

CREATIVE ENERGY: EXPLORING JAIL ARTS PROGRAMS AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Sociology

Charlotte

2021

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ABSTRACT

LINDSEY MILLER. CREATIVE ENERGY: EXPLORING JAIL ARTS PROGRAMS AND CULTURAL CAPITAL (Under the direction of Dr. Vaughn Schmutz)

This study explores the beliefs, goals, and motivations of arts-based prison initiatives based on a case study of a jail arts program provided by an art museum in Charlotte, North Carolina. This case study includes in-depth interviews with individuals who provide a range of support for this program, which I compare with interviews conducted with individuals involved in other arts-based programs outside the criminal justice system in Charlotte. I supplement this case study with information garnered from attending Justice Arts Coalition meetings. Analyses focus on the ideas that respondents have about perceived benefits of arts programming, potential for building cultural capital, and the capacity of arts-based programs to assess their impact. Findings have implications for sociological theory and research about cultural capital as well as for arts-based prison programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I received a great deal of assistance and support while composing this thesis. I'd like to express my gratitude to Dr. Vaughn Schmutz for guiding me through this and assisting me with numerous edits. I would not have been able to complete this mammoth project without your incredible feedback. Additionally, I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to speak with me and allow me to interview them, as well as everyone who helped me see the intersection of art and sociology.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States incarcerates more individuals per capita than any other country with approximately 2.3 million currently in prison or jail (Sawyer & Wagner 2020). Sociological research has identified numerous problems with mass incarceration, including the disproportionate number of Black males incarcerated in comparison to the general population (Thomas 2013), as well as studies demonstrating how difficult it is for those who have been incarcerated previously to lead productive lives outside the carceral system (Pager 2017, Western & Muller 2013), and how incarceration has a significant impact on the families of those imprisoned. For instance, many children whose parents have been affected by incarceration have displayed mental health issues such as depression and low self-esteem (Davis et al 2011). Because incarceration affects entire communities and families, rather than just those who are incarcerated, it is clear that additional effort and attention should be directed toward reducing recidivism and improving post-prison outcomes.

To address these issues, numerous prisons and detention centers are developing programs to assist prisoners in developing skills and coping mechanisms that will prove useful upon release, as well as to make life easier while incarcerated. For instance, jail arts programs teach individuals how to manage their emotions and increase self-esteem while also accumulating skills and coping mechanisms that may improve post-prison outcomes (Miner-Romanoff 2016). The Justice Arts Coalition (2021), which is a national network of individuals and organizations that promotes the use of art in the criminal legal system, lists over 200 programs in 48 states. These arts-based programs incorporate a variety of media and include everything from painting and collage to musical theatre and dance productions. In their view, art is an invaluable tool for cop-

ing with and expressing emotions, but many marginalized people do not have easy access to it. Many incarcerated individuals lack prior arts experience or training due, in part, to the declining number of arts classes offered in public education, particularly in under-resourced schools with students who are mostly Black and Latino or who live in poverty (Kraehe, Acuff & Travis 2016). Unequal access to arts education is particularly concerning given growing evidence that disadvantaged students benefit the most from this type of cultural capital acquisition (Anderson & Jaeger 2015, Catterall et al 2012, Crul et al 2017, Kisida et al 2014).

In this project, I aim to explore the beliefs, goals, and motivations of these arts-based prison initiatives. I use a case study of a jail arts program provided by an art museum in Charlotte, North Carolina. This case study includes in-depth interviews with individuals who provide a range of support for this program, which I compare with interviews conducted with others involved in various arts outreach programs and organizations outside the criminal justice system in Charlotte. I also supplement this case study with information garnered from attending Justice Arts Coalition meetings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mass Incarceration and Prison Arts Programs

As of 2020, 698 people out of every 100,000 in the United States were incarcerated (Sawyer and Wagner 2020). Following their incarceration and completion of their sentence, these men and women typically face significant difficulties reintegrating into their daily lives, and recidivism rates remain high. In light of these circumstances, a variety of programs are being implemented throughout the United States' prison and jail systems with the goal of enhancing the quality of life for incarcerated individuals both during and after their time in prison or jail. These programs have a common theme of improving self-esteem, self-expression, coping skills, and reducing depression and self-destructive behavior, and have benefited a large number of individuals (Gussak 2007). The aforementioned skills are critical for keeping people from returning to prisons, jails, and juvenile detention centers according to providers of these programs. Art programming in prisons is growing in popularity, with approximately fifty active programs in the Southeast alone and many more across the country (Justice Arts Coalition 2021).

There is a growing body of research demonstrating the value of art education especially for disadvantaged youth, as well as research examining the benefits and objectives of providers of prison programming (Anderson & Jaeger 2015, Catterall et al 2012, Crul et al 2017, Kisida et al 2014). However, there is little research in the field of sociology that directly addresses the impact of arts programs in the criminal justice system. Prior research has primarily focused on aspects of individual psychological outcomes, with an emphasis on an inmate's current state of well-being. While the emotional well-being of an incarcerated individual is critical, little atten-

tion is paid to an individual's social and cultural capital following incarceration and how it may affect their potential hireability, thereby affecting the community at large.

The Louisiana State Penitentiary, colloquially known as "Angola," is the country's largest maximum security prison. It hosts an annual art fair and rodeo where attendees can purchase artwork directly from incarcerated artists, either behind a fence or face to face (Schrift, 2006). Schrift's case study of the Angola Prison Art Fair included interviews with artists who discussed their experiences selling and creating art while incarcerated, how art had a humanizing effect on both the public and the inmates, and how the inmates were able to project an altruistic image of themselves (Schrift 2006). Some of the inmates in Angola were considered "popular artists" and had repeat customers over the years; this could imply that these popular inmates may have the potential for an art career after their release (Schrift 2006). Gussak (2007) discovered that after four weeks of twice-weekly art therapy sessions, forty-eight inmates experienced improved attitudes, more favorable compliance with prison staff, a decrease in depressive symptoms, and an increase in mood (Gussak 2007). The study's participants were all previously diagnosed with Axis I mental health disorders such as bipolar disorder and depression (Gussak 2007). Similarly, a 2009 study of a prison choral program discovered that those who participated in art programs had a 74.2 percent favorable parole rate, compared to 49.5 percent for those who did not (Cohen 2009). Such findings reinforce the potential for prison arts programs to improve the short-term mental health of individuals, but are unable to speak to the potential benefits of cultural capital for the incarcerated or the broader impacts of these programs from a sociological perspective.

