



**Digital Commons@**

Loyola Marymount University  
LMU Loyola Law School

---

LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations

---

Spring April 2017

## Intercepting the Intergenerational Trauma of Mass Incarceration Through Art-Based Parent Programs

Ana Ruth Yela Castillo

Loyola Marymount University, [castillo.anaruth@gmail.com](mailto:castillo.anaruth@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Art Therapy Commons](#), and the [Marriage and Family Therapy and Counseling Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Yela Castillo, Ana Ruth, "Intercepting the Intergenerational Trauma of Mass Incarceration Through Art-Based Parent Programs" (2017). *LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations*. 313.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd/313>

This Research Projects is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@lmu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu).

# INTERCEPTING THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA OF MASS INCARCERATION THROUGH ART-BASED PARENT PROGRAMS

By

Ana Ruth Yela Castillo

A research paper presented to the

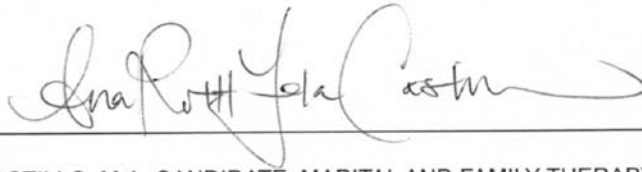
FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY  
LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

In partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

MAY 2017

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ana Ruth Yela Castillo", positioned above a horizontal line.

ANA RUTH YELA CASTILLO, M.A. CANDIDATE, MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY & ART THERAPY  
TRAINEE; RESEARCHER

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jessica Bianchi", positioned above a horizontal line.

JESSICA BIANCHI, Ed.D, ATR, MFT-I; RESEARCH ADVISOR

## **ABSTRACT**

This study discusses the intergenerational impact of mass incarceration on families. The general literature repeatedly described the negative effects of mass incarceration among children who have an incarcerated parent by pointing to the difficulty of educational attainment, social exclusion, stigma, substance abuse, and the exacerbation of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and antisocial behavior (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Miller & Barnes, 2015; Turney, 2014). Unfortunately, most incarcerated individuals are parents and most incarcerated women are mothers (Scudder, A., et al., 2014, and Miller, et al., 2014). Through the use of art, service providers (artists, clinicians, etc.) that facilitate parent based programs in correctional facilities or re-entry programs can alleviate the trauma caused by incarceration that affect the emotional and mental well-being of families. Two organizations that provide art programs to incarcerated parents participated in a qualitative study about the effective use of art in their programs. Themes from the interviews discussed the value of cultural humility, as well as the role of social justice and restorative justice frameworks when providing art-based programs for parents. The lack of trust, compassion, and empathy were barriers in the process of delivering services to families. Since the creative process is inherently inclusive and actively engages its participants (e.g., therapists, patients, observers), the results of this study point to art creation as a vehicle that promotes trusts and supports family relationship restoration in order to intercept the cycles of intergenerational trauma.

## **DISCLAIMER**

This paper does not reflect the views of Loyola Marymount University nor the Department of Marital and Family Therapy. Prior to data collection, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the research was obtained. Appendices contain IRB letter of approval.

## **DEDICATION**

I wholeheartedly dedicate this research project to my parents, Sara Castillo Lopez and Julio Guillermo Yela. You are my first teachers and I have learned from witnessing your struggles and successes. Thank you for sharing your childhood memories, your migrations stories, and our way of life to survive, work hard, and have gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon our family.

I dedicate this research project to the student who struggles to find their true voice, vulnerably shares their heartfelt experiences, and commits to the work because our communities are calling upon us to show up.

I dedicate this to our children. The seven generations already here and on their way. May we model and mentor as we walk in alignment and in integrity with our higher selves so that we may complete the mission we came to fulfill on this Earth.

To the children who miss their parents and the parents who miss their children, may the compassion to understand our struggle guide the weaver that brings us together in heart, mind, and spirit.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to my family. Hey nephews, hi nieces, hi grand nephew or niece on the way! I love you and sing for you.

Thank you to the friends who encouraged my growth, took me out dancing, sat on my doorstep with me to contemplate life, and for your belief in my ability to complete this educational journey. Thank you for the way you held me in thought and in prayer.

Thank you to the relatives I walk with with on this red road, this beauty way. We are so fortunate. We are so blessed. The medicine of our ancestors is pure love. Our love is great, always.

Thank you to my classmates. For your patience, your kindness, and willingness to learn together so that we may be of service to others. To my part-timers, our careers and families required so much from us, but we did it! We did this for ourselves.

Thank you Genevieve for always welcoming me in your home and for sitting with me for over 16 hours to edit this document. You helped to heal the writer in me.

Thank you Jessica for your patience and guidance to complete this project. Thank you to our professors, for choosing me to be a part of this program, allowing me to question, reminding me to focus, for reaching out when you did with a smile. Thank you for growing as a department as movements for a just world unfolded in front of us. The challenge to respond is constant and you were willing to become vulnerable with us to figure out a collective response as people, as artists, as clinicians, as service providers, and as a department. You held our multidimensionality with grace and it ain't easy. Thank you Helen, for your vision, your generosity, and your commitment and trust in the art.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Signature Page</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Disclaimer</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>List of Drawings, Table and Graph</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
• The Study Topic.....	4
• Significance .....	6
 <b>Background</b> .....	 <b>8</b>
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>10</b>
▪ Mass Incarceration: Intergenerational Family Trauma.....	10
▪ What's Out There?: Parenting Programs, Assessment and Effectiveness .....	12
▪ Art Based Programs in Correctional Facilities.....	17
▪ A Social Justice Praxis through Art Therapy.....	21
 <b>Research Approach</b> .....	 <b>27</b>
<b>Methods</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Definition of Terms	
▪ Cultural Humility	
▪ Restorative Justice	
▪ Healings Approach	
▪ Intergenerational Trauma	

▪ Intersectionality	
▪ Prison Industrial Complex	
▪ School to Prison Pipeline	
▪ Systems of Oppression	
▪ Therapeutic Creative Alliance	
<b>Design of Study</b> .....	32
<b>Results</b> .....	36
Presentation of Data .....	36
▪ Barbara and the Social Justice Theater Project.....	38
▪ The Restorative Justice Family Center .....	46
○ <i>The Role of Restorative Justice</i> .....	49
○ <i>Support and Success</i> .....	54
Analysis of Data .....	58
▪ A Shared Background in Social and Restorative Justice .....	61
▪ Barriers and Walls .....	63
▪ Artist vs. Service Provider .....	66
▪ Trusting the Art.....	70
Meanings.....	73
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	77
<b>Appendices</b> .....	80
<b>References</b> .....	87
<b>Community Resource List</b> .....	91

## LIST OF DRAWINGS, TABLE & GRAPH

### DRAWINGS

Interviewee Art Responses to the following Art Directives:

- **Art Directive #1:** Draw a moment that affirmed the effectiveness of the art process to participant(s) and your work.
- **Art Directive #2:** Draw how it feels when experiencing barriers to your work.
- **Art Directive #3:** Show how it feels when the work is supported.

Barbara: Art Response

AD #1.....	39
AD #2.....	42
AD #3.....	45

Emma: Art Response

AD #1.....	48
AD #2.....	52
AD #3.....	57

Helen: Art Response

AD #1.....	47
AD #2.....	54
AD #3.....	56

Researcher's Art Response: The role of the art therapist.....76

<b>TABLE</b> .....	60
Elements of art responses organized	

<b>GRAPH</b> .....	75
Graph depicting art as the container for multiple relationships that need trust built in for meaningful and healthy alliance in the therapeutic arts process within correctional facilities.	

# INTRODUCTION

## The Study Topic

The emphasis on a punitive system has resulted in mass incarceration of people representing the lower economic class of our society (Kjellstrand and Eddy, 2011). The racial profile of this lower economic echelon is comprised primarily of people of color. Literature on mass incarceration affirms the perpetuation of the negative mental, emotional and behavioral impact on marginalized and vulnerable members of our society inter-generationally (Kjellstrand and Eddy, 2011; Turney, 2014).

J. Kjellstrand states that, “over the past several decades, the most common societal response to crime and poverty in the United States has been incarceration... during this time period [1980’s and 1990’s], the number of incarcerated adults has increased five-fold, from 320,000 to nearly 1.4 million” (2012, p. 2409).

The purpose of this study is to discuss the effectiveness of art-based parenting programs, either in prison settings or re-entry service organizations, as a therapeutic model to address intergenerational trauma and support healthy attachment between parent and child. Two to four representatives from art-based organizations within California that offer services to incarcerated will be contacted to take part in this study. This study explores the following questions to address the effectiveness of the employment of art and art therapy as a therapeutic model by service providers to families impacted by incarceration in support of their reunification.

1. What is the role of art and a social justice and/or restorative justice framework in providing services?
2. What are systemic obstacles or supportive infrastructures to providing art based programs?
3. What are ways in which organizations work with and around these systems?

4. How can these perspectives inform innovative approaches in curriculum and programming by art therapists in order to best be of service to populations suffering from mass incarceration in the United States?

## Significance

The Adolescent Psychotherapy course offered through the Marital and Family Therapy Department at LMU has a component in which art therapy students visit and create an art directive for young women at Eastlake Juvenile Hall. It was during this visit that the young woman I worked with shared that her father was also incarcerated. I began to consider the intergenerational effects of mass incarceration and my role as an art therapist in providing services in the future within a prison setting. This consideration for working with incarcerated populations stems from my upbringing in South Central Los Angeles at the turn of the century when I observed a sudden increase in criminalization and incarceration of young people of color in my community as a result of legislation made at that time.<sup>1</sup> J. Kjellstrand cites that “over the past several decades, the most common societal response to crime in the United States has been incarceration...during this time period, the number of incarcerated adults has increased five-fold, from 320,000 to nearly 1.4 million” (2012, p. 2409).

As a participant in this course, I walked into the Juvenile Hall with an understanding of environmental factors, including poverty, as well as systems of oppression that play a role in the incarceration of young people of color, such as the School to Prison Pipeline (Mallet, 2015). Mallet explains the following in regard to youth most affected and targeted for incarceration:

Most of the young people involved in these harsh discipline systems among the schools and juvenile courts need not be, for they are minimal safety risk concerns. In other words, most students pose little to no threat of harm to other students, their schools, or their communities. However, those students involved in the pipeline, and in particular those who are suspended or expelled from school or subsequently held in juvenile justice facilities, have complicated problems and poor long-term outcomes (Advancement Project et al. 2011). These problems, though, are often part of the explanation for the children and adolescents’ initial involvement in the discipline

---

<sup>1</sup> Juvenile Crime, Initiative Statute, California Voter Pamphlet, p. 131 (2000).

systems: poverty, trauma, mental health difficulties, and/or developmental and cognitive deficits, among others (Mallett, 2015, p. 15).

As an indigenous scholar and art therapist it is important to remember where and how these larger systemic issues occur in the lives of our clients. The creative alliance is an effective therapeutic relationship that occurs with clients because the therapist holds a critical analysis of race and class and how it contributes to mental illnesses and disorders (C. Joseph, 2011). Art therapy is a vehicle where the creative alliance occurs.

As an art therapist and researcher using a qualitative methodology, I connect with organizations, artists and service providers offering art-based programs for parents involved in the criminal justice system. Through semi-structured interviews, I am interested in learning about barriers and supportive elements to the implementation of arts-based programs. Art making is woven into the interviews in order to gather a deeper sense of feelings, thoughts, and perspectives about their work.

Since the creative process is inherently inclusive and actively engages its participants (e.g., therapists, patients, observers), the results of this study point to art creation as a vehicle that promotes trusts and supports family relationship restoration in order to intercept the cycles of intergenerational trauma. The resultant effects of the art process is respected by the participants, and the creation of that artwork engenders trust.

## BACKGROUND

The rise in prison populations and mass incarceration is a characteristic of the United States (Makariev and Shaver, 2010; Kjellstrand and Eddy, 2011; Ng, Sarri, and Stoffregen, 2013; Turney, 2014; Miller and Barnes, 2015). Turney, refers to this as a, “profound alteration of the American kinship system...that spans across generations” and refers to the negative intergenerational outcomes as “collateral consequences of incarceration” (2014, p. 299-300). Unfortunately, most incarcerated individuals are parents and most incarcerated women are mothers (Scudder, A., McNeil, C., Chengappa, K., Costello, A., 2014, and Miller, et al., 2014). The general literature repeatedly demonstrates the negative intergenerational effects of mass incarceration among children who have an incarcerated parent by pointing to the difficulty of educational attainment, social exclusion, stigma, substance abuse, and the exacerbation of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and antisocial behavior (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Miller & Barnes, 2015; Turney, 2014). The study by Ng, et al., found that in their sample of incarcerated youth within the age range of 16 – 29 years old, 56% had a father who had been incarcerated and 28% had a mother who had been incarcerated (2013). Clopton, reports that, “In 1999, 1 in 50 minor children had a parent in a United States prison and 58% were under the age of 10 years old” (2008, p. 195).

The literature indicates a broad range of parent-related programs in corrections facilities including prison nurseries, child visitation, parenting classes, therapeutic services, and reading programs with recorded audio of incarcerated parents sent to their children (Clopton, 2008; Scudder, et al. 2014). These programs are important for children because they can help to “alleviate negative feelings associated with the separation [of incarceration] such as guilt and rejection, and be important in the process of family reunification”(Clopton, 2008, p. 196). However, as someone in the field of art therapy, I am interested in finding ways in which parent programs combined with art programs can serve families during incarceration.

Within a prison setting, art-based programs and art therapy are effective in creating a safe space for individuals to identify trauma through feelings, ideas, and past histories that they otherwise would not be able to express. (D. Gussak, 2008; B. Levy, 1978; B. Merriam, 1998) D. Gussak reports that, “creating art also provides inmates a form of communication when the ability to express what it is they are actually feeling eludes them” (2004, p. 36). The literature elucidates ways in which art making and the therapeutic alliance can be useful for parents, children, and families affected by the intergenerational trauma of mass incarceration.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Literature review indicates how mass incarceration has disproportionately affected the lives of poor and working class families of color in the United States. The review continues by discussing traumatic intergenerational effects on families who are caught up in correctional institutions. Parenting programs are then reviewed, discussing how they are assessed for effectiveness in serving incarcerated parents. Art-based programs in correctional facilities are also included in this review, pointing out to their unique forms of effecting change and offering therapeutic safe spaces. Finally, the literature ends by discussing a social justice praxis within the field of art therapy. This section notes how other practitioners place their identity and therapeutic relationship with their clients within a social justice lens.

### **Mass Incarceration: Intergenerational Family Trauma**

Since the politics of the Nixon era, a systemic and institutional criminalization of poor people of color has led to an unforeseen rate of incarceration that has taken over the United States (Turney, 2014). The U.S. currently houses the most prisoners of any country in the world. The rise in prison populations through mass incarceration is a characteristic of the United States (Makariev and Shaver, 2010; Kjellstrand and Eddy, 2011; Ng, Sarri, and Stoffregen, 2013; Turney, 2014; Miller and Barnes, 2015). Turney, 2014 refers to this as a “profound alteration of the American kinship system...that spans across generations,” (p. 299) and refers to the negative intergenerational outcomes as “collateral consequences of incarceration” (p. 300). Ng, et. al., discuss the “long term unintended negative consequences” of mass incarceration with nearly 2.3% of the U.S. child population who has an incarcerated parent as of 2009, which is equal to about 1.7 million children (2013). Miller and Barnes, 2015 share their data findings that there is a disproportionate racial rate of incarceration showing that 7% of black children and

0.8% of white children have a parent who is incarcerated. Researchers call the consequences of racial inequity in mass incarceration as something “unintended”. However, the literature fails to directly speak about judicial racial bias of mass incarceration.

