insures that power dynamics are not top heavy by reinforcing the belief that all individuals have the capacity to embrace leadership roles. Essentially, SKETCH strives for participatory practices from the young people. They trust the participants' wisdom, strengths, and creativity. SKETCH also trusts their ability to know how to help and heal themselves, a quality which may be most keenly present for those who have experienced oppression and marginalization. As Watkins and Shulman (2008) state, these new scripts must be constructed in dialogue with the community, not as a monologue of the expert (p. 47).

Another important aspect Novak discussed as critical to a humble, learning frame of practice is to participate in decolonization and the restoration of indigenous ancestry and wisdom to “the senior level of Canadian civilization” (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016). Acknowledging the land that is occupied by SKETCH and all Canadians opens us up to becoming more truthful. The land, Novak states, is a source of “constant creative energy” that we can connect to, and by doing so, connect to our “life force”. Embracing an anti-colonial stance relates directly to a shift away from service provider models, which could be argued, is historically linked to colonial missionary practices and other institutions within Canadian history that “worked toward the erasure of indigenous people” (Novak, Interview, May 6, 2016). Colonizing practices, Watkins and Shulman (2008) suggest, do not help the colonized become what they desire for themselves, but instead what the colonizer, who historically holds power, wants of them. It would seem then that a CBAO must critically examine the ethical frame of practice and theory of change that they work within as to not reinforce practices that may do harm to others. By considering a humble, anti-oppression, strength-based model of service delivery, new possibilities may open up that could have larger systematic change in the way we welcome youth, especially those most marginalized, into community.

Limitations

This research was limited in the number of individuals interviewed in order to glean information about CBAO and youth living homeless. The robustness of the information presented would have been improved by interviewing those who operate in different models of outreach with youth living homeless and CBAOs. Furthermore, the individuals interviewed had limited perspectives because they in the expert role, a role that was in fact challenged throughout the discussions. Time limitations required interviews to be gathered from individuals who hold a power dynamic with participants as well as others in the field. Ideally, this research would have expanded to include insights from youth experiencing marginalization and homelessness in order to discuss their thoughts on different models of CBAOs, resilience, well-being and creative capacity, not just through interviews, but also through participatory practices based on the method of communication they would chose (drawing, painting, poetry, for example).

Another potential limitation was the reality that much of this research did not address the issue of creative capacity directly. Starting out, my goal was to understand more fully this capacity's mechanism, or how it was working in specific way for youth living homeless. Although I did find very valuable and emergent content from this research, much of the content was focused on building the foundations and framework of a CBAO that supports creative capacity, but does not necessarily address the inner workings of this capacity itself for youth living homeless.

Recommendations

An important aim of this research was to summarize key aspects and recommendations for individuals or groups looking to starting a CBAO for youth living homeless, or expanding existing programming. Several important factors emerged within this research, such as carefully considering the location, environment and model in which to operate. Clearly, there are implications for both a structured model that resides within an art education context, and a drop-in open studio model that may, or may not be, within a shelter environment. It would be wise to consider what demographics the CBAO targeting in order to answer questions of frame and location. If one is looking to build community arts space for youth who are street entrenched, “traveller kids”, it may be important to remain structured as a drop-in, provide food, and be located in an easily accessible and visible location that takes less investment to approach. On the

other hand, engaging with a more diverse demographic may be important for reaching other goals. For less transient youth and women of colour, working within a structured frame of skill building, arts education and scaffolding opportunities in order to support pathways out of homelessness and marginalized situations may be the more appropriate focus. Cultural differences amongst youth living homeless or marginalized can be subtle, and may not be as obvious as any apparent markers such as race or gender. Both process and product are critical to ensure continued engagement of diverse groups of youth living homeless or marginalized, and ideally the CBAO would offer multiple entry points and ways of structuring their programming.

Kidd and Novak each described working with youth living homeless as challenging, and facilitators often deal with youth who are mentally ill, suicidal, traumatized and abused. Many youth are involved in circumstances that may lead them to harmful activities such as the sex trade, substance abuse and other potentially risky behaviours. These harsh realities, witnessed by the CBAO staff, make self-care and burnout prevention for workers critical. Both interviewees noted the importance of play, curiosity, and a simple love for humans as a mode of surviving these difficult realities. This perspective also constrains the framework of what a CBAO should strive toward. Remaining firmly focused on the arts maintains staff and organizational health, while being realistic about the scope of resources a CBAO is able to offer young people. Developing partnerships with other resources available for mental health support, opportunities for housing, and employment, as well as working in collaboration with individuals and organizations that do crisis intervention should be cultivated, so that when a crisis does arise, the CBAO is able to refer the young person to those services.

Conclusion

By reviewing current literature and conducting interviews with Kidd and Novak, my hope with this research was to offer a text that could be a starting point for those planning to work with youth living homeless in the context of community-based arts organizations. By elucidating the theoretical and practical foundations necessary in fostering and facilitating the creative capacity of the participants, my aim was to deepen the reader's as well as my own understanding of the nuances when working with youth living homeless. At times these elements were expected, however, many were emergent and illuminated unexpected but vital aspects that must be considered in order to build a truly anti-oppressive and healthy space that facilitates the strengths and creativity of participants. These elements include the environment, the

demographics, how the organizational model affects participation, and the ever present realities of organizational sustainability, all which enable processes of change for participants through building identities and resilience. It was also suggested by these interviews that there may be a unique capacity for creative thought for youth living on the streets, as this street environment may necessitate not only thinking of creative ways to survive, but offers unique and critical ways of seeing the world and society. This capacity and critical thinking, if pointed in a positive direction through engaging with the arts, could become the impetus for profound growth, self-understanding, and resilience building for the young person.

Devising multiple entry points for engagement is also a key factor for a CBAO working with youth living homeless, as no one model effectively reaches the broad needs of youth living homeless. My hope is that organizations commit to engaging with each person with a belief in their intrinsic wisdom, strength and capacity creativity and growth, as well as offering flexibility in their structure and programming in order to meet the diverse needs of the young person.

At the heart of a truly anti-oppressive model is a belief that every person has the ability to heal themselves, and know how to do that best, for themselves. I believe this begins with having welcoming spaces that foster healthy identities and resilience through the cultivation of the individual's strengths and healing abilities. This is the heart of "moving the foundations over" to somewhere the individual can see for themselves, and offer their unique voice, as a valuable contribution to the rest of the world.

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