To address these broader questions, we would ideally compare the post-prison employment outcomes and recidivism rates of individuals who participated in arts programs and those

who did not. However, this type of research is difficult due to privacy and ethical concerns. As a first step toward this goal, I will explore beliefs about the impact of arts-based programming on those who participate among those who deliver such programs. I consider how these programs are seen as affecting the social and cultural capital of participants, which has the potential to improve the lives of inmates and the well-being of their communities outside of the criminal justice system. This project will advance our understanding of the scope of arts programming for incarcerated individuals and at-risk youth, as well as the motivations and beliefs that underpin these programs and the ways in which they help participants build social and cultural capital.

Cultural Capital and Social Mobility Among Former Prisoners

Bourdieu (1984) defined cultural capital as a 'familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society.' At the time, this referred to individuals who had engaged in 'high culture' activities such as museum visits or opera attendance. The transfer of cultural capital from parents to children was emphasized, and this was used to further understand the children's later success in life (Bourdieu 1984). In a more contemporary context, engaging in a broad range of cultural activities such as viewing or creating visual art, dance, and popular culture contributes to the development of cultural capital (Lizardo 2016). Cultural capital, like economic capital, can be thought of as a form of currency that is exchanged between individuals and serves as a barometer of their cultural status (Bourdieu 1984). Rather than exchanging currency or being aware of an individual's currency capacity, there is an exchange and understanding of ideas between individuals that enables these individuals to transcend perceived levels of status (Bourdieu 1984). Previous research indicates that cultural capital can be just as valuable as economic or social capital when it comes to an individual's education or employment pursuits (DiMaggio 1982, Koppman 2016)

and that it can be a source of upward mobility rather than being determined by family background (Aschaffenburg & Maas 1997, Andersen and Jaeger 2015).

Incarceration erodes skills and diminishes vital social contact and capital that could lead to job opportunities, which helps to explain why those released from prison perform poorly on the job market (Western & Muller 2013). Given sociological research that highlights the benefits of cultural capital achieving desired social or economic status, it is likely that incarcerated individuals would also benefit from acquiring cultural capital. Prior research indicates that it is difficult for an incarcerated person to obtain gainful employment, which may directly result in rising recidivism rates (Pager 2017). There is mounting evidence that cultural capital can be a source of distinction for job applicants that increases the likelihood employees are seen as a good “match” by employers when they have the requisite human capital (Rivera 2012, Koppman 2016). Cultural signals exchanged between prospective employees and employers might also benefit formerly incarcerated individuals when they seek to obtain gainful employment. Thus, cultural capital acquisition could potentially ease formerly incarcerated individuals' reintegration into society and reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

If cultural capital that is acquired in prison could lower recidivism, this would not only benefit the individual in question but the community at large. Though there have been studies of arts programs which affect prisoners on an individual level, there is little to no research on how these programs could affect cultural capital and thus improve post-prison outcomes and increase stability in families and communities in general. There is also little to no research that shows how providers conceptualize and attempt to assess the social impact of these programs. Therefore, I propose to conduct a case study on the beliefs, goals and motivations of prison and jail

arts initiatives through in-depth interviews to gain a better understanding of the social impact of arts-based prison and jail programming.

Arts Programming for Marginalized Individuals

School systems frequently instill the belief that failure can be explained by a culture of poverty or other deficit frameworks (Hess 2018). From this vantage point, I aim to explore how those who provide arts-based programming apply their motivations and ideologies to those who are at risk of early incarceration or, more broadly, to those who have a need for art programming in general and are not necessarily youths. At-risk youth are those who have not yet entered the general education system or are otherwise isolated from the school community (O'Thearling & Bickley-Green 1996). Additionally, at-risk youth are perceived to have lower self-esteem and a limited skill set compared to their peers (O'Thearling & Bickley-Green, 1996). Both youth and adults appear to benefit from activities such as art creation that influence and improve self-esteem and skills.

Numerous studies have been able to demonstrate that art education has a significant impact on the success of at-risk youth or those with low socioeconomic status. Students who are not involved in art have a lower likelihood of graduating from high school, making them less likely to pursue productive careers or careers as artists (Kraehe et al 2016). Teenagers with a lower socioeconomic status and a history of extensive involvement in the arts have better socioeconomic outcomes following high school than those with a low level of involvement in the arts (Caterall et al 2012). Additionally, it is demonstrated that extensive participation in the arts correlates with students being more civic minded (more likely to vote or volunteer) than those who are not as involved (Caterall et al 2012). Even more compelling is the fact that at-risk youth who partici-

pated in the arts at a high rate had nearly identical socioeconomic outcomes to general population youth (Caterall et al 2012).

Additionally, studies conducted in juvenile correctional settings have discovered that youth art programs are effective predictors of decreased recidivism and behavioral problems (Miner-Romanoff, 2016). Not only do these art programs benefit the participants, but it has been demonstrated that youth participation in gallery shows or auctions helps the general public develop an understanding and even compassion for those who are imprisoned (Miner-Romanoff, 2016). These programs, which work with both youth and adults and use art to humanize those who are incarcerated, could be more explored within the context of sociology and is important to look at in our current prison state. Not only does art boost self-esteem, but it also provides a means for young people to express themselves about everyday situations they may not feel comfortable verbalizing (Hess 2018).

METHODS

I address the research question by examining the jail arts program provided by an art museum in Charlotte, North Carolina and comparing it to several other arts-based social outreach programs in the region. Since 2011, the jail arts program I am examining has worked with residents of Charlotte's detention centers, including both youth and adults. The program employs teaching artists and staff to conduct residencies of varying durations throughout the year (up to twelve weeks). These programs last different amounts of time and occur sporadically throughout the year depending on the availability of the teaching artists. Additionally, these programs differ in terms of the types of art taught to inmates at the two Mecklenburg County Jails; classes in ceramics, sculpture, collage, painting, and drawing have been held. Most classes go on for about a week with daily two hour sessions with the teaching artist. The classes are held in multi-use classrooms at the jail and are equipped with a variety of amenities, including computers and sinks, but were not designed for art classes. Each class had an average of about ten students according to one provider.