Poverty is a common environmental factor present in the lives of incarcerated persons. The longitudinal studies discussed by Kjellstrand and Eddy, 2011, “Linking the Interest of Families and Teachers”, and the “Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study”, by Turney, 2014 discuss poverty as a common shared background among incarcerated individuals. Miller and Barnes, report on research that indicates economic instability, unemployment, and deprivation for those who have an incarcerated parent (2015). Poverty and neighborhood decline, unhealthy parenting, absence of parenting from previous generations, and substance abuse were also issues present in the lives of persons prior to incarceration (Makariev and Shaver, 2010; Kjellstrand and Eddy, 2011; Ng, Sarri, and Stoffregen, 2013). Kjellstrand et. al., indicates that of the families with an incarcerated mother, “nearly half (45.6%) were living in poverty prior to incarceration” (2012, p.2413). Based on the aforementioned literature it can be surmised that both poverty and judicial racial bias can be inter-generationally linked and related to incarceration.

The consequences of mass incarceration and the direct correlation of negative outcomes onto children with incarcerated parents are vast and multidimensional. The general literature repeatedly discuss the negative consequences on children including problems at school, delinquency, and/or antisocial behavior is also linked to future criminal behavior and incarceration (Kjellstrand and Eddy, 2011).

The study by Ng, et al., found that in their sample of incarcerated youth within the age range of 16 – 29 years old, 56% had a father who had been incarcerated, and 28% had a mother who had been incarcerated (2013). Fifty-three percent of these same young incarcerated men reported having children themselves. Through the reading of the general literature, three to four generations are discussed as being impacted by the culture of mass

incarceration in the United States (Kjellstrand, et.al, 2012; Kejjellstrand and M. Eddy, 2011; Miller, 2015; S. Riley, 1990; Turney, 2014). The socio-economic, emotional, and familial issues are massive and it begs our attention to address the intergenerational consequences at a humanistic and interpersonal level as well as at a macro policy level regarding prison and punishment in our society.

The separation caused by incarceration is emotionally devastating to families. The young men who participated in the study by Ng, et al., had grown up in single-parent family household, were on public assistance and/or in the foster care system (2010). Sometimes they were moved from foster care to residential placements and finally into correctional institutions. This intergenerational transmission of not having parents is everlasting. Ng, et al., report in a later study that a “majority of the male respondents with children indicated that they expect to have little future contact with their children” (2013, p. 442). Their study calls for intervention that addresses the attachment between parent and child because the effects of incarceration stretch across generations. Interventions addressing attachment can help to build more secure attachment between children and incarcerated parents (Ng, et al., 2013).

### **What’s Out There?: Parenting Programs, Assessment and Effectiveness**

Most incarcerated individuals are parents and most incarcerated women are mothers (Scudder, C.McNeil, K. Chengappa, A. Costello, Miller, et al., 2014). Clopton, reports that, “In 1999, 1 in 50 minor children had a parent in a United States prison and 58% were under the age of 10 years old” (2008, p. 195). Parenting programs in prison settings offer the potential to serve children who are affected by incarceration and can help to “alleviate negative feelings associated with the separation such as guilt and rejection, and be important in the process of family reunification” (Clopton, 2008, p. 196). The literature indicates a broad range of parent related programs in corrections facilities including prison nurseries, child visitation, parenting

classes, therapeutic services, and reading programs with recorded audio of incarcerated parents sent to their children (Clopton, 2008; Scudder, et al. 2014).

During the literature review, three parenting programs that took place in prison settings stood out. Course makeup and evaluation tools are discussed in each program.

1. A parenting class in a correctional facility in Virginia modeled from Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), an evidence based intervention for the treatment of externalizing behavior problems among children and enhancement of parenting practices in families with a history of child physical abuse (Scudder, et al. 2014).
2. A Parenting class adapted from a Partnerships in Parenting manual which was designed for eight, weekly, 120 minute meetings that program staff used to meet the needs of mothers in a correctional facility in Virginia (Scudder, et al. 2014).
3. The Parenting While Incarcerated curriculum based on the Strengthening Families Program, conducted in an Arizona jail, collaborated with a community organization to deliver programming. The pilot program was evaluated with the intention of changing curriculum in order to meet the needs of participants (Miller, et al., 2014).

The PCIT program consisted of role-plays, behavioral rehearsal, and parenting skills knowledge transfer. Seven classes were held with group practices where participants rotated between role of parent, child, and an observer coding interactions. An instructor also rotated among groups and provided feedback and parent coaching skills. There were 12-15 participants in each group, and the instructors leading were persons with a Masters degree in Psychology and undergraduate student assistants. Although higher levels of parenting skills and treatment satisfaction resulted in the evaluation of the program, almost 74% of parents did not have a visitation with their children throughout the course of the parenting classes (Scudder, et al., 2014).

The existing parenting class, was educationally based with curriculum derived from the Department of Education's, Partnerships in Parenting manual, by staff from the correctional facility who adapted it to the prison setting. It also had instructor-led discussions, videos, and homework assignments such as "How to Deal with Forgiveness". Each class also held 12-15 participants with instructors holding an unspecified Masters Degree and an assistant from a person who had previously completed the class. The topics covered in these classes were the following: "self-esteem, communication, discipline versus punishment, family origins, family rules and responsibilities, domestic violence and children, child abuse and going home" (Scudder, et al., 2014).

Both parenting courses were evaluated through the use of the following assessments and Pre- and Post Tests: Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction Coding System III, Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory, Parenting Stress Index, Child Abuse Potential Inventory, and Therapy Attitude Inventory. Results indicated that the parenting class showed higher levels of knowledge of child development than mothers who participated in the PCIT based class. Mothers in both classes demonstrated significant decrease in total stress as well as a decrease in "abuse potential" that measured empathy as well as belief in corporal punishment. Both these courses were skills based but were not trauma or treatment focused (Scudder, et. al., 2014).

Parenting While Incarcerated was a pilot-parenting program conducted at a women's jail in Arizona (Miller, et. al., 2014). The curriculum paid attention to the needs of the participants and tailored the program accordingly. Pre- and Post incentivized surveys were conducted in order to evaluate the program. These evaluations included an 11-item survey that was read out loud to eliminate any lack of accessibility through literacy. Literacy access to complete surveys were not mentioned in the evaluation process of the previously mentioned parenting classes. Questions on the surveys included items such as, "whether or not the participant would recommend the program, if they felt the group leader cared about the participant, and also how much they believed the program helped them" (Miller, et. al. 2014, p. 165). A measurement tool

used in this pilot program was the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory, assessing attitudes for child maltreatment (Miller, et. al., 2014).

The results were positive, influencing the curriculum for follow up programming. Women reported high levels of satisfaction with the program. Three of the top classes that parents reported were helpful were; how to discipline children without spanking, improving communication skills, and building strong parent-child relationships despite separation. Other recommendations included requesting more classes and session length extension. This demonstrates that participants were invested in the learning process, course content met the needs of participants to the extent that they valued their time in the courses. New content added to the curriculum by way of pilot participant recommendations included sessions on behavior change, coping with addiction, and how to manage anger and stress. Issues of custody were also brought up throughout the time of the class courses. Of special note, group classes both began and ended with rituals such as poetry. These classes also provided journaling materials and stationary materials, both useful for self-reflection and parent communication with their children. Parent participants were provided with information on developmental stages of children. This particular program was co-facilitated by a community-based organization who remained unnamed throughout the article, but provided insight into the needs of families after being released. Through the collaboration there was a very humanistic, client-led approach to running this parenting program. The course even provided a certificate of graduation, which showed participants they were regarded and valued for their time and participation in the program (Miller, et. al, 2014).

Parent programs may be therapeutic and/or educational in order to build rapport, positive relationships, and serve its participants. For example, providing stationary through parenting programs is a simple yet relevant form of supporting parent-child relationship by facilitating communication (Clopton, 2008; Miller, et al. 2014; Scudder, et al., 2014). Other means of communication are very costly, including the visitation due to transportation, meals, and housing costs. It is reported that over 60% of parents in State prisons and almost 85% in

Federal prisons are housed in a correctional facility that are more than 100 miles from their residence and 53% of parents in Federal prisons are more than 500 miles away (Clopton, 2008). Communicating over the phone is also costly which can “add up to \$200 to \$600 a month”(Clopton, 2008, p. 197). A component for consideration within parenting programs would be one that aids in the traveling and housing costs for family members and children who are committed to maintaining relationships with incarcerated family members and would benefit from this support.

Research indicates that maintaining positive communication is valuable, popular, and relevant for incarcerated parents (Clopton, 2008; Miller, et. al., 2014; Scudder, et. al, 2014). Assessments of the first two parenting programs showed that the highest level of interest in receiving information through parenting classes was related to communication in which they explicitly asked for support in “writing an appropriate and encouraging letter to children of various ages, learning how to make a phone call go well, or improving the quality of parent-child interactions during facility visitation,” (Scudder et al., 2014, p. 239). In Miller, et al. curriculum topics for parenting classes in a jail setting, two courses are specifically designed to address communication (2010). Class during Week 7 is titled, “Communication I: Better Relationships”, and Week 8 is titled “Communication II: Communicating from a distance and parent impact on children”. It shows they are invested in learning how to maintain a positive relationship despite institutional separation (Miller, et. al., 2014; Scudder, et. al, 2014).

In the Kjellstand, et al. report, findings indicated that parenting programs should also address issues related to reintegration after prisons release, “parenting programs ... need to consider not only how to assist parents in developing or refining parenting skills in general and how to be a parent in the context of incarceration, but also on skills and strategies to positively re-enter and engage with their communities, families, and children after release.” (2012, p. 2413) Furthermore, Kjellstand, et al., lists a number of services that parents can benefit from post-incarceration:

- securing housing
- opportunities to pursue education or job skills training and finding a job
- support in refraining from destructive use of drugs and alcohol
- support towards avoiding abusive or detrimental relationships, in other words helping parents to identify healthy relationships with self and others
- access to mental health services (2012)

The construction of a supportive web with wrap around services and referrals are necessary to give parents a chance at parenting successfully once they are on the outside (Clopton, 2008; Kjellstrand, 2012; Miller, et. al., 2014). Scudder, et al., also adds, child contact programs and community-based parenting programs as recommendations for services following parole (2014).

Although many topics, issues, therapies, and approaches have been discussed in the literature, preventing incarceration and lowering the rates of incarceration at a local, state, and federal level would ultimately be the most cost-effective and humanistic manner of addressing the intergenerational trauma, separation, and exacerbation cycles of poverty due to mass incarceration. Kjellstrand, et. al, finalizes his report with the following conclusion, “The situations surrounding parental incarceration are complex. Our responses need to recognize this complexity, and address the needs in as cost-effective way as possible” (2012, p. 2414). The aftermath of incarceration weighs heavily against child and family wellbeing. Literature suggests that State sanctioned punishment to address criminal behavior and mental illness in our society is detrimental for future generations (Miller, 2015; Ng, et. al., 2013; Turney, 2014)

## **Arts Based Programs in Correctional Facilities**

Throughout the literature on art therapy programs in prison settings, a direct emphasis on family, communication and parent-child relationships was missing. Instead art therapy programs addressed trauma, anger, behavior, and art as an outlet for emotions that otherwise

would remain undisclosed (B. Levy, 1978; D. Gussak, 2008; B. Merriam, 1998). Within the “therapeutic” context, familial issues were explored as they related to an inmates history of trauma (B. Merriam, 1998). In a study of the effects on art therapy with inmates, D. Gussak reports that art therapy also helped to increase a person’s locus of control and decrease depression (2008). Arts-based programs also seem to be focused more on individual outcomes such as strengthening participant self confidence, increasing communication and expression, improving mood and attitudes, and reduction of recidivism rates (K. Dunphy, 1999; D. Gussak, 2004 & 2008).

Within a prison setting, art-based programs and art therapy are effective in creating a safe space for individuals to name and identify feelings, ideas, and past histories that they otherwise would not be able to address (D. Gussak, 2008; B. Levy, 1978; B. Merriam, 1998) D. Gussak reports that, “creating art also provides inmates a form of communication when the ability to express what it is they are actually feeling eludes them” (2004, p. 36). Gussak shares an example of a man in prison who was unable to share his physical illness, lupus, to others while in prison out of fear for appearing too vulnerable within a prison environment. However, during an art group,

“He used the art piece to help him find the words to explain how he felt, and to talk about what he did not understand. He indicated that he felt better after completing the mask; he was more open to talking about his illness, and was able to discuss his future. By the time he was paroled, he was in compliance with his diet and medical care; he was more attentive with the doctors about how to take care of himself, and when he left he had established a plan for his future” (2004, p.37).

Art therapy lends itself to non-verbal expression, which can facilitate a person’s ability to disclose and share within the therapeutic space. B. Merriam, art therapist who works with incarcerated women, concludes in her article that, “Art therapy provides many benefits for incarcerated women by offering autonomy, strengthening self-esteem and providing a safe and

acceptable way of releasing feelings such as anger and aggression. Art therapy as a non-verbal form of communication and expression can be important for this population of highly traumatized women whose unspeakable feelings often lead to emotional withdrawal and isolation or the practice of destructive, tension-releasing activities (1998, p.169).

Art programs in correctional facilities are able to tap into participant's sense of self-worth in a positive manner due to the ability to learn, gain skills, and create something whether it is an object or taking part in a performance (K. Dunphy, 1999, G. Hamilton 2009). In a study of an art program named "Keeping the Faith" near Seattle, Washington, it was noted that, "participants reported increased self-esteem as a result of mastery of new-skills. They enjoyed having a positive outlet for their physical energy... it was particularly valuable for those inmates with less developed verbal and written expressive skills", (K. Dunphy 2004). An encouraging note within the literature is the way in which arts programs are intuitively sought after models for rehabilitation in prison settings (G. Hillman, 2009).

The use of art is an acceptable use of expression by both institutions and incarcerated individuals (D. Gussak, 2004; G. Hillman, 2009). D. Gussak states that, "using art permits the inmate to express him or herself in a manner acceptable to both the inside and outside culture" (2004, p. 36). Art seems to be a relatively safe manner of expression in which status can also be self-made upon the quality of someone's artistic work (D. Gussak, 2004). G. Hillman, a director of a community arts program in Texas, worked in juvenile halls and other prison settings through out the 1980's and 1990's. He found that institutions were more open and inclined to contract artists to work with inmates. His understanding of this relationship between prisons and art is that, "A general understanding that the arts practice has an intrinsic therapeutic value, the observation by corrections professionals that incarcerated juveniles create art as a response to their detention and that they express a strong interest in art making, and finally arts programs are low cost" (2009, p. 5). These reports by art therapists and arts-based educators give hopeful

reports in terms of continuing to explore and create curriculum for prison settings where art is used for therapeutic and positive forms of expression.

Also noteworthy for institutional consideration is arts rehabilitative nature in reducing tension within the prison, increasing positive behavior outcomes, and in addressing recidivism rates (K. Dunphy, 1999; D. Gussak, 2004, 2008; G. Hillman, 2008). D. Gussak reports during the study of an interdisciplinary model that included arts, education, and wellness that the, “pilot program had been a significant tool for institutional safety as seen through the increase in program participation and a reduction in incident rates and disciplinary reports for those who participated in the program” (2004, p.42). Hillman also reports that that “studies suggest that art programs with offender populations not only reduced the incidence rate of misbehavior within institutions, but had long-term transformative impact on post-release behavior” (2009, p.5).