Following the conclusion of these programs, the artworks are displayed in the lobby of the art museum for individuals to pick up upon release or for family members to pick up. Additionally, the museum provides passes to the incarcerated youth and adult's family in an effort to encourage them to become more involved and to visit the museum, which is located in the city center. The jail arts program is run by a small staff of approximately three individuals in close collaboration with the local sheriff's office. The teaching artists and program providers interviewed have experience working with both juvenile and adult offenders.

In a semi-structured format, interviews with individuals involved in the jail arts program and those who provide other arts- or museum-based programming in Charlotte, North Carolina, were conducted. For the purpose of this project, I transcribed ten interviews with providers of these programs. Five interviews from the jail arts program were examined including those with the program director, past and present teaching artists, and a museum board member who is also a youth program coordinator. Almost all of the individuals who run the jail arts program serve in multiple capacities within the program.

For comparison, five additional interviews were examined from a variety of other art outreach programs in the region. The other arts-based outreach programs' interviewees ranged from teaching artists to program directors to CEOs. After-school programs, community mural festivals, and cultural center initiatives are among the other programs included in order to make comparisons with the jail arts program. I interviewed the leader of an organization that hosts an annual mural festival and employs street artists with the goal of beautifying neighborhoods while remaining respectful of their cultural diversity. Another interview was conducted with the founder of an organization that connects youth who have experienced trauma with art enrichment programs. An interview with the CEO of a museum and cultural center is included in the analysis. Finally, I included interviews with the executive directors of two different programs in the Charlotte area that provide arts-based programs after school and during the summer for low-income youth.

The interviews were conducted as part of a larger study examining the impact of arts-based social programs in Charlotte, North Carolina. The interview guide used for these interviews covers a wide range of topics, including the subject's personal life, involvement in the arts,

their views on social and cultural capital, and their perceptions of the impact of the programs with which they work (see Appendix A for the full interview guide). Additionally, interviewees are asked how they and their organizations evaluate the benefits of these programs and how those evaluations could be improved to better serve the community and their participants. The interviews ranged from thirty-six minutes to an hour and thirty-six minutes in duration, with the average being one hour and one minute long. All interviews took place via Zoom or phone call, and transcripts from the audio recordings were analyzed using a thematic coding procedure. For the context of this research, those affiliated with the jail arts program will be referred to as "JA," while those associated with the other programs will be referred to as "Non JA."

The individuals interviewed represented a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and ethnic origins. Several were self-employed artists who had never participated in community outreach prior to developing or working with these specific programs. Each participant expressed a desire to improve their community and a strong sense of empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. Additionally, the participants' educational backgrounds ranged from bachelor's degrees in fine arts to doctoral degrees to degrees in law.

I transcribed the interviews using the Microsoft 360 program's transcription service and then proofread them for accuracy. Following the transcription of the interviews, I coded each one using the NVivo software and compared them to the interview guide to identify major themes. Once those major themes were identified, I broke them down into smaller and more specific codes. I examined the perceived impact of arts-based social outreach programs, whether emotional or social, the assessment methods used for each program, and the various contexts in which participants participated. My primary motivation for creating these codes was to ascertain

the impact these providers believed they had on their students and the impact those effects had on their lives and communities through the acquisition of cultural capital. I discovered numerous parallels and differences between each program and then conducted a more detailed comparison of JA programs to non-JA programs.

FINDINGS

The Context of Participation

Consider why someone enrolls in or participates in art programming. There is a significant distinction between being compelled to do something and choosing to do something, and programs may be interpreted and received differently depending on these contexts of participation. The possibility that an individual could derive significant benefit from a program in which they initially had no interest is a compelling reason to pay attention to a particular program or institution. After conducting research on several arts-based programs in Charlotte, North Carolina, I discovered that all programs, with the exception of the jail arts program, are more or less optional and are selected by students, parents, or guardians. With perhaps the exception of the organization which social workers and judges help to select participants, where students are typically referred by their social worker, these students demonstrate an interest in a particular arts-based program prior to being referred. Beyond this study, numerous scholarly debates exist about whether or not art education should be mandatory (Nagel, Damen & Haanstra 2010), an issue that is relevant to the context of jail arts programs for the reasons discussed below.

Context of participation: JA. While there are numerous distinctions between the contexts of participation for youth and adults incarcerated in the Mecklenburg County Jail in arts classes, the context of participation for the jail arts program stands in stark contrast to the other programs examined in this study. The most striking distinction is that both youth and adult participants in the jail arts program were compelled to participate in these programs, either through enrollment in a program pod (which the inmates select to be in but have no control over which classes they attend) or because authorities determined that participation was beneficial in the instance of the

youth. Absence of initial motivation to participate has an effect on program outcomes and may attest to their effectiveness, as students may benefit from something without actively seeking it. Individuals are not self-selecting to participate in the jail art programs. Adult offenders self-select into a 'program pod' where they are enrolled in a variety of different classes such as GED courses, yoga, or resume writing. The adult side of recruitment is explained by a provider of JA programming:

So those inmates self-selected to participate in programs but the key is that they don't get to choose which programs they participate in. So once you sign up for programs, you just have to participate in any and all programs they place you in. So it's like they do sign up. But then again they also kind of don't, but I mean. I guess they chose to participate in programs.

This is a significant distinction when compared to other programs, in which students or their parents self-select to participate. It is also worth noting that there is already a presumption of interest or ability in art.

With the jail arts program, oftentimes participants would be extremely resistant in the beginning but many ultimately engage deeply with the content and enjoy participating in the arts. With the programs and institutions not including jail arts, there is a motivation for the students or at the very least their parents to understand or improve upon artistic skill or invest in their cultural capital before the program even starts or before a person steps into the institution. This motivation is typically not present in the participants of the jail arts program. A former teaching artist who had formerly worked for the jail arts program and primarily taught incarcerated youth had this to say about the selection process and students' initial desire to participate:

I would have these young individuals who are put in this classroom and very often they did not want to be there, so we're talking about like also this attitude of like who do you think you are and why are you wasting my time?...

They're there you know. Everything is terrible in that moment, and for a lot of them, this was a disruption that was unwelcomed. Like maybe they needed to have time on their own and this was really upsetting because now they're in this room and here you have this woman coming in and saying, like, 'oh, we're going to do this' and they're just like I don't care. They're angry, they're frustrated and it's like. And this was

maybe an unwelcome distraction in terms of disrupting what maybe they needed or wanted in that given time.

This level of resistance certainly attests to the level of dedication of the teaching artist staff at the jail arts program as it is difficult to teach willing participants and even more difficult to help those who do not want to be there in the first place. This initial level of resistance is important to note among participants to fully understand the level of individual impact that these programs and art involvement has on individuals. Yet even among those participants that are initially resistant, JA providers report a positive impact. Later in the hour-long interview with this teaching artist, they discuss students who were once very resistant to the class but eventually thriving, persuading those in charge to let them take it again.

I would come back like within a three week period, if I could right so, then he was still there and he requested to take that class again. And I said, well, you know what, we're doing the same project again. He wanted to be there so bad he came back and he just kept making these prints like he didn't care. He just wanted to keep making stuff from day one super focused and was just like it was amazing.

This demonstrates that there is a definite impact on these classes, at the very least in terms of how participants respond during their incarceration, which may have an effect on their post-incarceration arts participation.

Context of participation: non JA. With the other programs discussed in this paper, the parents of students or the students themselves self-select to be involved in the programs with all programs aside from one of the youth programs for individuals involved in social services. This organization does require the parent/guardian or social worker to fill out screening paperwork which discusses the artistic interests of the participant. This self-selection for all of the organizations also infers that individuals have had prior art experience or at the very least a *desire* to par-

ticipate in the arts. A director of an after school program spoke of the motivations behind their students joining their program and motivations of sticking with the program.

And, so that's the hope is that, you know, at the end of the day, all of our students want the same thing. Then I just want to get better. You know, I want to cultivate their creativity and develop artistic skills regardless of what level they're coming in at. I think I mean, it's hard to speak kind of blanket statements 'cause I think they're all in it for different reasons, but . . . if they are artistically inclined, they stick around because they value the instruction that they're getting there and value the quality of education in terms of material learning environment, sort of everything that we're providing for them.

It is interesting to see that students for this particular program have a choice to be there and also a choice of continuing the program. The JA students are not given this choice although some students may be permitted to retake the art classes with special permission (I only found one instance of this within my research which was listed above). Below is a statement from a non JA program provider regarding how their students are recruited which is mainly word of mouth and some outreach in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system to gain students:

We went into schools and sort of pitched to students and enrolled our own students instead of having to go to another program and so that was summer of 2017. And, had, you know, our first kind of fully functioning Summer Art Academy and so that kind of has become the basis.

This shows that students had to take their own initiative and at least mention the program to their parents or guardians in order to sign up for the program.

The jail arts program's most blatant distinction from the other programs examined in this study is the context of participation. Individuals who are incarcerated do not have much agency in their lives, and this is no different when it comes to participating in the arts. This complicates the environment in which a participant perceives his or her participation in this activity. Numerous providers of the Jail Arts Program have stated that their participants frequently exhibit extreme resistance. This makes teaching the classes more challenging at first, but also more rewarding if the participants adjust well. This is quite different from students being recruited from

their schools and expressing interest to their parents, or from a discussion between parents and their children resulting in a person joining the class. Participation in museum programming and mural festivals is entirely voluntary and does not typically require enrollment.

Perceptions of Arts Impact

The outreach program providers interviewed expressed a similar sentiment about their work's positive impact and the critical role of art education and practice in a person's life, regardless of whether they worked inside a prison or jail or in a museum or classroom. While the majority of anecdotes focused on individual impact, it appeared as though these individual impacts could be broadly interpreted as positively affecting the individual's community as well as those in close proximity to the participants, demonstrating the critical nature of increasing an individual's cultural capital for later life success. It appeared as though programmers recognized the numerous ways in which art participation can benefit students, including making their lives more enjoyable in general and making difficult situations more manageable. Below, I focus on two broad categories of impact among jail arts and non-jail arts providers. The first deals with responses that focus on the role of art as a form of therapy and emotional regulation for participants; the second deals with broader impacts more consistent with cultural capital acquisition.

Emotion Regulation/Art as Therapy

Emotion regulation/art as therapy: JA. Consistent with previous research on the benefits of jail arts programs, the JA providers in this study identified similar outcomes. Several of the jail arts program participants mentioned that their students had previously had no exposure to art instruction beyond the third grade. It is critical to note that many of these students come from districts that are generally poorer than the rest of the population, and as a result, funding for these

schools is frequently cut. Once funding for school programs begins, there is typically a greater emphasis on STEM studies and less on the arts, and thus art programs are eliminated first. The interviewee from JA, spoke about the value of arts-based programming and the dearth of such programming in schools:

But it gives you so much when kids or adults are involved in it, and particularly, you know now for a lot of 'em they're not getting it in school. You know, schools don't offer a lot of art-based programs. And so when those would come out, you know, you wonder where folk are finding you know that outlet so you know again, it's just a way that we can help channel some of that energy into something positive.

Numerous interviewees alluded to an underlying urge to create art or defined art as something inherent in people who simply need to be introduced to it. When confined behind bars, that aforementioned energy can be amplified.

For those who participated in the jail arts program, it seemed that even completion of a project or having the time and freedom to focus on art projects was beneficial to their overall well-being. Instructors and providers of the program discussed how something as simple as positive encouragement went a long way for the participants. A lot of these participants, especially the younger ones, have not learned ways to express their emotions and expressing things visually rather than verbally seems to be a lot easier for them to channel and unpack the situations that they are in. This ability to build self-esteem and enjoy the satisfaction of completing a project benefits their overall well-being and the idea is that the greater the well-being the less of a chance of recidivism for those that participate.

A provider for the jail arts program spoke of the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in the arts:

You know, for kids or adults who normally don't finish things who don't feel the sense of accomplishment or esteem, you're building that into them because of the finished product from start to finish through encouraging instructors who are saying "good job" "nice work" you know you're seeing the process of building up, you know a full person you know through programming, and so you know all those things are connected into how you do comprehensive rehabilitation and reentry, and so a big part of any program that we

do you know that has a best practice model it has those encouraging, inviting, those participatory developmental aspects of it that you know, we put you in something because we see something and you want me to accomplish something we want to build you up while doing that, all the while having fun but also again, going back to the therapeutic aspect of it, you know having the ability to express and to emote.

In this case, the JA provider links the therapeutic benefits of positive encouragement through arts participation with successful rehabilitation and reentry. According to the respondent, while it is extremely important to improve upon quality of life while incarcerated, a greater benefit to society overall is achieved by assisting individuals in becoming more productive and adaptable once released from the detention centers.