Literature reveals that parent programs and art-based programs in correctional facilities seek similar outcomes in terms of improved behaviors and positive well-being, but are written about in the literature with different measured outcomes. An interdisciplinary approach to providing family art therapy in a prison setting could prove to be a powerful tool in affecting change in individuals, families, and children. It is suggested in the literature that art-based programs can also benefit from a therapeutic approach. K. Dunphy noted in her study of *Keeping the Faith*, a performance, writing, and art based program that the, “program staff were not therapists and it was beyond the scope of the program to deal with issues of deep concern in an ongoing way. For successful resolution or healing of inmates concerns, adjunctive therapy sessions would need to be offered” (1999, p. 42). The parenting program in Arizona, *Parenting While Incarcerated*, also noted that therapists would be beneficial in the parenting classes. Miller, et. al., states, “parenting intervention for jailed mothers that include counseling and treatment for addiction, mental health, trauma, and/or other medical conditions may be beneficial (2014, p. 168). The literature leads me to believe that art therapists can provide a conduit in facilitating and meeting the needs of incarcerated individuals by providing both art

and therapy. An art therapist is able to serve uniquely, yet effectively, as both artist and as therapist. Art therapists' identity and therapeutic alliance is further discussed in the following section on social justice praxis within prison settings.

## **A Social Justice Praxis Through Art Therapy**

Art therapist with a social justice praxis provide the therapeutic arts as social action to increase the access to healing individual inner change in support of outer change among disadvantaged groups (F. Kaplan, 2005). Due to systemic social and economic dynamics in which race, class, and cultures become targets of oppression, programs that seek to serve impoverished classes and working class communities must maintain this commitment to social justice in our practice (K. Frostig, 2011, C. Joseph, 2011). Systemic oppression is contributing to traumas, pathologies, and mental health disorders (C. Joseph, 2011). Therefore, as some of the literature suggest, we have a duty as mental health professionals to understand environmental contributions, systemic inequities, and historical traumas that disproportionately affect clients and patients within underserved communities that seek or are "ordered" to participate in mental health services (K. Dunphy, 1999; K. Frostig, 2011; C. Joseph, 2011). When we interface with clients as art therapists and begin to build rapport, the therapeutic alliance is as important as implementing effective programs for vulnerable populations (C. Joseph, 2011). Frostig states, "Art therapy has deepened my understanding of how systems work, how to network between groups, how to empathically approach different populations, and how to develop inclusive conversations surrounding areas of conflict... The genuine pursuit of social justice linked to critical methodologies and actions enabling agency will keep the work honest" (2011, pg. 56).

Within our training programs, building and sustaining a genuine therapeutic relationship with our clients is emphasized as an important element in the work to affect change with our

clients, (C. Joseph 2011; L. Gipson, 2015). The therapeutic relationship within a social justice framework is discussed by Cliff Joseph, an art therapist who participated early in the foundation of the field of art therapy and uses the term “creative alliance” to describe an art based and psychotherapeutic alliance with our clients:

A therapist should understand their clients social, economic, and cultural world, as well as the patients psychodynamic conflicts. Hostile schools, an unjust justice system, underpaid work, poor housing, and a variety of other problems bring stress to threaten otherwise stable personalities. A creative alliance between therapist and client can nurture the learning necessary for overcoming the enemy/illness with all its dimensions.  
(p.33)

Populations within a prison system are the ultimate example of people that have been hit by a myriad of systems that have been endangered, traumatized, and relegated to a marginalized place in society (C. Joseph, 2011). Education systems, foster care systems, welfare systems, judicial systems, and the prison industrial complex continuously produce painful narratives for individuals within poor communities and/or communities of color (Kjellstrand, et.al., 2012; Miller and Barnes, 2015; Turney, 2014). As therapists, we also walk with diverse experiences and intersections of identity. However, holding an awareness of our own privileges along with an analysis of the systems that create and sustain privilege and power dynamics that may be present for our clients is essential to creating a working therapeutic alliance (C. Joseph, 2011). It is in this awareness and knowledge that we can advocate for our clients and build trust while engaging in the therapeutic work.

Cultural competency is taught in universities as part of our training programs and lead toward our practice as mental health clinicians. Leah Gipson, poses the following questions as an educator within an art therapy program in Chicago, Illinois:

Can art therapy educators confidently believe in the components of cultural competency – knowledge, skills, and awareness- to make the invisible veil visible? Can teaching cultural competency prepare students to raise critical consciousness and resist systemic oppression? If the field truly embraces social justice, our training should equip students to reach new understandings of their identities in relationship to systems of domination and dehumanization, and to formulate useful alternatives in solidarity with targeted communities. Approaching social justice in art therapy requires a more complex engagement with social issues than an introduction to new terminology and recognition of privilege. (2015, p.142)

The veil refers to what Frostig also defines as, “power and privilege that lead to social dysfunction and social injustice (2011, p.52). As mental health professionals, we cannot ignore the impact of this political cloud over the mental well being of individuals and society at large. Which is why we need to question if “cultural competency” (knowledge, skills and awareness for issues of culture) avoids justice in our field of work (L. Gipson, 2015).

Karen Frostig, art therapist in Massachusetts, also discusses this relationship between therapist and client through the concept of critical attunement, “derived from mutual regard and may be understood as a method of working with marginalized, disempowered people and communities in order to restore agency and transformation” (2011, p.52). This practice is similar to Cliff Joseph’s therapeutic alliance to see illness and systemic oppressions as an “enemy” to the patient.. Frostig, uses her methodology and approach through attunement to “find the common ground of conflict, empathy, and activism” in order to name systems of oppression in our society (2011, p. 52). The praxis can come in many forms but creating trust through identification of the patient’s historical, environmental and social impacts remains critical to the work.

When organizing curriculum, maintaining a social justice framework becomes easier through practice, intention, and thoughtfulness or as L. Lu and F. Yuen mention, “Finding a

process that would meet all the intersecting needs required a mixture of coincidence, consultation, reflection, and creative adaption” (2012, p. 193). There is value in create dialogue and spaces to empower clients through leadership opportunities while in the therapeutic space (Miller, et.al, 2014; Lu and Yuen, 2012). This may also be experienced through group therapy and group process work.

Through the Parenting While Incarcerated program that was tailored for women in a jail, Miller, et al., goals were set to specifically gather information and evaluations from participants that influenced the curriculum during its implementation (2004). New content was generated through this process that called for the implementation of class topics that participants most identified with. This positively affected the effectiveness of the program because the mothers were able to request specific information such as coping skills for stress, addiction, and positive communication outcomes. Of special note, is that mothers also expressed concern about how their children were coping with their own emotions regarding their mother’s incarceration. Authors note that by explicitly sharing with clients that their opinions and experience matter to the extent that they will influence the program and its implementation would be an act of social justice, empowerment, build leadership, and tap into knowledge that would increase the effectiveness of therapeutic efforts (Miller, et.al., 2014). L. Lu and F. Yuen, refer to this as relationship building, “which is the main approach to developing trust” (2012, p.32).

Literature also posits that other means of developing trust, creating empowerment, and encouraging leadership is by using the natural talents, skills, and expertise of clients to lead in ritual openings and closure in the therapeutic work (L. Lu and F. Yuen, 2012). Often times this activity is culturally and/or spiritually based and it is important for clinicians to stay open and ask clients for their feedback and ideas for opening and closing a safe therapeutic space that clients can own. A beautiful example of an opening ritual and cultural reclamation is shared in the work by L. Lu and F. Yuen in a project and scholarly article titled, “Journey Women: Art Therapy in a Decolonizing Framework of Practice”:

I ask if someone would like to open the circle by smudging...each woman who decides to smudge has her own way of bringing the smudge smoke over her body just as each has learned different teachings regarding this process. The woman bearing the smudge bowl leads us in a prayer as we hold hands in a circle. She wishes us well on beginning our body-mapping journey to give us strength to tell our stories. The women who have brought their drums lead us in a song; some women know it well, while others hum or follow along. We laugh together when there is pause of uncertainty and then continue singing. A woman says, "There are no elders here to tell us what the right protocol is," so the women go with what feels right in their hearts. They support each other and share the process of ceremony. As they claim their own stories through body-mapping, the women also empower themselves to claim their cultural traditions that may or may not always feel familiar due to a variety of reasons that have kept them away from native traditions – mixed family backgrounds, impact of residential schools, history of living in foster care. For many it is a journey of reclamation. (2012, p.194)

The literature suggests that this process was important to establishing a client defined safe space that honored their knowledge and experience, which can easily stretch beyond the knowledge and training of a mental health professional within a western medical model and yet still be relevant and effective in the therapeutic work.

Another form of empowerment that can extend beyond the therapeutic room is the process of how we create space for witnessing (Lu and Yuen, 2012). Frostig sees empowerment as a transformative process that is, "evidenced by a palpable shift in behavior or acknowledgement by an audience" (2011, p. 52). In Lucy Lu and Felice Yuen's work of body-mapping with indigenous women, she discusses the effect of bringing the art created in the therapeutic space out into the public for both the participants and the community who attended a gallery event of the art work:

The exhibit offered a space for a decolonizing process to occur where the artists could externalize their inner pain and have it witnessed by the community as a collective

hurt embedded in colonial history... render(ing) them visible on multiple levels. Attention to the artwork and an active witnessing of the individual provided the potential for a deep understanding of the artist's experience so that the meaning was created from the act of honoring her journey. Initially, the artist was her own witness, which was followed by the therapist, the researcher, and the other artists involved in the project also giving witness. Eventually, the circle widened to include the public viewers and other interested Aboriginal communities; it will continue to widen as readers learn about this work. The art creation and subsequent exhibition initiated a building of circles of connection, and even you as a reader become a part of these circles. (2012 ,p.198)

This article points out the impact of the intentional process of witnessing individuals and communities as an act of empowerment. Storytelling and art making is a vulnerable act yet courage is gained in the ability to share, be heard, and be seen (Frostig, 2011).

The literature demonstrates that the need is great for impoverished populations who are marginalized and cycle through the prison industrial complex (G. Hillman, 2008; Ng and Sarri, 2013). Social safety nets and preventative measures before someone is punished, as well as receiving effective programs that are tailored to the needs of incarcerated populations, and wrap around services that are accessible when someone leaves the institution could play a role in interrupting the intergenerational effects of incarceration (Clopton, 2008; Kjellstrang, et.al., 2012; Miller, 2014). Art-based programs create a space that empowers individuals, addresses trauma, and enables survivors to tell their story.(K. Dunphy, 1999; Frostig, 2011; Lu & Yuen, 2012). As evidenced through the literature, the work of the art therapist within a prison setting can have a positive ripple effect.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

I have chosen a qualitative research approach to guide this project. In her discussion regarding quantitative and qualitative approaches for art therapists, Marcia Rosal (1998) contends the importance of both approaches to the field of art therapy. In Rosal's article, "Research Thoughts: Learning from Experience", Rosal discusses the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches and I resonate with her statement that, "quantitative research is based on hierarchical, mainstream, empirical, and bias-free assumptions and qualitative research is based on understanding context and places the researcher as an active participant in the context" (1998, p.48). During the beginning phase of constructing and reviewing the literature, I had perceived the qualitative approach as the most intuitive way of conducting the work, analyzing the research, and ultimately being able to write in a way that would be the most natural to me as an academic.

Furthermore, Rosal reports that art therapy authors "agreed that qualitative research is a better fit for art therapists than quantitative research because of the subjective, artistic nature of the work" (1998, p.48). As stated previously, this research project is strongly influenced by my personal experience, opinions, and the need for interrupting perpetuation of intergenerational trauma through mass incarceration. This research allows us an opportunity to consider the subjective experience of selected participants for this study.

Sarah Deaver (2002) also discusses the application of quantitative versus qualitative research approaches within the field of art therapy. Although there is a strong validation for the use of scientific quantitative approach, she states that, "Those characterized by impressions, thoughtful analysis of observed themes, and reflections-in other words, characterized by the subjective responses of the researcher and research participants to the problem or situation under investigation-are defined as 'qualitative' " (2002, p.24.). That which is under investigation for this project is the effectiveness of arts based programming for incarcerated parents. An

intention during interviews will be to ask about institutional issues that may impede, affect and/or support arts-based programs. I also seek to find out from participant's personal accounts what makes art-based approaches effective.

In preparation for this research, much work has been done to contextualize the importance of this topic. Jane Edwards argues that, "One of the expert skills needed for the qualitative report is the ability to contextualize the research" (2016, p. A1). The research is contextualized by linking social and systemic issues that affect incarcerated parents and their children. I am encouraged to do this work from a qualitative approach because, "It is about referring to the intellectual and cultural space in which the researcher's thinking and interpretation takes place, and the intersections and interplay between these" (Edwards 2016, p.A1).

## METHODS

### Definition of Terms

- Cultural Humility

“Cultural humility reflects an other-oriented stance, which is marked by openness, curiosity, lack of arrogance, and genuine desire to understand clients’ cultural identities (Hook et.al., 2013). Therapists with high levels of cultural humility rarely assume competence, but rather approach clients with respectful openness and explore collaboratively the client’s cultural identities. initial research has shown that cultural humility may be an important characteristic for working effectively with diverse clients.”

Owen, J., Tao, K. W., Drinane, J. M., Hook, J., Davis, D. E., & Kune, N. F. (2016). Client perceptions of therapists’ multicultural orientation: Cultural (missed) opportunities and cultural humility. *Professional Psychology: Research And Practice*, 47(1), 30-37.

- Restorative Justice

“As it has developed in the criminal justice system, restorative justice seeks to provide, perhaps for the first time, a much clearer framework for restitution, in which offences can be punished, but within a context where the relationship damaged by the offence is the priority and based on the premise that this damaged relationship can and should be repaired and that the offending individual can and should be reintegrated, not only for the good of that individual but also for that of the community as a whole. “

McCluskey, G., Lloyd, G., Stead, J., Kane, J., Riddell, S., & Weedon, E. (2008). 'I was dead restorative today': From restorative justice to restorative approaches in school. *Cambridge Journal Of Education*, 38(2), 199-216.

- Healings Approach

“Many social problems are associated with disconnection from the traditional cultural rituals and spiritual ways of being and doing. The biomedical model dissects health into compartments that usually ignore emotional or spiritual wellbeing. For example, the therapist-client classical structure can make a client feel there is a power imbalance, and render the client feeling ‘less than’ the therapist and also not in control of their capacity to initiate their own healing journey”. (T. Delauny, 2013). A healings approach creates cultural safety and uses indigenous healing tools to assist persons and family members on their healing journey.”

Delauny, T. (2013) Fractured Culture: Educare as a Healing Approach to Indigenous Trauma. *International Journal of Science in Society*, 4, p. 53-62.

-

- Intergenerational Trauma

“Intergenerational trauma is trauma passed down by family members and through generations (Atkinson 2002). Intergenerational trauma is often expressed as violence, excessive drug and alcohol abuse, and even poor health, and high rates of injury, death and imprisonment (Atkinson C 2007).” (T. Delauny, 2013)

Delauny, T. (2013) Fractured Culture: Educare as a Healing Approach to Indigenous Trauma. *International Journal of Science in Society*, 4, p. 53-62.

- Intersectionality

“The term “intersectionality” was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the multidimensionality of lived experiences of women of color in contexts of sexism and racism. Crenshaw argues that an understanding of either system, or even of both systems in parallel, does not explain their interactions. Instead, she urges an understanding of how racism and sexism reinforce and complicate each other.” (D. Shalasko, 2015)

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, 139–167.