Individuals who are incarcerated also may not have the means because of their situations to successfully verbally express how they feel in a given situation. Being able to create visual art may also help these individuals to express something that they may have not been able to articulate previously. The representative from the JA program said this regarding self-expression and the arts:

It gives people an opportunity to again be expressive, be creative, to utilize means of artistic expression to alleviate maybe some stress and burden, or to have uncomfortable conversations, particularly around things that they may have created that creates a conversation so you know all that is kind of just, you know, encompassed inside that program

Other representatives of the jail arts program spoke about opening up the conversations that typically happen when individuals are incarcerated and how these conversations are somewhat centered around the fact that they are incarcerated, for instance individuals may talk about their charges or court but with the introduction to art classes, these conversations are able to change to focus around the art they were creating.

A lot of them would actually look forward to it because it is kind of like I can disconnect. I can forget that I am here in jail. For a lot of them it was a time where they could be away, but also like enter this special space in their mind that it's through making something even you know for a lot of them, discover their own voice that way.

This disconnection from the jail can assist these individuals in thinking of themselves and visualizing themselves in a location other than the confines of the jail, which may aid in the creation of space for imagination and escape. Many of the respondent's mentioned the importance of viewing oneself outside of their current situations in order to begin thinking about their post-incarceration future. Regarding the escapism that art can create inside jails and prisons, a teaching artist for the jail arts program stated the following:

I'm a pretty for whatever reason, a pretty empathetic person. So I like working closely with people and creating art, and things that people are proud of. Whether it's just for like two hours out of their day, or like an hour, then that's like awesome that they get to kind of just focus on something else for just a little bit.

During my interviews this theme of the importance of the ability to escape was recurring for those who worked for the jail arts program.

Another recurring theme among those who were imprisoned was displaced energy. Confinement and a lack of agency are often difficult for those who are imprisoned to deal with, and art is an excellent way to effectively use this energy in a positive way.

We found a need you know, for kids to be able to express themselves, utilize creative energy, a large majority of the young men and young women that come inside our facilities, you know they're pretty creative, they like to draw, they like to sketch, they like to write poetry, music, things like that and so we decided you know, how can we help, I would say channeling some of that that energy and creativity into programming that can be productive and positive can be utilized as an outlet.

Though these individuals have received little formal art training, they, like those involved in the other self-selecting programs discussed in this paper, retain a desire to create art. Another teaching artist interviewed discussed their students' desire to make art and create and how this was something that was possibly previously missing in their life and how the creation of art could be something that individuals could use to gain positive attention.

That was always my observation that it's just like the ones who really enjoyed it, the ones who were like I loved learning a new thing. I didn't know I could make art, and it was just like these discoveries that really speak of individual growth and like I think you know I look at it, it's like wow is this maybe this was missing? Maybe this was missing in their everyday life. That like I didn't know I could do this or no one ever

saw that in me or you know all of my energy was going into this kind of activity or behavior or whatever, because that's where I was being noticed, Or this is how I could have been noticed.

The theme of displaced energy reappears yet again, this time from the perspective of a different individual with a different connection to this program. Energy placement, particularly with youth, has the potential to significantly influence how people behave.

Emotion regulation/art as therapy: non JA. In conducting interviews with program participants who were not involved with incarcerated individuals, I discovered that providers rarely mentioned emotional regulation as a benefit of their program offerings. This was a significant discovery. I would have assumed that while the participants of these other programs were not incarcerated but would be considered to be at risk youth or people who need some type of social assistance. Additionally, it is reasonable to assume that those individuals would require assistance in managing their emotions, as they have been identified as being disadvantaged, which entails numerous emotional struggles. Ability to express oneself adequately is critical for all individuals, and some have a more difficult time verbally expressing themselves than others. A non JA program provider had this to say about the impact of arts participation on broadening one's perspective on the world and developing an emotional intelligence:

Especially children you know, sort of tap into that inner feeling and to understand that they have this ability to create something beautiful and to change their world, even if it's from within and not to say that artists don't have, you know their own problems. It's not a solution. It's a resource.

This attests to the fact that even if it is on a short-term basis, that the arts have a powerful impact on how a person views and deals with their current situations.

The JA group observed significantly more frequently that participation in arts-based classes had a beneficial effect on participants' emotional well-being during the class's brief duration. With the exception of one of the organizations which focuses on children who have had

traumatic experiences, providers of Non JA programs were generally less concerned with participants' immediate emotions. There is a wealth of scholarly research indicating that art can be therapeutic. Participants in the JA interview group stated repeatedly that art participation is critical for diverting energy away from less productive activities.

Cultural Capital

There is mounting evidence that a person's cultural capital has a much greater impact on his or her success than previously believed. Due to the increased importance placed on those previously incarcerated remaining on the other side of the prison walls once released, cultural capital acquisition is becoming more paramount. Each participant was tasked with defining cultural capital and discussing how it relates to the programs they offer. Given that none of the participants had a background in the social sciences, it is unsurprising that the term was unfamiliar to most of them..

Cultural capital: jail arts. Though the majority of participants involved with Jail Arts were unsure how to define the term 'cultural capital,' they all made reference to it in some way without using the precise definition. Naturally, being able to regulate one's emotions and see oneself in new contexts is critical for increasing one's cultural capital. As previously stated, it is critical to consider the difficulty that these individuals who provide the programs have assessing or even visualizing an increase in someone's cultural capital as a result of the strict orders to discontinue contact with an individual when the program concludes or the individual is released. The providers of these programs may speculate on the ways in which art instruction might benefit someone who is not incarcerated, but this is still speculation.

When you're talking about that upward mobility, that's you know, it depends how you look at it, because you know when we when most people think about it, you know we talk about that upward mobility within a

society and just kind of shifting over time, this is what I could speak of like this kind of change that maybe can happen within a very short period of time that I get to observe in terms of how it impacts them long-term...

We don't have a connection with them like that's the thing we come in. We're there for a minute and like nobody keeps tabs on them because it's all very, you know, when you come in into jail like they know your name and that's it.

Because those involved in jail arts can only observe their participants' evolution over a brief period of time, the concept of long-term or community impact is nearly impossible to grasp.

Some instructors from the program have spoken briefly about running into former students in their daily lives, but this is uncommon, and the former student must initiate contact with the instructor. Frequently, those former students do not remain in Charlotte or are not in a location frequented by the instructor. It was emphasized that the main benefit of this program is not perfecting or mastering an artistic skill but improving the overall quality of life and improving upon communication skills for the students which would ultimately help increase their cultural and social capital.

(The class) was not to teach them a particular drawing skill, but to think about life a little bit and their context and to use visuals to sort of understand, use visual language and making use of that to help them understand their own situation.

The ability of students to exhibit their work in a national institution represents a significant increase in cultural capital. Many of these students had never visited any of the institutions in uptown Charlotte, and the mere act of visiting was frequently intimidating. Being able to create artwork through the art museum and having it displayed on its physical walls as well as on the website contributes significantly to students' cultural capital.

So I think being able to connect with the museum again an institution that they may never have previously imagined themselves being connected to actually kind of helps to strengthen that and then another thing that's really cool is like the fact that we exhibit a lot of their artwork. I think that gives them a stronger sense of cultural capital, especially like when we show them pictures of their artwork exhibited, or if students or family members are able to come into the museum to see their artwork exhibited I think those types of connections are really important and then also just like in the classroom, we form really strong bond. A lot of times we'll form really strong bonds with the participants, and again I think that just kind of helps them to feel more connected to their community.

Not only does this connection to the art museum help to build the cultural capital of incarcerated art students, it also helps build the cultural capital of their friends and family who visit the museum to view the artwork. This also facilitates communication between those individuals and possibly other friends and family members of incarcerated individuals. Seeing works displayed in this institution where the majority of people must work for years helps to cast a different light on incarcerated people. People who had visited an exhibition in Ohio where works were displayed from incarcerated youth and completed an exit survey in which many stated that seeing the works of art had a humanizing and compassionate effect on the way they viewed the incarcerated youth (Miner-Romanoff 2016).

Cultural capital: non JA. Surprisingly, those involved in programs outside of jails appeared to have a better grasp of social and cultural capital and the impact of their programs on their students' cultural capital. Additionally, it was stated numerous times that students should not face financial barriers to participate in arts activities that contribute to their cultural capital. That is a significant distinction between these two types of programs, as the financial barrier is obviously absent for those compelled to participate by the jail arts program. The participant from a Charlotte museum spoke extensively about the financial barriers that many individuals and families face when it comes to acquiring cultural capital.

There shouldn't be this financial barrier to get in to explore the arts unless it's just like this is just some exceptional exhibition that we have in that might require or there's some workshop is required and that's what I like about the virtual strategy that we can get folks in a way that breaks down these economic barriers, and I think that's part of that social new. I see that as social change I see that is affecting breaking out some of these barriers. They create some of these injustices that we have because, you know, for a family we come to a museum. Your family of four come to a museum and you have \$37 and \$35 or something.

I found it extremely interesting that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which ultimately closed down institutions and prohibited them from visiting in person, the cultural center became

much more digital, with free online access. This conversation placed more importance on cultural capital and demonstrated how a catastrophic event can alter how people interact with art, bridging the divide between those who lack cultural capital and those who do not. This individual expressed their hope for the continuation of this type of virtual accessibility because it was so beneficial in this way. They continued to discuss the increase in cultural capital by saying “So how can we make sure that they are not denied? I think virtual free virtual content allows them to be able to participate in some ways that it might not be to participate at all.”

Other interviewees clearly had difficulty thinking about arts in a social way and how this could increase someone’s cultural capital. These conversations need to happen with those that create art and those who provide instruction regarding art. They do genuinely believe that participating in the arts does create a deep impact in individuals and can help them outside of the art world. Regarding the skills imparted through arts participation, the participant from a non JA program stated the following:

There is a social impact, but yes it has--When people say ‘social’, you're thinking one thing, but I'm really thinking more concretely in the sense of it has concrete results that can be economic, that can be self-discipline, that can be exposure. I really don't think of the art so much ‘social’ because that's almost like, what's the word I want to use, ‘optional’. I think that the Fine Arts really can provide long lasting, life changing type skills.

Even considering how art instruction enables students to consider other obstacles in their lives was mentioned by leaders of after-school art instruction, which was similar to how those who taught programs at the jail arts program felt about their instruction. The lasting effect was not on whether an individual became a better artist, but on their ability to deal with the world and with themselves outside of art. The goal of these programs is not necessarily to increase the global population of working artists, but to arm individuals with the social skills necessary to

succeed in any situation. These benefits are frequently reserved for students with a higher socioeconomic status, leaving students with a lower socioeconomic status behind.

Almost every interviewee stated that art instruction is frequently the first subject cut in public or private schools despite arts education having numerous benefits to students outside of the arts world. The participant from a non JA organization said the following in regards to this:

You have all these stats. The people sort of here, but they don't necessarily believe and what I also found was that there were so many arts organizations that are struggling to, you know, carry out this without enough resources since arts are being taken out of schools.

A non JA program provider stated the following about the diminished importance placed on arts studies in favor of STEM: "It's a national cultural problem right now. Nobody really respects the arts. It's like it becomes a luxury. Even our school systems say that because STEM is the most important thing"

While a renewed emphasis on STEM-related studies is commendable and arguably very important, it is critical to emphasize that all individuals interviewed stressed the importance of art practice in an individual's development. I found it odd that most of the individuals interviewed outside of the jail arts program did not mention art instruction as a means of regulating their emotions. While I believe this benefit is present in these other programs, it is clear that providers do not prioritize it when weighing the benefits of art instruction. Increased self-esteem and self-expression have been shown to correlate directly with decreased recidivism and increased cultural capital. Interviewees from both jail and non-jail programs stated that their primary goal was not only to improve students' art performance, but also to improve students' well-being and provide an outlet for displaced energy, particularly among youth participants. Additional-

ly, those interviewed in non-prison programming demonstrated a more concrete understanding of cultural capital.

Though few JA participants had a precise definition of cultural capital, they all spoke about it differently in terms of the perceived effects it had on their students. This could be because they are unable to maintain contact with their students following the conclusion of the JA classes, making it difficult to discern the effects of cultural capital on these children and adults. Non-JA participants demonstrated a stronger grasp of the term and discussed its significance in regards to their students. These findings underscore the importance of equipping providers of these organizations with the language and tools necessary to assess the beneficial effects of their programs.

Lack of Assessment

Sociology is constantly evaluating the impact of various social outreach programs to gain a better understanding of their efficacy. At the most fundamental level, assessment enables programs to determine what works and what does not, and it enables instructors to tailor their programming to specific needs in order to increase the success of these programs. Along with meeting the needs of students, evaluation and assessment enable these programs to provide concrete evidence to organizations in order to receive funding priority.