Shalasko, D. (2015) . Using the Five Faces of Oppression to Teach about Interlocking Systems of Oppression. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 48, p. 349-360.

- Prison Industrial Complex

“The Prison Industrial Complex is a term that allows for reliable identification of a complex interlocking web of institutions that extends outward beyond any one jail or prison into the larger political economy and loops back to the thousands of jails and prisons that house men and women for crimes for which they have been convicted—guilty or not. We argue elsewhere (Hattery and Smith, 2008) that under the rubric of the PIC incarceration has little to do with rehabilitation or deterrence and much to do with the detention, removal and exploitation of labor” (E. Smith & A. Hattery, 2010).

Smith, E. & Hattery, A. (2010). African-American Men and the Prison Industrial Complex. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 34(4), p. 387-398.

- School to Prison Pipeline

“The United States school districts and juvenile courts were never intended to operate in a collaborative paradigm. Unfortunately, over the past 30 years a partnership among schools and courts has developed through a punitive and harmful framework, to the detriment of many vulnerable children and adolescents. This phenomenon is often referred to as the “school-to-prison pipeline” (Kang-Brown et al. 2013) or “school pathways to the juvenile justice system” (Marsh 2014). This pipeline is best understood as a set of policies and

practices in schools that make it more likely that students face criminal involvement with the juvenile courts than attain a quality education (Advancement Project et al. 2011).” (C. Mallet, 2016, p. 15).

Mallet, C. (2015). The School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Critical Review of the Punitive Paradigm Shift. *Children Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 33, 15-24.

- Systems of Oppression

Systems of oppression, such as racism, heterosexism, ableism, and so on, are systemic, directional power relationships among social identity groups, in which one group benefits at the expense of other groups

Bell, L., & Griffin, P. (2007). Teaching for diversity and social justice (2nd ed.). New York, NY:Routledge.

- Therapeutic Creative Alliance

A creative alliance between therapist and client can nurture the learning necessary for overcoming the enemy/illness within all its dimensions. The therapist should understand the client's social, economic and cultural world, as well as the patient's psychodynamic conflicts. (C. Joseph, 2011, p. 32-33)

Joseph, C. (2006). Creative Alliance: The Healing Power of Art Therapy. *Art Therapy*, 23(1), 30-33.

## Design of Study

The focus of this research will look at effective and creative components in art-based programs for incarcerated parents and their children. I will interview representatives from organizations that provide art-based programs to parents who are incarcerated . The interview will be recorded and transcribed and will include art directives. Through the interview and art responses, areas will be identified that may impede, affect and/or support arts-based programs' implementation.. Participants will be either male or female consenting adults who are over the age of 18 years. Two to four participants will be selected according to their work and career in art-based programs for incarcerated parents.

### *1. Sampling*

The following is a list of identified organizations that potentially provide an art-based program to incarcerated parents within the state of California:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ▪ California Arts Council              | ▪ The Actors Gang                               |
| ▪ Center for Restorative Justice Works | ▪ Theatre Workers Project                       |
| ▪ Friends Outside Los Angeles Co.      | ▪ Youth Justice Coalition                       |
| ▪ Liberated Arts Collective            | ▪ Welcome Home LA                               |
| ▪ Roots and Wings Project              | ▪ William James Association Prison Arts Project |
| ▪ Street Poets                         |   |

I will reach out to each organizations to discuss my study and if they would be interested in participating. I will provide the following information to the organizations reached:

- an introduction of the researcher
- the purpose of the study
- interview process for qualitative research gathering
- description of the use of art directives and art materials in data gathering
- information regarding consent and confidentiality

Interested participants will need to write a letter of participation in order to fulfill requirements for approval of the Institutional Review Board.

## *2. Gathering of Data*

The gathering of data will be overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Therefore, when the Participation Letter is returned, I will provide the subject with an Informed Letter of Consent in order to confirm participation. Upon receiving consent from a participant, I will follow up to schedule an interview that will be audio recorded. Art directives will be a part of the interview process in order to capture more in-depth content of the participant's thoughts, feelings, and perspective. An art directive includes the following choice of materials: construction paper, markers, glue sticks, and scissors. The art response will inform the researcher on the felt experience being inquired about and used as part of the data, findings and conclusions. As the interviews are completed, I will move forward by creating an art response to the interview session in order to document my experience and facilitate informing my conclusions.

The interview will take place in the location of the participant's organization. Interview will be about an hour in length with research-focused questions in a semi-structured interview. Through research-focused questions, participants will be invited to reflect on the motivations for their work, the approach they use, as well as recommendations for mental health service providers in working with this population. The following is the list of research-focused questions along with art directives for the semi-structured interviews:

1. Share the story of how you became involved in this work?
2. How and why is an art-based approach used in your program?

**Art Directive #1:** Draw a moment that affirmed the effectiveness of the art process to participant(s) and your work?

3. How has the artistic process informed, changed, or added perspective to others not in the program (e.g., family members, corrections officers, etc.)?
4. Does a social justice framework, restorative justice, and/or healing approach inform your practice, if so, in what way?
5. What are systemic barriers that you've experienced to providing parenting programs to incarcerated parents and their children?

**Art Directive #2:** Draw how it feels when experiencing barriers to your work

6. What are the supportive factors that encourage, allow, and facilitate your work?

**Art Directive #3:** Show how it feels when the work is supported

7. What is the future of art-based programs for incarcerated parents?

8. What are your recommendations for mental health service providers who have an interest in serving incarcerated parents and their children?

## **Analysis of Data**

The recorded interview and art will be reviewed in one of two ways. Presentation of data will occur in both narrative form and through the art responses. It will then be analyzed and organized in tables in order to identify emerging themes and key differences between individuals and organizations. Data compiled will be discussed along with findings and conclusion.

## RESULTS

### Presentation of Data

During the process of this research project, I learned that organizations that serve incarcerated populations might identify as art-based but not as parent programs *or vice versa*. However, these organizations did serve clients who were parents and formerly incarcerated or had staff who had a personal history of being a child of an incarcerated parent. I wanted to include their voices and perspective in this study as this experience also informed their approach and commitment to effective programs, but the IRB proposal was written before the discovery that programs do not usually identify with both bases for programs. Including an addendum or modification to the study would have jeopardized the completion of this study by institutional deadlines. As a result, their valuable perspectives were not included in this research project.

Two organizations that provided art programs to incarcerated parents agreed to participate in a qualitative interview. I scheduled interviews with representatives of each organization. Both interviews included the same art directives that gave insight to the barriers, support, and successes of art-based programs for incarcerated parents. I have summarized these interviews to include the concepts, ideas, experiences, and perspectives that speak to the particularities of working with families within the criminal justice system. The art created during the interview by organization's representatives is woven within the summary similar to the way in which it was addressed during the semi-structured interview. I refer to each drawing with the name of the representative and the art directive. The following are the three art directives chosen for this research project:

- **Art Directive #1:** Draw a moment that affirmed the effectiveness of the art process to participant(s) and your work.
- **Art Directive #2:** Draw how it feels when experiencing barriers to your work.
- **Art Directive #3:** Show how it feels when the work is supported.

The representatives of these organizations agreed to participate anonymously and have been assigned pseudonyms. Therefore, through out the conclusion of this research project I will refer to the Restorative Justice Family Center (RJFC) as the organization that provides a program designed as a camp, where the children visit for four to five days with their mothers, and participate in therapeutic arts activities facilitated by art therapists. The director of the program aims to give an opportunity to families to restore the relationship between children and their mothers who are separated by policies of the criminal justice system. Emma and Helen coordinate the programs for the camp during the summer months and identify as service providers. The camp is described as “a meaningful week-long summer program for children to heal and reconnect with their incarcerated mothers by creating art together”. The description of the approach is as follows: “Utilizing a trauma-informed approach of art therapy and family support, professional artists facilitate fun and educational activities aimed at building stronger relationships”.

Another participating organization is the Social Justice Theater Project (SJTP) who provides theater arts as part of a re-entry program for parents. Barbara is a facilitator of the theater workshops that are made up of mostly fathers and occasionally mothers. Barbara identifies as an artist. I chose this program because it was contracted within a re-entry program for parents and because theater arts programs emerged numerous times during the literary research and review of arts-based programs in correctional facilities. The following are the organization’s core values:

- All human beings possess the ability to create works of art
- Each person has an important story to tell

- It is the responsibility of the artist to partner with each community of participants to bring their stories to life through high quality theatre experiences
- The artist has a responsibility to use her/his creative skills to address and illuminate social and political issues and to offer opportunities for audiences to grapple with these subjects
- Participating in and witnessing the creative process can be a transformative experience

I interviewed Barbara at a school-site where she provides theater classes to charter school students. Barbara provided a dynamic and energy filled interview with rich history of theater workshops she has facilitated with community organizations. Through the use of theater she bridged her artistic and social political upbringing to connect with working class communities. She has had a multitude of work experience using theater with workers, youth, and incarcerated populations.

The second interview was done with both Emma and Helen at the RJFC office. They provided passionate and heartfelt insight into the work of restorative justice for families that are suffering from the separation caused by incarceration. Both representatives have a history of working with women and families who are incarcerated. They note the value and importance of giving children the right to see their parents despite prison sentences. Mending the relationship between mothers and their children for reunification has been a calling they have responded to with hard work and dedication.

### ***Barbara and the Social Justice Theater Project***

Barbara has a 40-year history of using theater with workers (steel workers, meat packers, mill workers, etc.) in high schools and in prison settings to tell stories to community audiences and families. I wanted to learn how someone who has dedicated their career to providing the arts to communities came to believe in the use of art as a therapeutic medium.

She answered, “I see how it transforms people. It transforms me as an artist, a member of the audience, and as a participant”.

The first art directive was about capturing the moment and the feeling in which Barbara was affirmed in the effectiveness of the art process to participants. Right away, Barbara mentioned that she was not good at drawing, but I assured her there was no right or wrong way to draw. Barbara related to that statement, mentioning that she tells her participants the same advice when performing. She first created a red lightning bolt and then drew herself with a red marker and used a yellow marker to color in her hair. The following drawing is her response to the first art directive (AD#1).



Barbara, AD #1: Draw a moment that affirmed the effectiveness of the art process to participant(s) and your work.

Barbara describes the effectiveness of art as, “Changing the world”. When describing her art piece she states, “I wanted red because it’s fire, it’s transformative, and it’s shocking. It has to do with changing the world. We do a lot of physical activity where we do a lot of sculptures [tableaus] to represent feelings and events. So that’s me.”

Barbara then described her ‘most transformative’ moment in her theater arts career. She told the story of steel workers that presented theater performances to workers in communities across the rustbelt.

“We did this play with these men, these big, burly men who stood up during the second act, because I always have a second act discussion during the plays, and they stood up like they testified in church and they told their own stories. And these men, these grown men were crying, talking about how much the play touched them because it reminded them of their own lives. That was the most powerful audience transformation that I have seen. Just the willingness for the audience to engage in the subject matter and then tell their own story.”

This mutual exchange between performing artist and audience is the experience that Barbara usually brings to her programs as a theater artist and facilitator. However, she also discussed the challenge of not having enough time and funding with current participants, the fathers. Although the participants have performed for each other they have not performed in public. She then took a moment to imagine what it would be like if the father’s had an opportunity to perform in front of their family members:

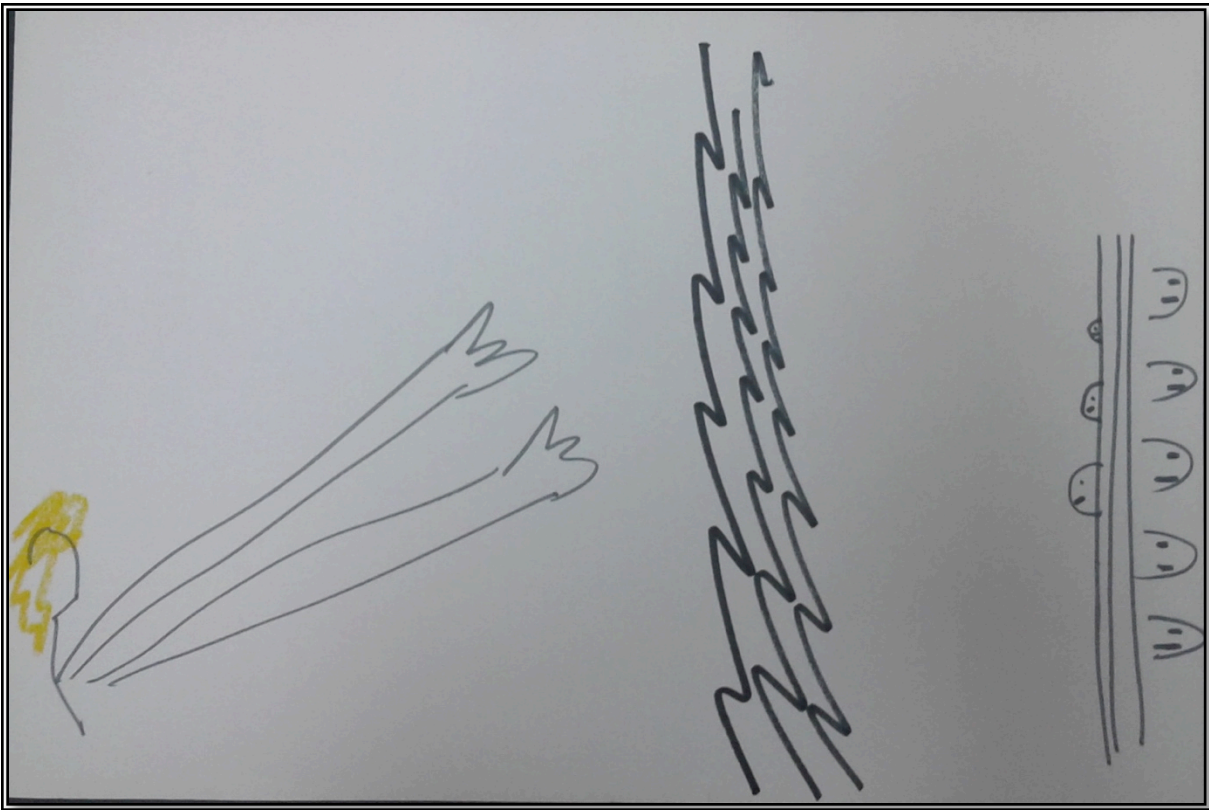
“I think their families would be very moved to hear them... Every time I did a program with at-risk youth and they performed for their families, their families were moved because the kids were saying things through their poetry and their performance that they had never said before. I’m going to have a grant to work with former lifers. That program will be delving into the participants past, and who they’ve been, and what their story was, and how they got to where they got. Our project with the dads is totally opposite of that. We call it Moving Forward because it’s about who they would like to become. We don’t ask them where they’ve been, how long they were inside, what they did ... sometimes some of

that comes out in the discussion, or in the writing, or in the physical theater exercises. But it's not our purpose. Our purpose is to create an environment where they can reimagine themselves."

Barbara continued to describe that the fathers who are incarcerated are serving their last months of their sentences in a half-way home through an amenity program. They meet twice a month with Barbara for theater workshops that run two hours, each session. I inquired about her experience working with non-incarcerated populations and how it informs her approach with the incarcerated fathers. She pointed out that a characteristic of theater art is a "communal art form". She continued, "I am building community with the small participant pool because we have a new group every month – that's the challenge in this program for me. They are month-long academies... so what we get to happen in four hours is pretty extraordinary!"

We moved on to discuss the barriers that Barbara experiences in the work she does through the second art directive. She described the group dynamic of the previous month in which, "a quarter of the men were so resistant, and so rude, and so difficult to work with, that it was a very exhausting and frustrating experience." She adds, "Ultimately it came out very well, and ultimately they did some beautiful stuff. But, it was hard. [Laughs] And it was interesting because the writing that the men did last month was so much deeper than the writing this month." The following drawing is her response to the second art directive. She chose a white sheet of construction paper again and mostly uses a black marker to draw these "barriers". The figure on the left is Barbara, as identified with yellow hair. The participants are located on the opposite end of the sheet (to the right) represented by small figures with eyes but no mouths or any other details. In between Barbara and the participants are lines representing walls. The jagged vertical lines are described as "static and interference".

Barbara, AD #2: Draw how it feels when experiencing barriers to your work.



I reflect to Barbara that the picture has a feeling as though she is reaching out and she responds, “I have so much to offer and there’s this resistance. It’s kind of like a barrier. It’s a barrier between them and me. And these guys are peeking out of the barrier. They’re a little curious.” Barbara then shared a personal anecdote which expressed a fear of that barrier, “I actually have occasional performance anxiety dreams, where I will get to a workshop or rehearsal and people just refuse to listen to what I’m saying.”

We switch to discussion of supportive factors in her work. There were three main factors emphasized in the interview. The first one is having a community alliance and collaboration that is built between a community-based organization and herself as a theater artist. She stated, “It’s really essential that when you work with a community as an outsider, to have some stake holders from the community who are your allies.” Aside from community partnership, the second

supportive factor is the selection of her team members to match the population whom she serves.

Barbara felt it was necessary to have a man be a part of the facilitating artist team for the father's that are incarcerated. She also hired a woman who is an African-American theater artist because Barbara felt, "it was important to have a colleague of color as well" because the participants are mostly men of color. As a researcher interested in forms of inclusivity and cultural humility, I took a moment to find out the ways in which Barbara is aware of and informed by the need to consider issues of race and gender in her work. Barbara shared the following remark about her identity and the importance of building trust;

"I think about that all the time. I mean...being a white woman and going into non-traditional, majority of male communities and doing theater work, I'm always reflecting on who I am against who they are. When I started working with steel workers I was in my early 30's. Now I'm 69, I freak out just saying that. I cannot relate to that at all ... I'm sensitive to that. I feel like I'm really youthful and I have a tremendous amount of energy. I don't want to come off as the old white lady coming to change you. That's not what my goal is or my thing. I am a theater artist that is coming over to offer you an experience that will allow you to see yourself in a new way. And that's what I tell them, 'I see you as an artist,' and we are going to give you an opportunity to see yourself and re-imagine who you are through theater, through writing, through movement. All of that is fine and good, but they also have to trust me and relate to me. A lot of times the guys will relate to me as a mother figure, as a sister, kind of a pal. But I want them to relate to me as an artist. So I have to gain their trust. "

Lastly, a third supportive factor has to do with the participant's own willingness to do theater. Barbara shared the growth in participants within a month's time of providing theater workshops to the fathers. Barbara reflects on the participant's role and the courage and artistry that she expects from the participants.

“We are asking them to take huge creative risks, by asking them to do things they have never done before. I don’t know if you’ve seen some of the images of the guys doing some of these physical image things. When we first ask them to do these things, they’re like “huh”, but then they do it, and I’m surprised to see how they do it, how they’re willing. Because they’ve had to be in environments where they are not vulnerable. They have had to hide any sense of vulnerability. They’ve been separated racially, they’ve been absolutely divided racially. So this is a whole new experience, they couldn’t touch each other except to fight ... I mean there’s so many different elements that they have been denied, and we are asking them to break down all of those barriers. I’m amazed when they are willing to do it. Particularly when it’s the huge 300 pound guy whose willing to get up there and perform or the guy that’s been sitting like this (arms crossed), and suddenly he’s up there volunteering to be first.”

Barbara moved on to describe her assessment and check-in with the participants and the work they are engaging in.

“I’m moved and we always have a circle check-in in the beginning where everybody, including us (teaching artists), check in with one word with how they’re feeling, and everybody checks out. Often, my word in the beginning is apprehensive, interested or excited and questioning. I don’t know what to expect. And everyone says similar, some people say nervous, and some people say humbled, honored. At the end the words are always more positive. And my word at the end is usually moved, impressed, or inspired ... because I am moved by them, and I am impressed by them, and I am inspired by them.”

Barbara showed me poetry pieces and tableaux written and performed by the fathers. She describes giving the participants artistic freedom and exploration to interpret open-ended prompts. She conducts writing exercises that are performed through sculptures, such as tableaux. One tableau demonstrated a picture of men whose hands are tied up as if they are being locked up with handcuffs. In the following image in the series the men are holding hands instead. This tableau was called, Before and After.

Through videos that have documented the theater work of SJTP, we listened to a testimony of a father who participated in the workshop. He shared, “A bunch of guys get together trusting each other to fall back on. Stuff that we couldn’t do in prison. We are of different races; Mexican, Samoan, White, Black, having a good time, just being normal. Normal people out here. We broke a barrier right there. Something we didn’t do in prison.”

We ended with a third and final art directive that captures the feeling of what it is like and how it feels when the work that Barbara provides in the community is supported. She quickly produced the following drawing:



Barbara, AD #3: Show how it feels when the work is supported.

Barbara stated, “I feel like I’m on top of the world. I am very fulfilled”.

### ***The Restorative Justice Family Center***

I began my interview with Emma and Helen by learning how they became involved with providing services to families and children who had a member of their family incarcerated. Emma began working with families of the incarcerated through a program that provides transportation to family members to visit their loved ones who are in prison. Through this experience, Emma realized the importance of children seeing their parents and that no one was providing this experience for them. She emphasized that it is a “children’s right” to see their parents, despite the separation caused by the incarceration. The program she is a part of offers four to five hours of visitation to children, twice a year. Emma then developed a camp where children can visit their parents for a whole week. Although she witnesses the difficulties children experience when seeing their mothers after a long period of separation, she can see that they have a need to discuss important issues with their parents. The first camp provided art during the visitation as a way to facilitate conversations between mother and child. Emma retells that through the art they are able to get to know each other, sometimes even the opportunity for a child to learn their mother’s favorite color.

Helen worked for over 10 years at a juvenile camp with young women, naming this work as one of her passions. She was providing writing workshops when she met Emma and jumped on board with coordinating and implementing an art therapy component to the camp for children and their mothers. Helen contacted the art therapy department at Loyola Marymount University and was connected with an art therapist who assisted in creating an art-based therapy component to the camp.

I presented the first art directive and asked Emma and Helen to draw a moment where they saw that the art process was effective in their work. Helen seemed hesitant to draw and Emma stated that she did not know how to draw. I invited them to draw symbols, shapes or colors that represented the moment they realized art was an effective component to their

program. Helen described the gratitude that she felt to have been given the opportunity to facilitate the moment in which the children and mother's see each other for the first time. As she was drawing, she described their reunification with tears and smiles in the embrace of mother and child. The following drawing is Helen's response to the first art directive.



Helen, AD #1: Draw a moment that affirmed the effectiveness of the art process to participant(s) and your work.

Helen, described her selection in color in her drawing, along with the meaning in the following way:

“For me it was seeing the mom and the child side by side over a piece of art, whether it was a piece of art of painting. First there were tears but I’m drawing the smile...I drew the mother in the orange because that’s what they wear on the inside. And lavender for the child because to me it is a peaceful color; watching the moment of tears and love. It was also very peaceful to see the coming together of mom and child. The turquoise blue is the running, the rush when they first see their mom and they run towards her. And then the tears, just seeing the love between a mom and child and how important that is, the embrace, the physical part, the looking at each other, the holding, that for me captures the moment... the art does that, because the kids can choose different ways of communicating through the various styles of art.”

Emma did not offer as much detail in her drawing, AD #1, but it captured a similar moment as Helen’s drawing. Emma wrote the words, “Happiness”, “Bonding”, and “Hope” to describe her drawing of a mother and child. She did not offer meaning to the color choice of the paper or the color to draw with other than they were the first things she saw and “went for it”. The following image is Emma’s art response.

Emma noted that there was difference between the first camp, which offered art, and the second camp, which offered art therapy. I inquired further about the difference that Emma and



Emma, AD #1: Draw a moment that affirmed the effectiveness of the art process to participant(s) and your work.

she replied, “I think it was completely different because in having the therapist they were able to see issues that an artist probably wouldn’t see. And that’s the great advantage. The therapist can ask and see if there’s a problem. But not an art teacher ... probably they don’t see that. But either way we have a beautiful camp. They [the families] were very happy.”

### ***The Role of Restorative Justice***

I asked both Emma and Helen to talk about the role of restorative justice in their work with families. Helen gave the following description and definition for restorative justice as well as the role of art within this work:

“It’s the restoring of relationships that are broken and that is in our mission statement. It’s the restoring, the mending, the healing of broken relationships and these children have experienced some level of trauma. The art can be very healing, it can be the gateway to open communication and to talk about stuff, whatever *that stuff* is that happened when their mothers were incarcerated.”

Emma added to this statement by giving an example of the way in which this relationship has an opportunity to mend and be restored through the art and the opportunity for communication to happen:

“With the Camp, we give the opportunity of restoring justice; it is about the responsibility, rehabilitation and restoration. In this case the children are the victims. So with art, we are not repairing the damage but at least, they are given the opportunity [victim and offender] to talk to them, perhaps say, “I’m sorry, I want to apologize”. The children are the victims. Rehabilitation art is a great healer. It can rehabilitate people through art. And the responsibility component is for these moms. When they are there, they are responsible for these children and the way they need to change and make amendments [sic] with the children.”

Helen then offered an observation that was noted by the re-entry coordinator at the prison, stating that the Camp had a positive affect on behavioral changes among the imprisoned mothers because they are motivated to participate in this program. Emma then began to discuss the ways in which the prison staff also lack understanding in the effects of incarceration for the families because of their expectation towards the children’s behavior who may be having a difficult experience in seeing their mother in this setting. Helen offered an example of a prison staff person who expected the children to be “well disciplined and behave”. Helen took the opportunity to defend and advocate for the children and offered the following words and perspective to the prison staff, “...just allow the process to happen. Give the mom the chance to establish that re-connection.” Helen continued by describing the length of the camp and the way in which it is experienced by the families.

“They get there, the tears and all of this happens in the middle of the week. And so they are preparing to say good-bye too. It happens really fast; Monday, Tuesday, Weds, Thursday and then boom, it’s done. So I had to say, ‘Think about how that child feels. They have not spent time with their mom in a long time. And that could be very disruptive to their being, it could be overload.’ So we give them the space, if they need to walk out and go into the playground and be alone, that’s ok. When they are ready, they come back.”

She finished off by saying that at the end of the Camp, the correction officers responded with, “This art stuff is good”. Emma took the opportunity to discuss the need of the institution to have “these kind of programs”. But she noted that there may be a discrepancy between the value of the work and what is considered “good” for the institution. It should be noted that one of the factors in corrections institutions ranking is the number of re-entry programs they offer. However, it also is a lot of work for them and may not be as readily accepted.

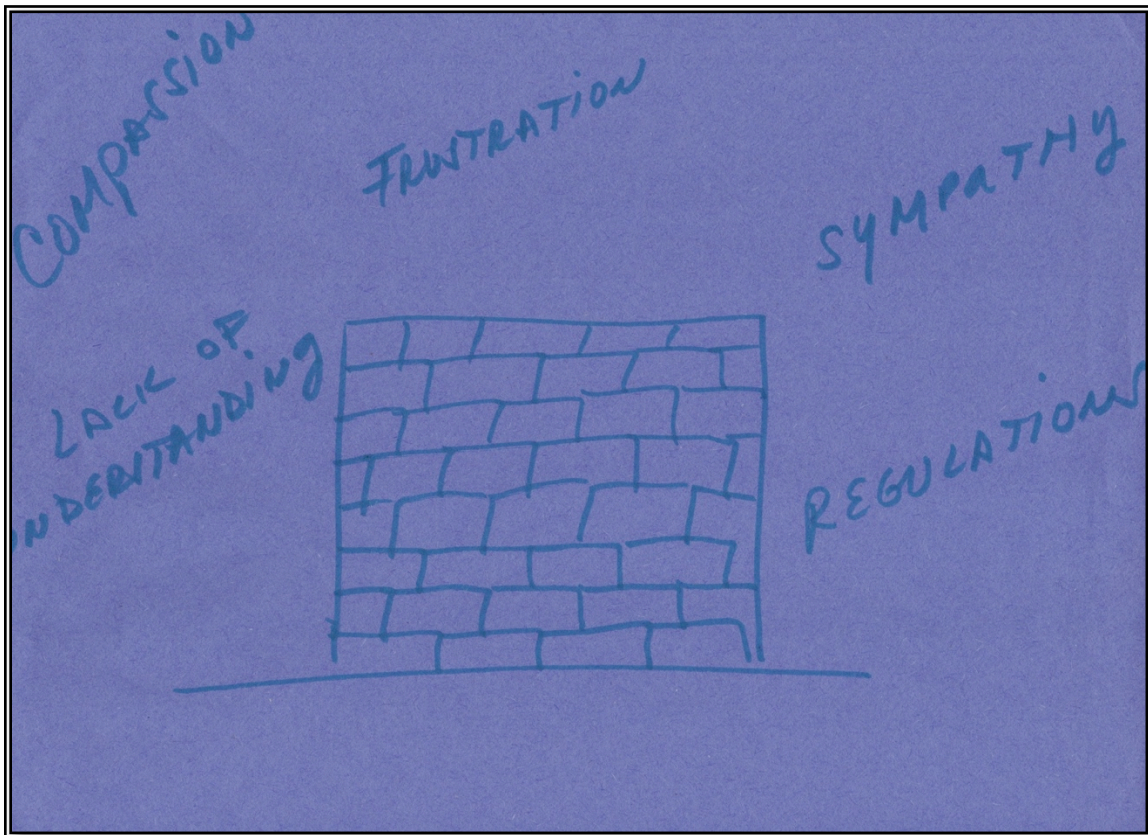
I asked them to describe what they perceive is missing for the prison staff in order to be more aware of or supportive of the program in its effort to reunify families. Emma offers the following understanding;

“I would say that they definitely don’t have the background in restorative justice, they are just in the part where punishment is the way to solve problems. Whereas in restorative justice, we don’t believe in that. We believe in rehabilitation and giving a second chance. So for them, they haven’t been trained like that. They have a special training as a guard to follow rules and think, “they are dangerous, they are criminals”, those are the things that we have to encounter, but we have to accept it because they need to do their job and they have been trained to do that. Security first. We need to comply with the rules. But we are grateful for the opportunity”

Helen offered a potential solution to this difference in training and understanding and suggests that perhaps an organization that can offer training to prison staff and correctional officers on the benefits of having a restorative justice perspective for the families in rehabilitation.

## **Barriers**

We continued discussing obstacles that RJFC representatives have experienced with the second art directive that asks the interviewees to identify how it feels when experiencing barriers to their work. After a few attempts at clarifying the directive and inviting the interviewees to draw again, Emma and Helen began drawing and reflecting on new sheets of paper. Emma selected a blue sheet of construction paper and with a darker blue marker began to detail a large brick wall in the center of the paper. She gives the wall a solid grounding line and proceeded to add words around the brick wall.



Emma, AD #2: Draw how it feels when experiencing barriers to your work.