Lack of assessment: JA The most striking and urgent finding of my research was that almost every interviewee expressed a desire for a more accurate method of evaluating the impact of their programs. Assessing impact and positive outcomes is critical for securing funding for any type of program and, on an individual level, can help program providers and institutions remain motivated and invested in the work they do. Almost all of the participants interviewed ex-

pressed a desire to improve their programs' evaluation and effectiveness, but acknowledged a lack of evaluation due to a variety of barriers. Cost, time, and resource constraints appeared to be the most significant impediments to successful evaluation.

The jail arts program was the program with the fewest evaluation methods. This appears to be partially due to the fact that the art museum employs only three to four people for all of its arts outreach programs, not just the Jail Arts, but also outreach programs for the elderly, blind, and others. Each of the five individuals I spoke with about the jail arts program felt that it would be beneficial and would contribute significantly to the program's funding, effectiveness, and visibility. The jail arts program is unique in that legal constraints prevent program providers from following up with participants and assessing the program, even if they had more resources to devote to evaluation. Because the jail arts program is not permitted to contact participants following the conclusion of the program, determining the effectiveness of this class beyond a pre- and post-class survey is difficult as was explained by a former teaching artist "I mean, that's not the case in other you know teaching situations, but in ours it was very, very much one of those things where you did what you could and then you never knew."

Several interviewees mentioned seeing former students out in the community that expressed their gratitude for the program. However, this is a chance encounter and is not necessarily indicative of the program's overall quality. Apart from the jail arts program, providers of other programs interviewed expressed a sense of helplessness during the evaluation process.

Cost is always an issue, as is comprehensively evaluating abstract concepts such as artistic expression. Additionally, providers of all of the programs in question frequently referred to their evaluations as anecdotal. The providers appeared to believe they were doing good in their

hearts but lacked a concrete way to demonstrate the benefits of their programs. A director for the jail arts program expressed a need for better assessment but lamented the fact that there were very few staff members and a limited amount of knowledge regarding the ability to effectively assess their program.

We're just not researchers and we're busy. Yeah, it would be kind of difficult. I really wish we could like hire like an outside research group or something I don't know for all of our programs really just because it's basically like myself and the two staff members, that I mentioned overseeing and running all seven of these programs, and so just implementing the programs is a lot of work and then having to go back and record and analyze all the survey results is a lot and I think the information we get is useful. But again, it's just not like you know, we're not researchers, so it's not right. It's not the quality that it could potentially be if a professional were to come in and do something. I think so. Even though we do our best, we could use a little bit more

It is also difficult to effectively assess a program when there is little control regarding the funding of the program by those who operate it.

Lack of assessment: non JA. Though all ten interviewees expressed a desire for a more effective method of evaluating the effectiveness of the program they represent, there was a marked difference in the resources available to non-Jail Arts programs. Additionally, it appeared as though those responsible for programs other than Jail Arts possessed a more capable vocabulary for defining how to assess their programs more effectively. It was important to note that a youth arts outreach program actually had paid for a study from UNC Charlotte to evaluate their success. The director of the program spoke of this below:

No, well, we actually do it a lot. We actually had UNC Charlotte. We paid for one year to collect, you know, disciplinary, and attendance, and academics. We found, frankly, because we have a partner--we have a memorandum of understanding with CMS that allows us to--they send us our kids from all of that information. How they're doing on their progress reports, what their grades are: their EOGs. So we can just sit and look at it and see--And for us, it's pretty simple--if they passed their EOGs. We all know third grade if you're failing EOGs, that's a sign of just how much that child is likely to need extra help through the rest of their school career. So, for us anecdotal is fine, but you need to pass your EOGs. We're not saviors with that, but we're saying we're essentially doing the same thing that a middle income and upper income kid--so you're not doing well. What would a parent do to help their child? What would the parent do?

It appears that evaluating all social outreach art programs in this manner would be critical, though this is complicated by the fact that not all programs and institutions are academically ori-

ented. Those interviewed whose affiliated programs did not necessarily serve children directly did not assess their success in terms of these positive trajectories. A person's success may or may not be determined by their academic performance, but it may be enhanced by their social or cultural capital, which is discussed in this quote from a non JA provider:

Which is more time consuming both from the assessment standpoint and also from like the human resources standpoint. Right and so. Knowing that we're trying to measure growth and development of these things that are very very much more abstract.

As I discovered while writing this paper, assessing someone's personal growth objectively is exceedingly difficult. Additionally, it is prohibitively expensive and time consuming to truly understand the impact of a child's or adult's success over their lifetime, as discussed below:

Long term assessments are expensive and complicated, so you're not gonna always get that follow kids forever, but we do get them coming back then we know our gut tells us "better to have it than not to have it." Let's just say that. And it does have an impact. But we haven't done a 20 year study to determine that. So whatever we can say, it's gonna be anecdotal more than anything.

Due to legal restrictions on following up with those who have participated in the jail arts program's programming, the jail arts program is unique in its ability to assess the impact of its programming. They are not permitted to contact or follow up with individuals who have previously been incarcerated. The providers of this program have discovered their programs' success solely through chance encounters outside the penitentiary. Because there is no binding confidentiality agreement in place for the other programs examined in this study, a long-term study could theoretically be conducted for the other programs in Charlotte, NC but not for the Jail Arts. When time permits, the jail arts program conducts pre- and post-class surveys, but these are extremely basic and provide no insight into how these classes may affect participants in the long run.

Other programs have collaborated with UNC Charlotte on shorter-term evaluations but have expressed a need for longer-term evaluations and a lack of funding to conduct them. These

assessments conducted by non-JA organizations typically focus on narrow criteria such as academic performance or confidence levels. Both groups of programs would greatly benefit from assessment that considered a broader range of outcomes and, potentially, the far-reaching effects of cultural capital acquisition. Even if programs had the resources and time to evaluate the effectiveness of arts programming for marginalized groups, all of these programs' providers have stated that evaluating abstract concepts such as self esteem is difficult.

CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION

To gain a better understanding of the perceived benefits of arts participation, the lack of evaluation within these organizations, and the cultural capital gained by participants, the jail arts program was compared to other social outreach arts organizations in Charlotte, North Carolina. Between these programs, I discovered numerous parallels and distinctions.