I asked Emma to share the meaning of the words she wrote around the wall. Frustration represents, “when they don’t weigh simple stuff, like, ‘I want to take a picture of the mom and the child’ and the guards say, “No”. She described the lack of compassion, because “They [prison staff] just want to go as far as the book is telling them.” They lack sympathy because, “They don’t walk in the child’s shoes and they don’t walk in the mother’s shoes.” Her inclusion of ‘regulation’ was because the prison staff seemed to be more responsive to compliance with regulation than they are understanding of the incarcerated mothers and their children.

Helen agreed and shared a moment when she had to advocate once again to the prison staff on behalf of the children. She uses the example of the art therapist as someone who is able to facilitate the art process as well as the interpersonal relationship dynamics occurring amongst mother and child. Helen noted that the prison staff may have difficulty in understanding, allowing and trusting those dynamics to play out.

“She (prison staff) is quick to do the punishment part, like “nuh uh, that child shouldn’t be like ...” and she just comes across strong and harsh. And I just got fed up with it one day and I said, “You know, that’s what the art therapists are here for. They just kind of back off and let them do their thing”. You’ll watch this kind of thing happen. And also that’s when I explained to her, ‘put your self in the child’s shoes’, they haven’t seen their mom in three years, and they are seeing her for the first time and now the child has to see her all day. There is going to be some tension, there is going to be some struggle. But if we just allow this art piece to deal with the struggle, deal with that tension, just let it be. I respect the staff and her level of implementing rules. I get the safety, but we also need to respect the therapist and what they are trained to do in this process.”

I asked them both to describe the feeling they experience when these barriers arise. They both stated out loud at the same time, “Frustration!” They looked at each other and began to laugh at the synchronicity and mutual felt expression. In Helen’s response to the second art directive she drew a figure of herself with out a face or feet. The money signs floating above represent

the lack of funding and money as an obstacle in their work that they constantly are facing. She drew vertical parallel lines and began to write in a series of words.



Helen, AD #2: Draw how it feels when experiencing barriers to your work.

Helen identified the following barriers and obstacles she experienced by writing: Frustration, Policies, Relationships, Personalities, Systemic Rules, Regulations, Federal Prisons, Tolerance, Respect, Authority, Empathy, Sympathy, Lack of Understanding.

### ***Support and Success***

We moved on to discuss ways in which they have felt supported in the work of bringing families together. Helen described being supported by RJFC leadership who helped her to connect, plan, and feel supported as she coordinated the camp programs. She also discussed her connection and involvement to her religious community as offering support, suggestions, and connection to Northern California contacts.

Emma described the lack of support for the work outside of the immediate friends and supporters of the organization itself. She also conveyed that the lack of institutional buy-in or support also presents a large obstacle in connecting with prison staff and participants doing the work. She stated that, “Not everybody believes that we should invest that money in a child of a prisoner.” The idea that money should not be “invested” in a child who has an incarcerated parent landed heavily in the room. Emma’s earlier point, that the child is the victim, struck home again.

Given Emma and Helen’s years of experience working with families who are touched by incarceration, I asked them to share their perspectives about what a service provider needs to consider and practice when working with incarcerated populations and their children. Helen’s answer was, “to be open”. Emma then stated that there is not enough programs that help children stay in touch with their family members and loved ones who are incarcerated. She continued, “With art, I think it would be awesome. Because they need a lot of healing and they would have the opportunity to express their hurt through art. You know? And sometimes life is so chaotic that they don’t really have the time to sit and do art.”

Helen returned to the importance of being open and having tolerance, understanding, and respect towards a client's culture. She noted that taking children's feelings into account are "really important ... that I do know". Emma agreed right away, "There's nothing more important than that [feelings]". Helen added, "The feeling that people respect them and that what they have to say is important".

As a way of closing the interview on a positive note, the final and third art directive focused on their experience when they feel supported and feel their work is successful. Again, there was a bit of convincing that had to be done from my end as the interviewer to facilitate their creation of their drawings. They began creating, talking to themselves as they described what they were drawing.

Helen began to describe her picture in the making, "It felt like something that blossomed in the relationship", and drew flowers. Then she came back and said, "It felt like it was a lot of



Helen, AD #3: Show how it feels when the work is supported.

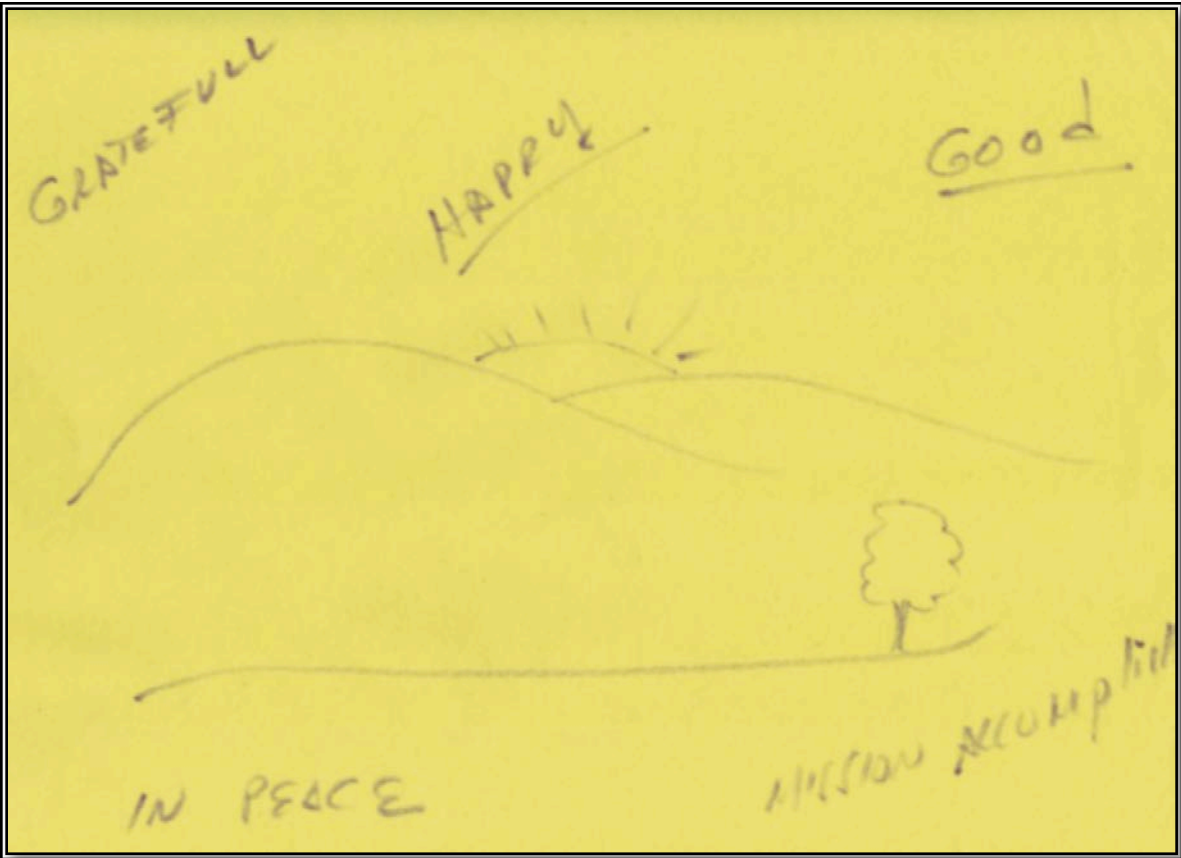
light” and drew a sun with rays. When she finished her drawing she described hope the following way:

Helen concluded with the following description to her artwork:

“I felt like the start of the relationship, it started to blossom. At first you could see all the tears, there was tension with some moms and their child, naturally ... so I just felt like it was the beginning of a flower that’s blossoming. This looks like the end of that result, but I should’ve just done the stem ... because it was the start of something. I put the sun because I just felt like there was a lot of light at the end of the week; joy and a sense of relief, “I got to see my mom, I hadn’t seen her in a year”. I felt like all my work was done, I had worked for a year in connecting the children and the families on the outside with the moms on the inside... it had all come into fruition...it happened.”

Helen also noted feeling sad when she saw the children read the love letters on their way home that their mothers had made for them. Helen’s sincerity appeared genuine as she reflected on bearing witness to the wide range of feelings and emotions among the families throughout their time at camp.

At the start of her drawing, Emma began saying out loud, “I felt good, I was happy” and she continued making lines on her paper. When she presented her drawing, Emma stated boldly, “I feel grateful, I feel happy, I feel good, I feel at peace, I felt that it was a mission accomplished.” I thanked them for their time and their work and felt my own sense of accomplishment at the conclusion of this interview.



Emma, AD #3: Show how it feels when the work is supported

## Analysis of Data

The art directive responses and audio interview transcriptions were analyzed and organized for presentation through tables in order to identify emerging themes between individuals and organizations. Common themes and differences were found through the interviews, art, and art descriptions provided by the interviewed participants. The following questions were posed at the beginning of the research project and guided the data analysis.

5. What is the role of art and a social justice and/or restorative justice framework in providing services?
6. What are systemic obstacles or supportive infrastructures to providing art based programs?
7. What are ways in which organizations work with and around these systems?
8. How can these perspectives inform innovative approaches in curriculum and programming by art therapists in order to best be of service to populations suffering from mass incarceration in the United States?

Several themes were identified through this project:

- A consistency in cultural sensitivity: This project brought to light the participants' awareness and practice of cultural humility was most effective in the deliverance of service and positive relationship building.
- A consistency in program obstacles: Participants described common obstacles that included issues of trust between prison staff, participants, and program representatives.
- Program facilitators' self-identity: Participants recognized strengths and weaknesses between facilitator perspectives as artists, service providers and therapists. A third theme is a difference in identity as artist or as service provider among representatives from the organizations.

- Art process effectiveness: Lastly, the interviews reiterated the effectiveness of trusting the art process and the way in which it supported the lives of participants to connect, re-imagine, process, and re-integrate experiences and relationships.

As an art therapist and researcher, another form of analyzing the art as data was by organizing the elements of the art responses into tables. Emergent themes were identified in the art responses that include color of the paper used for drawing, symbols, figures, lines, actions drawn, and words.

	Art Directive # 1	Art Directive #2	Art Directive #3
	Draw a moment that affirmed the effectiveness of the art process to participant(s) and your work?	Draw how it feels to when barriers to your work exist. Include those barriers through words or images.	Show what happens when the work is supported and you feel success?
HELEN	<b>Theme:</b> Human emotion <b>Color of Paper:</b> White <b>Symbols:</b> Hearts (6), Tears (6) <b>Figures:</b> Mother in Orange Prison Jump suit and Daughter in Lavender. Both are brown. <b>Actions:</b> Rushing towards each other <b>Lines:</b> Blue representing the action <b>Words:</b> n/a	<b>Theme:</b> Wall, Trust, Frustration <b>Color of Paper:</b> White <b>Symbols:</b> \$ Money signs (3) <b>Figures:</b> Drawing of herself, no feet, arms but no hands, head but no face <b>Actions:</b> n/a <b>Lines:</b> 2 Parallel Vertical Lines = Wall <b>Words:</b> Frustration, Policies, Relationships, Personalities, Systemic Rules, Regulations, Federal Prisons   Tolerance, Respect, Authority, Empathy, Sympathy, Lack of Understanding	<b>Theme:</b> Nature, Hope, Satisfaction <b>Color of Paper:</b> Pink <b>Symbols:</b> Yellow Sun, Blue Clouds, Flowers (6) <b>Figures:</b> Flowers <b>Actions:</b> Blooming <b>Lines:</b> Grass as grounding line <b>Words:</b> n/a
EMMA	<b>Theme:</b> Human emotion <b>Color of Paper:</b> Green <b>Symbols:</b> Heart in the middle above figures <b>Figures:</b> Mom and daughter facing forward <b>Actions:</b> Love <b>Lines:</b> n/a <b>Words:</b> (L to R) Happiness, Bonding, Hope	<b>Theme:</b> Wall, Trust, Frustration <b>Color of Paper:</b> Blue <b>Symbols:</b> Brick wall, 8 stacks, 39 bricks <b>Figures:</b> n/a <b>Actions:</b> n/a <b>Lines:</b> Brick wall has a grounding line <b>Words:</b> (Clockwise) Lack of Understanding, Compassion, Frustration, Sympathy, Regulations	<b>Theme:</b> Nature, Pride, Satisfaction <b>Color of Paper:</b> Yellow <b>Symbols:</b> Sun, 7 rays, tree (small trunk, lots of foliage), 2 hills, <b>Figures:</b> n/a <b>Actions:</b> Sun Rising <b>Lines:</b> grounding line <b>Words:</b> (Top: L-R) Grateful, Happy, Good (Bottom: L-R) In Peace, Mission Accomplished
BARBARA	<b>Theme:</b> Transformation <b>Color of Paper:</b> White <b>Symbols:</b> Red lighting bolt across the page, cut out using red construction paper <b>Figures:</b> Herself, Woman smiling to the side, yellow hair <b>Actions:</b> arms in the air <b>Lines:</b> n/a <b>Words:</b> n/a	<b>Theme:</b> Wall, Trust <b>Color of Paper:</b> White <b>Symbols:</b> n/a <b>Figures:</b> Artist is on the left with large arms extended towards the right, yellow hair, head but no face. Unformed figures on the right are heads with eyes, no mouth <b>Actions:</b> arms are "offering", unformed figures peeking out and others hiding <b>Lines:</b> 3 jagged black vertical lines = static, 3 parallel vertical lines = wall with unformed figures as participants <b>Words:</b> n/a	<b>Theme/Words:</b> "The World", Pride, Satisfaction <b>Color of Paper:</b> Peach <b>Symbols:</b> Earth/World with green continental lines <b>Figures:</b> Stick Figure, Big hands, Smiling face, blue eyes, yellow hair <b>Actions:</b> "Standing on top of the world" <b>Lines:</b> continental lines

### ***A Shared Background in Social and Restorative Justice***

The data that came from the semi-structured interviews and art making indicated interviewees had a strong background in social justice work. Through their work history and passion there was a powerful way in which they were driven to connect with communities who are marginalized, voiceless, and misunderstood. Barbara has been committed to bringing theater to working class communities for over forty years. Emma and Helen have committed their careers to working with families who are dealing with the punitive consequences of the criminal justice system.

Barbara identified the importance of building a community alliance as an outsider of a community in order to deliver an effective arts program. Emma and Helen belong to a restorative justice organization that provides services to the needs of a community of family members who have an incarcerated relative. Both the SJTP and the RJFC provide their services and the art with compassion, empathy, and respect. They hold an expectation for their participants to rise into or step into their higher selves as an artist or as a parent through empowerment. Through creation of thoughtful and meaningful safe spaces, they are better able to enable the participants' transformation.

An account that demonstrates this practice is when Barbara refers to the men as participants and also as artists. She states, "I am a theater artist that is coming over to offer you (the fathers) an experience that will allow you to see yourself in a new way. I see you as an artist, and we are going to give you an opportunity to see yourself and re-imagine who you are through theater, through writing, through movement."

"Rehabilitation art is a great healer", explained Emma when she discussed the role of art in giving the opportunity to the parent to restore their care-giving relationship with their child. Emma described the way in which they facilitate moments of participant empowerment and transformation of the parent-child relationship.

"With the Camp, we give the opportunity of restoring justice; its about the responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration. In this case, the children are

the victims. So with art, we are not repairing the damage but at least they [the parents] are given the opportunity to talk to them [the child]. Perhaps say, "I'm sorry, I want to apologize". And the responsibility component is for the moms, when they are there [at the camp], they are responsible for these children and the way they need to change and make amendments with the children".

Emma and Helen's work is sensitive to the culture and family dynamic that support the restorative process.

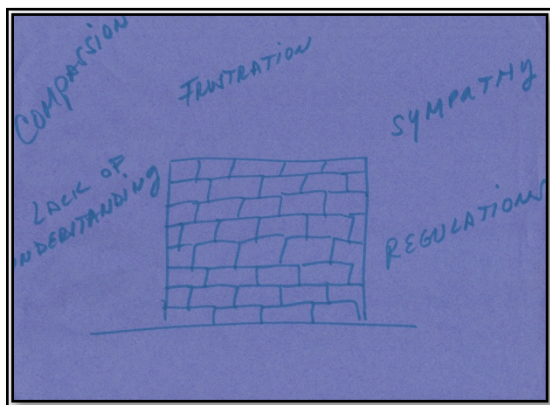
Helen speaks on the importance of being "open" as a service provider. During the interview she talks about the use of tolerance, understanding, and respect towards the client's culture. In particular, she notes that the feelings of children need to be taken into account. Emma agrees with this perspective reiterating that, "There's nothing more important than that [feelings]". Helen continues, "The feeling that people respect them (children) and that what they have to say is important".

Finally, another theme that is important and relates to social justice praxis is the cultural awareness and identity between provider and clients. This awareness supports the building of community, trust, and safe spaces for participants. Barbara acknowledges the "creative risk" she encourages from the fathers. She explains, "They've had to be in environments where they are not vulnerable...they've been separated racially...so this is a whole new experience, they couldn't touch each other except to fight". This awareness maintains a strong level of engagement between her and the participants.

Barbara was also very frank in the role she did not want to play as a Caucasian woman, she states, "I don't want to come off as the old white lady coming to change you. That's not what my goal is or *my thing*. I am a theater artist that is coming over to offer you an experience that will allow you to see yourself in a new way." In her process as an artist, she is attuned to the needs of her clients and creates a team of artists that the participants, the fathers, can relate to. She chose a Caucasian male artist as a co-facilitator because

most of the participants are male. She also invited an African-American female artist to co-facilitate the theater workshops because most of the participants are men of color. An awareness and consideration for race and cultural dynamics opened a space to intentionally create a team that participants could relate to, establish trust, and therefore support the creative process.

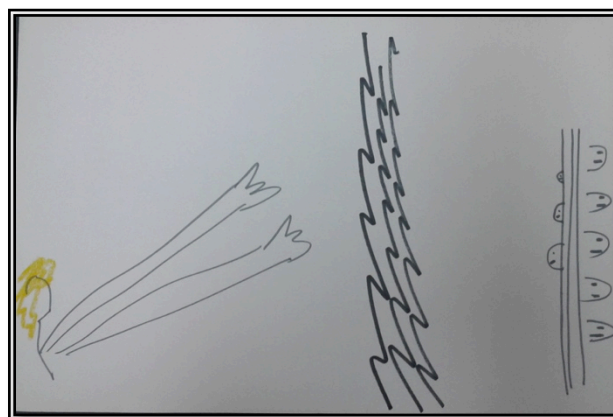
### ***Barriers and Walls***



Emma, Art Directive #2



Helen, Art Directive #2



Barbara, Art Directive #2

When all three interviewees' responded to Art Directive #2: Draw how it feels when experiencing barriers to your work, every drawing included representations of walls. Barbara and Helen used vertical lines to show placement of the walls. Barbara experienced these walls between herself and the participants. Emma drew a brick wall in the center of the page representing the obstacles between her program and the participants. Encountering these "walls" caused a feeling of frustration and a sense of interference where connections, understanding, and trust in relationships were absent which have a domino effect on the participant's experience

The data also illuminated the ways in which lack of funding or insufficient funds created a barrier that must be overcome by both providers. Interviewees discussed that funding is the way by which multiple resources can be extended to provide the art. For example, Barbara spoke about the time constraints in her program. Her work to build trust and a community through a theater ensemble takes time. Due to funding constraints, she can only meet with the father's twice a month for about two hours each time limiting the creation time and process to then offer their work to other audiences.

Emma spoke about funding as a serious issue in their ability to provide a service that does not exist, reunification of family members separated by the criminal justice system. Emma states, "We need to do a lot of work in supporting this Camp. And the reason why is because it's expensive. It's *extremely* expensive. The cost of Camp is more than a thousand dollars per child. Not everybody believes that we should invest that money in a child of a prisoner." Because the Camp takes place at a prison that is over 300 miles away from the children's home, the organization must provide transportation and housing. According to the cost of a family to visit an incarcerated relative, it is already a burden enforcing separation, so the costs for an organization providing for multiple children and families can easily add up.

Another challenge for service providers was the lack of trust and collaboration between them and the staff of a correctional facility. Emma and Helen spoke about this throughout the interview, noting the ways in which prison staff made it difficult for children

and mothers to be themselves in the art making process and relationship building process. They identified a lack of empathy and compassion from the correctional staff toward the children and their mother's due to strict rules and regulations that they must enforce. Helen in particular discusses "putting yourself in the child's shoes" when she witnesses the difficulty and tensions that arise from the parent-child relationship. She advocates and explains to a corrections officer who has yet to trust the way in which the behavior of a child who is struggling with the separation from their mother unfolds before them. Helens explained to the officer, "they haven't seen their mom in three years... and now the child has to see her all day. There is going to be some tension, there is going to be some struggle". Helen asks the officer to trust and "respect the art therapist and what they are trained to do in this process".

Emma's art piece also captured this sentiment and perspective when she carefully detailed a large brick wall representing the barrier that the lack of understanding, compassion, and sympathy created in the deliverance of their work. When I asked her for the meaning of the words she wrote around the wall (Emma, Art Directive #2) she stated,

"Compassion, they [the guards] don't have compassion. They just want to go as far as the book is telling them. Sympathy, they don't walk in the child's shoes, they don't walk in the mother's shoes. Regulation, they are very strong and compliant with their regulation and they don't have the understanding or maybe they are trying to understand, why we do this ..."

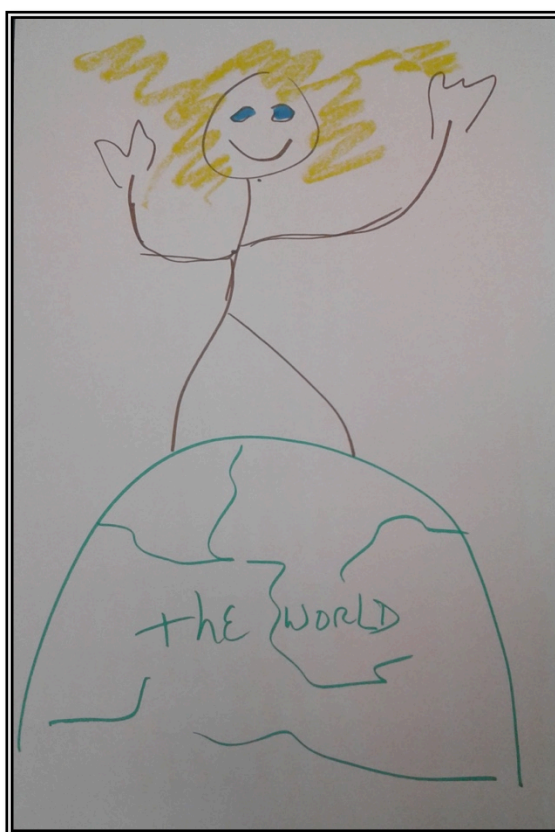
Barbara spoke on the issue of trust as it related to her and the participants during her response to the second art directive. Barbara mentions, "I want them to relate to me as an artist, so I have to gain their trust". The effectiveness of the work depends on building and holding trust among participants towards each other.

The video Barbara shared with me makes a strong connection between the power art to build trust and break barriers. A participant stated, "We are of different races; Mexican,

Samoan, White, Black, having a good time, just being normal. Normal people out here. We broke a barrier right there. Something we didn't do in prison.

### ***Artist vs. Service Provider***

A notable difference between the individuals interviewed was the way in which they referred to their identity. Barbara indicated that she has a strong identity as an artist. She spoke from her identity as a theater artist and refers to her successes and barriers from this place. Barbara draws herself in all three drawings. Centering her experience as a way of knowing the effectiveness and capacity of her work to affect the lives of others. In the last art directive depicting what success looks like to her, she quickly draws herself, indicating that the yellow hair is the way she always represents herself, and states, "I feel like I'm on top of the world. Very fulfilled."



**Barbara, Art Directive #3**

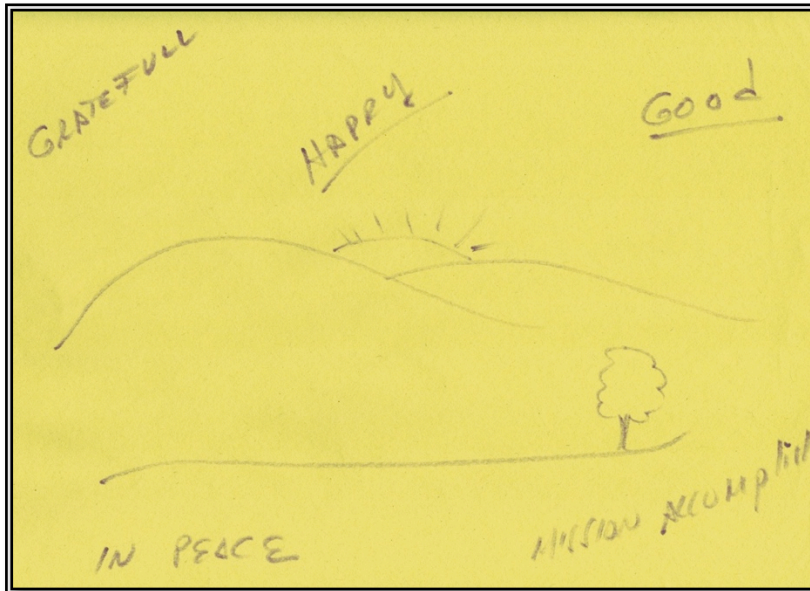
Her trust and expectation in the art creates the energy and motivation to engage her participants. During the interview she discussed being bolder as an artist and trying things she would not have done in the past. It is perhaps that she has learned to trust her artistry that has resulted in her artistic confidence.

It appears that Barbara measures her success through her participants' breakthroughs as artists. Barbara's program facilitates empowerment and transformation of the individual participants in relation to other incarcerated individuals. To complete this work, she works with the participants twice a month and then receives a new group of fathers the following month. RJFC's program facilitates empowerment, transformation and relationship building between the incarcerated individuals and their families. The art-based program at the camp is the final culmination of a lot of legwork and preparation through out the year which sets a different expectation of deliverance of service for all parties in order to effect a successful family reunification event.

Both activities are valid and important work, whether it is approached as an artist or service provider, in the creation of internal stepping stones toward developing a healthy interpersonal relationship, who consistently refer to their clients, the children and the mothers, as their way of measuring their successes and barriers. The organization's goal, as stated by Emma, "is the reunification and restoration of the relationship between children and their parents". Emma reiterated the understanding that a child is a victim when they experience the separation of a parent as a direct policy of the criminal justice system. Both Emma and Helen draw the child and mother in their first drawing (Image from Art Directive #1). In their second drawing they express frustration at the lack of compassion between the prison guards and their clients. They advocate on behalf of the children and the mothers.

In their last drawing, they both created a nature themed drawing to talk about their personal feeling of success. Emma is straightforward and sums up her feelings by stating that she feels grateful, happy, good, and having peace. The last description on her art response reads, "Mission Accomplished". This statement speaks to the work, energy, commitment, and effort required to navigate a myriad number of systems and obstacles in

order to transport, house, and bring families together. The amount of logistics work necessary just to have their program (let alone the complexities of conducting their program) may indicate why their identity refers to being a service provider instead.



Emma, Art Directive #3

Helen, focused on what she witnesses between mother and children first and then she acknowledged her work based on the families coming together.



Helen, Art Directive #3

Helen shares the following meaning to her art response:

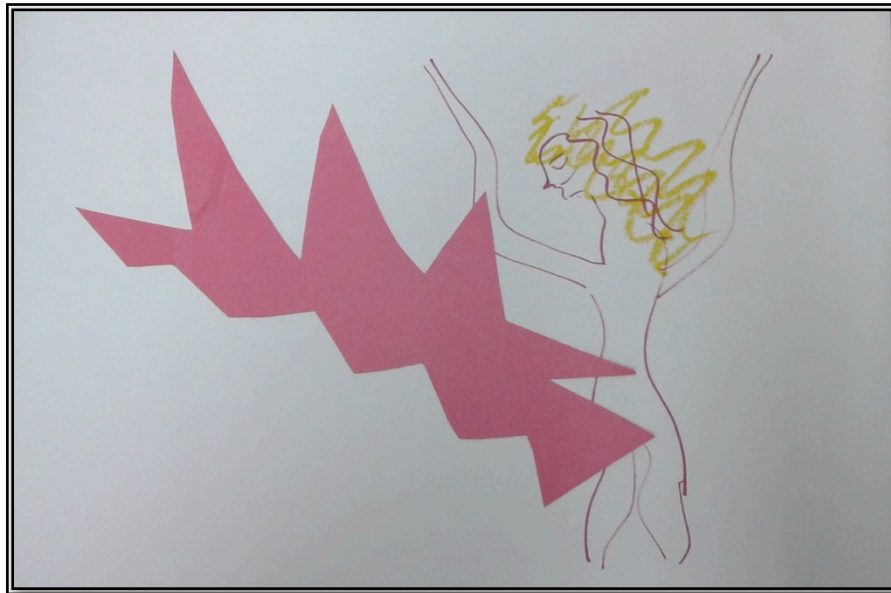
“I felt like the start of the relationship that starts to blossom. There was tension with some moms and their child, naturally ... so I just felt like it was the beginning of a flower that’s blossoming. I put the sun because I just felt like there was a lot of light at the end of the week; joy, sense of relief, ‘I got to see my mom, I hadn’t seen her in a year’. I felt like all my work was done, what I had worked on for a year, working with the families on the outside and with the moms on the inside - It had all come into fruition.”

For Emma and Helen, their success was in seeing the families come together. Despite the systemic set backs, the costs, the traveling, the tension between family members, and tension they experienced as service providers with the guards, they both held on to bearing witness to the love expressed between mother and child.

## ***Trusting the Art***

Overall, an emergent theme was to trust in the creative process by both organizations and the service providers. Barbara continually centers her feelings, her personal knowing, that the art is effective through both an internal and external feeling of transformation. She explained that the power of art and theater to transform participants and audiences is something that gives her energy and motivation to continue this work. When she talks about the participants she states, “I am moved by them, I am impressed by them, and I am inspired by them.” This demonstrates a reciprocated relationship by which she measures effectiveness. Pictured below is her art response to Art Directive #1.

Barbara, Art Directive #1



When Barbara finished her drawing she states, “That’s me... and that’s just the electricity that comes out (pointing to the red). I wanted red because it’s fire, it’s transformative, and it’s shocking, and it has to do with changing the world.”

Emma and Helen stated that the effectiveness of the art came from witnessing the mothers and their child collaborating on an art piece together. They both stated that art is healing and extended their trust to the art therapists. Emma and Helen saw the art as the bridge between mother and child and eventually between prison staff and the program.