It is becoming increasingly clear that something must be done to address the United States' ever-increasing rate of mass incarceration and recidivism. Once individuals are released from juvenile or adult facilities, reintegration is difficult, and without adequate coping mechanisms, reentry into the criminal justice system is relatively easy and expected. Additionally, there is a stigma attached to incarcerated individuals, which complicates assessing the broader impact of arts participation on community stability, positive family outcomes, and upward social mobility. The interviews demonstrate how art can help inmates develop skills and perspectives that help them build their cultural capital and thus ease their transition back into society. Families of imprisoned individuals and visitors to museums that exhibit their work get to see these individuals in a much more human light. Not only does art instruction benefit those who have been incarcerated upon their release, but it also helps individuals improve their behavior while incarcerated. According to interviewees, these classes significantly improved inmates' behavior, allowing them to qualify for parole and other programs that could result in an earlier release or even a more comfortable prison experience.

Cultural capital can be beneficial for both JA and non-JA participants in the long run. These benefits may be amplified for those who are marginalized, most notably former prisoners. Sociological research enables a more complete understanding of those outcomes and enables

arts-based providers to maximize the impact of their efforts. While non-JA providers are more familiar with the ways in which arts participation can improve academic performance or other indicators of upward mobility, they share a desire for more systematic evidence of those effects. The implication is that sociology/sociologists can contribute significantly to conceptualizing and quantifying the potential effects of cultural capital in both JA and non-JA contexts.

The most striking difference between participants in the Jail Arts Program and those who did not participate was the context of participation. It is remarkable that despite the fact that participants are not self-selected, the Jail Arts Program appears to have a sizable impact. This was not anticipated at the study's inception. The fact that those who benefit from the JA program are not self-selected reaffirms the therapeutic value of art participation. Individuals frequently objected to being placed in these classes at first, but after a brief period of time became captivated by art and made it a more regular part of their lives (as far as the interviewee was able to see which may have been only a few weeks).

Additionally, almost every interviewee in both JA and non-JA programming stated that arts programs are frequently the first to lose funding as a result of the increased emphasis on math and science. While those are critical subjects, I believe this study demonstrates the value and impact of arts programming on an individual's life and significantly increases their potential for upward mobility.

Prior research on arts programming in prisons and jails in the field of sociology is scant, if not nonexistent. Additional research is necessary to fully understand the effects of arts-based programming on detained youth and adults. In general, research on arts-based programming

should place a greater emphasis on how these programs help individuals develop their critical thinking and social skills, which in turn helps them improve their potential for upward mobility.

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APPENDIX A: Interview guide (individual)
Arts-based social mobility: Exploring cultural capital in Charlotte, NC

NEA Application: 1863443-38
IRB Number: 19-0751

Interviews with providers of arts-based programs with social impact

Topic 1: Personal background in the arts and/or arts education

1. Tell me about your background in the arts and creative activities
 - a. Describe some of your earliest memories associated with the arts
 - b. What formal education or training have you had in arts-related fields?
 - c. What other relevant activities have you participated in before you became involved in [current program/organization/work]?
2. Describe your family's involvement in creative activities.
 - a. What arts-related activities did your [parents or other family members] participate in?
 - b. In what ways were your parents or other family members involved in your arts-based activities?

Topic 2: History of the program/organization

1. Describe your [program/organization/creative work] for me.
2. Tell me about the history of [the program/organization].
 - a. How did it start and what role did you play in its development?
 - b. Describe the role that other people or groups have played in its development. What other partnerships do you rely on in doing this work?
 - c. What key steps or turning points have led [the program/organization] to its current situation?
 - d. How do other people in [your field/your organization] view the program?
 - e. How do other people in [your field] view your [work as an artist/your organization]?
3. What is the target population/audience for [the program/organization/creative work]?
 - a. Describe the typical participant.
 - b. How are they recruited? How do they become aware of [the program/organization]?

Topic 3: Motivations for developing/providing the program

1. What motivated you to establish or get involved with [the program/organization]?
 - a. How did you first get involved? What has kept you involved?
2. Who else works with you in providing this program?
3. What do you think motivates them (e.g., volunteers, employees, etc.) to be involved with [the program/organization]?

4. Why do you think [people from the target population] participate in what [the program/organization] has to offer?
5. How would you describe the general beliefs or values associated with [the program/organization]?
6. What makes Charlotte a good location for [the program/organization]?
 - a. Why does Charlotte need a program like yours?

Topic 4: Beliefs about cultural capital and social mobility

1. Tell me what you think [people from the target population] get from participating in [the program/organization].
2. In your mind, how does engaging in creative activity play a role in positive social outcomes?
 - a. What role do you think involvement in art/creativity plays in social mobility?
3. What would you say to convince a skeptic that participation in the arts is beneficial for [people from the target population]?
 - a. For those concerned about economic opportunity and mobility in Charlotte, how would you convince them that investing in programs like [the program/organization] is worthwhile?
4. Are you familiar with the concept of cultural capital?
 - a. What, if anything, does the concept mean to you?
5. Why do you think participation in the arts might contribute to social mobility?

Topic 5: Goals of the program

1. What are the main goals of [the program/organization/creative work]?
 - a. What type of social impact [or social change] are you trying to achieve?
 - b. In what ways do you see these goals as relevant to social mobility?
2. Describe how the goals of [the program/organization] were developed.
3. How did you come to focus on [people in the target population] and [the type of art/creative activity employed]?
4. Tell me about anything related to the local setting in Charlotte that contributed to the goals of the program.

Topic 6: Methods of assessment

1. How do you measure the impact of [the program/organization]?
2. Describe any methods you use to assess the impact of [the program/organization].
3. Tell me about any challenges you face in assessing the impact of [the program/organization].
4. What, if anything, do you wish you could do to better assess the impact of [the program/organization]?

Topic 7: Experiences with arts-based social mobility

1. What examples have you seen where involvement in the arts has had a positive social impact on someone or even contributed to social mobility?

- a. Are there examples you have seen in your [program/organization/creative work]?
 - b. Any other examples you have witnessed? Or any others you are aware of?
2. Do you think involvement in the arts has had a positive social impact in your life? Has it contributed to social mobility in your life?
 - a. Explain why you feel that way.
3. Have you seen or heard any other examples that show the arts and social mobility are connected?

General wrap-up questions

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the social impact of arts-based programs like yours?

Are there any other questions you think I should have asked? Please share with me anything else you feel might be relevant.