Helen notes that by the end of the camp a prison staff member mentioned to her, “this art stuff works”. The art invites observers to witness a different dimension to a person. In this case the guard may see a mother and not just a “criminal”. The art is also a truthful expression and therefore trustworthy when bearing witness to it. Emma describes the experience that affirmed the effectiveness of art as a therapeutic tool for rehabilitation and reunification of families:

“For me it was seeing the mom and the child side by side over a piece of art. First there were tears, but I’m drawing the smile ... the turquoise blue (represents) the running, the rush when they first see their mom and the child runs towards her. There were tears and I saw love between a mom and child. And how important that is, the embrace, the physical part, the looking at each other, the holding.”



Helen, Art Directive #1

I return to Emma's first art response, which responds to the moment that affirmed the effectiveness of art in their work. When describing her drawing she states, “I saw happiness, bonding, hope between the families. Me personally, I was grateful with the opportunity to give and facilitate that moment. We were able to give this big opportunity to the child.”



Emma, Art Directive #1

The way in which the art functions in the lives of people and the multiple ways of both delivering and experiencing it suggests that an art therapist can be the artist, the service provider, an ally, an advocate, and a healer. Using the art is a way of creating an invitation for someone to be an artist, a parent, a child, a witness, and an advocate for Oneself. The creative process can remove or even move those walls, whether real or imagined. For a population that is systemically contained within walls, the creative process can be a liberating humanistic experience.

## Meanings

This research looked at the intergenerational impact of mass incarceration and ways in which artist, service providers, and art therapist can help to mend the bonds between the parent-child relationship through art based parent programs in a correctional facility and a re-entry program. The literature on parent based programs showed that curriculum was either educationally or therapy based and focused on parenting skills but were not trauma or treatment focused (Scudder, et. al., 2014). Another program studied was community based, meaning the curriculum was built to meet the needs of the participants through their evaluation and feedback which was considered for future implementation (Miller, et.al, 2014). This program demonstrated a higher level of satisfaction and had a healings approach component to the program through poetry and ritual. The programs studied in this research used art as the main tool for relationship building, either between participants or between participants and facilitator, or participants and their children. The programs studied did not have an educational component but it had a healings and therapeutic component through the art.

The camp created by the Restorative Justice Family Center had a trauma-informed approach in providing art therapy to the families to support family reunification and restoration. They met multiple needs that the literature showed were important to serving families with incarcerated relatives. The RJFC raised the funds to transport, house, feed, and provide family art-therapy for children of incarcerated parents. Clopton, 2008 identified that the high costs for family members to visit incarcerated relatives impedes the ability to maintain the family which negatively impacts the parent-child relationship. The literature also indicated that it is important for families to maintain positive communication and that it is valued and popular by incarcerated parents. Parent-participants of the camp responded to the opportunity to see their children through positive behavior acknowledged and valued by prison staff. Parents, even though systemically separated, have a deep need and desire to parent and see their children. Among curriculum described in the literature, healthy

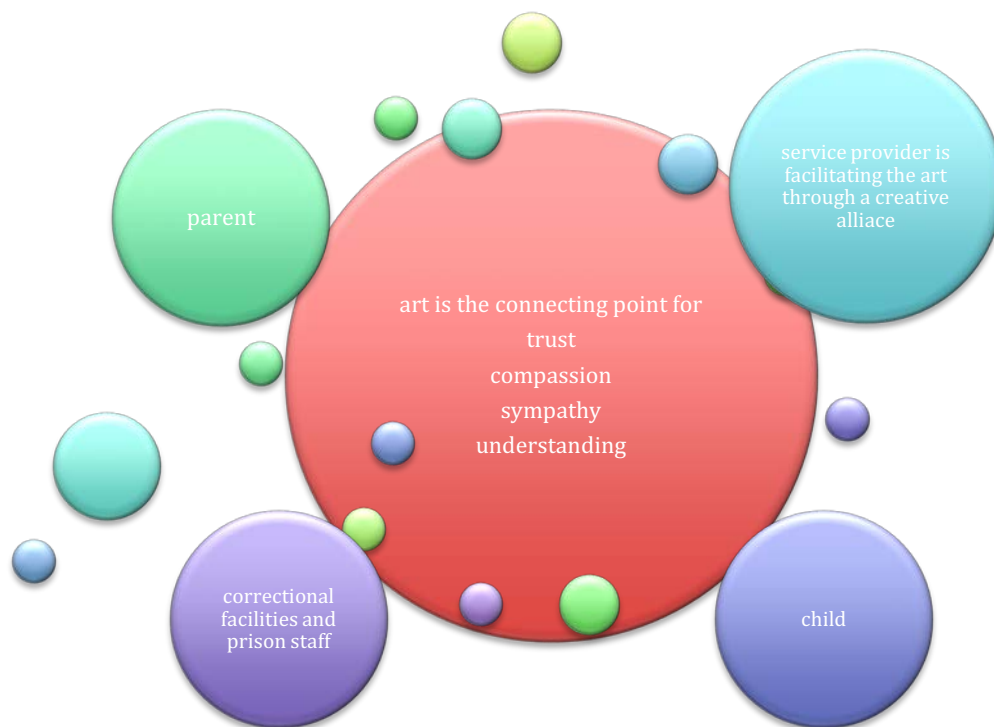
communication and building strong parent child relationships despite separation were “the most helpful” to parent participants (Clopton, 2008, Miller, et.al, 2014, Scudder, et. al., 2014).

The Social Justice Theater Project used art as a tool for transformation, positive expression, and empowerment for both the artist and the participants. The participants gained valuable social and interpersonal skills that “broke barriers” and created trust among individuals that had been racially separated within the prison and even separated from their own humanity due to the inability to expose any resemblance of vulnerability and feelings. The theater work that the father’s take part in speaks to the evidence presented in the literature regarding an art programs ability within correctional facilities to support the participants sense of self worth (K. Dunphy, 1999, G. Hamilton, 2009).

Through the use of art, service providers (artists, clinicians, etc.) can alleviate the trauma caused by incarceration that impacts the emotional and mental well-being of families. The effective components in the process of providing art-based programs to parents included a personal value to cultural humility by the service provider, as well as having social justice and restorative justice frameworks. The lack of trust, compassion, and empathy were obstacles described by the participants. Therefore a program that aims at addressing the parent-child relationship within a correctional facilities setting, will have to include building trust among all participants and observers. This includes prison staff and guards trusting the work of the artist, service provider, and/or art therapist. The therapeutic creative alliance between the art therapist and their client is a therapeutic relationship built on a critical analysis of systemic oppressions (C, Jospeh, 2011). Representatives from both programs studied in this research were advocates for the participants, demonstrating the alliance in order to establish trust and offer the learning, healing, rehabilitative and creative opportunities intended through the programs.

Since the creative process is inherently inclusive and actively engages its participants (e.g., therapists, patients, observers), the results of this study point to the importance of having an interdisciplinary approach to art creation as a vehicle that promotes trusts and supports family relationships and restoration in order to intercept the cycles of

intergenerational trauma. The resultant effects of the art process is respected by the participants, and the creation of that artwork engenders trust. The following graphic depicts the way in which art can be the bridge, a connecting point for all parties involved in the process of rehabilitation and family reunification.



Graph depicting art as the container for multiple relationship that need trust built in for meaningful and healthy alliance in the therapeutic arts process within correctional facilities.

As an indigenous scholar and art therapist, I recognize that our practice as social action and the therapeutic relationship as the creative alliance, when combined, can use art in positively effecting change in intergenerational trauma cycles caused by systems of oppression that inflate the population of incarcerated persons. In finalizing this study, I created an image that portrays an art therapist (on the left) facilitating the parent-child relationship. The spiral is the creative and social action that is serving to protect and

strengthen the bond, the attachment, between a mother and her child, through a moment of art making and reunification.



Art by the researcher depicting the role of the art therapist in the art making process of mother and child.

## CONCLUSION

When I began this research project I asked, how can this project serve to inform innovative approaches in curriculum and program development by art therapists in order to best be of service to populations suffering from mass incarceration in the United States. This project set out to name the layers and dimensions for consideration in order to answer this question. And then, when we acknowledge the multidimensional issues affecting the lives of individuals and their family members who suffer from policies of mass incarceration, I came upon a another question; How do we integrate these understandings in order to affect individual, familial, and systemic change for everyone involved in the prison industrial complex?

Detention reform, which addresses juvenile detention laws and policies, is being sought by a myriad of professionals so that the punitive nature of correctional institutions can instead reflect a rehabilitative institution in our society (P. McCarthy, V. Schiraldi, M. Shark, 2016). But abolition is still on the table, abolitionist and scholars such as Angela Davis center the debate on the “efficacy of incarceration” and discusses the obsolescence of the prison. Davis challenges us to imagine a society without punitive measures that extend from a historical foundation of racism, classism, and sexism (Davis, A.Y., 2003). As a trauma informed mental health professional I acknowledge and understand that incarceration has a traumatic impact for prisoners, their family members, and also the prison guards.

Corrections fatigue has been identified as the umbrella term for the range of stressors and types of vicarious traumatic exposure in prison environments affecting the mental health of corrections officers (M. Denhof, C. Spinaris, G. Morton, 2014). The impact of trauma extends beyond the prisoner and reforming these institutions to reflect a rehabilitative environment is on a lengthy course. However, artists and services providers that are incorporating healing,

art, and therapeutic resources to prison programs are bringing a sense of humanity into these spaces. We are the force and the hope for rehabilitation within the prison environment.

This study was dedicated at looking at the child-parent relationship because trauma cycles need to be interrupted. Children are victims of policy and practice that separate them from their primary care giver, sending the parents away to unreachable and inaccessible institutions for years at a time. Children are affected in multiple areas of their lives but the main concern is the way in which their heart, soul, and spirit is marked by the loss and separation of their mother and/or father. And even though the literature explains the mental, emotional, and behavioral impact of this separation, simply put, a child will miss their mom and they will miss their father.

The programs discussed in this research are effective because of the commitment and respect given to participants (both the child and the parents), also the trust in the art and creative process, and the awareness in cultural humility and the advocacy towards compassion when implementing these programs. The art is the vehicle that carries participants through a journey of self-discovery, transformation, and reconciliation for participant, service provider, and observer (prison guard). It is my hope, that this paper has served to lift up and showcase the work of artists, service providers, and art therapists who are committed to social action and the reunification of families impacted by systems of oppression.

The research project also informed the need to center art, trust, and integrity in our mission, purpose, and approach as service providers. I choose to name the importance of integrity because it can be the antidote to the betrayals caused by systemic wide oppressions. When we approach clients whose lives have been negatively impacted by these systems, we have to arrive with integrity in our work so that we may be worthy of gaining their trust for the transformative work we offer through the therapeutic arts process.

Trust is a sacred agreement and the lack of trust creates what Emma and Helen referred to as a lack of tolerance, respect, empathy, and compassion. The lack of trust creates walls between people. And prisons are literally walls and cells created to contain

individuals. The power of art is that it finds a way to break barriers, whether they are systemic or the inner barriers of the mind. Art is profoundly effective. Art and its healing power is expansive, it is the circle that can break the lines and boxes that attempt to confine our humanity.

## APPENDIX

## **IRB Approval/Castillo**

Dear Ms. Castillo,

Thank you for submitting your IRB application for your protocol titled Arts-Based Programming for Incarcerated Parents. All documents have been received and reviewed, and I am pleased to inform you that your study has been approved.

The effective date of your approval is February 16, 2017 – February 15, 2018. If you wish to continue your project beyond the effective period, you must submit a renewal application to the IRB prior to January 2, 2018. In addition, if there are any changes to your protocol, you are required to submit an addendum application.

For any further communication regarding your approved study, please reference your IRB protocol number: LMU IRB 2017 SP 21.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Julie Paterson

## **LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY**

### Experimental Subjects Bill of Rights

Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code §24172, I understand that I have the following rights as a participant in a research study:

1. I will be informed of the nature and purpose of the experiment.
2. I will be given an explanation of the procedures to be followed in the medical experiment, and any drug or device to be utilized.
3. I will be given a description of any attendant discomforts and risks to be reasonably expected from the study.
4. I will be given an explanation of any benefits to be expected from the study, if applicable.
5. I will be given a disclosure of any appropriate alternative procedures, drugs or devices that might be advantageous and their relative risks and benefits.
6. I will be informed of the avenues of medical treatment, if any, available after the study is completed if complications should arise.
7. I will be given an opportunity to ask any questions concerning the study or the procedures involved.
8. I will be instructed that consent to participate in the research study may be withdrawn at any time and that I may discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.
9. I will be given a copy of the signed and dated written consent form.
10. I will be given the opportunity to decide to consent or not to consent to the study without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, coercion, or undue influence on my decision.

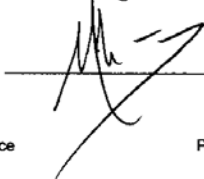
LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation: February 2017

- 1) I hereby authorize Ana Ruth Yela Castillo, MFT Trainee to include me in the following research study: Arts Based Programming for Parents
- 2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to understand effective and creative components of parenting programs offered to parents who are or were formerly incarcerated.
- N/A 3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I am a representative from an arts based organizations within California that offers services to incarcerated parents and their families OR I am a former participant of said program.
- 4) I understand that I will be audiotaped and the artwork that I make in the interview will be photographed in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that the audio and artwork will be used for teaching and/or research purposes.
- 5) I understand the organizations I am affiliated will not be named in the use of the study, and that my individual name will be kept anonymous through the use of a pseudonym.
- 6) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
- 7) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time.
- 8) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
- 9) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
- 10) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.
- 11) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".
- 12) I understand that Ana Ruth Yela Castillo, can be reached at (323) 237-2088 or at Castillo.anaruth@gmail.com, and will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.
- 13) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Moffet, Ph. D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 at david.moffet@lmu.edu.

Participants Signature



Date 3/9/17

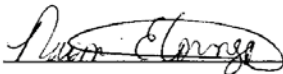
LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation: February 2017

- 1) I hereby authorize Ana Ruth Yela Castillo, MFT Trainee to include me in the following research study: Arts Based Programming for Parents
- 2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to understand effective and creative components of parenting programs offered to parents who are or were formerly incarcerated.
- 3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I am a representative from an arts based organizations within California that offers services to incarcerated parents and their families OR I am a former participant of said program.
- 4) I understand that I will be audiotaped and the artwork that I make in the interview will be photographed in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that the audio and artwork will be used for teaching and/or research purposes.
- 5) I understand the organizations I am affiliated will not be named in the use of the study, and that my individual name will be kept anonymous through the use of a pseudonym.
- 6) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
- 7) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time.
- 8) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
- 9) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
- 10) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.
- 11) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".
- 12) I understand that Ana Ruth Yela Castillo, can be reached at (323) 237-2088 or at [Castillo.anaruth@gmail.com](mailto:Castillo.anaruth@gmail.com), and will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.
- 13) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Moffet, Ph. D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 at [david.moffet@lmu.edu](mailto:david.moffet@lmu.edu).

Participants Signature



Date

03/09/2017

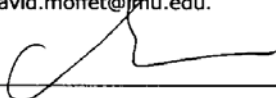
LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation: February 2017

- 1) I hereby authorize Ana Ruth Yela Castillo, MFT Trainee to include me in the following research study: Arts Based Programming for Parents
- 2) I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to understand effective and creative components of parenting programs offered to parents who are or were formerly incarcerated.
- 3) It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is that I am a representative from an arts based organizations within California that offers services to incarcerated parents and their families OR I am a former participant of said program.
- 4) I understand that I will be audiotaped and the artwork that I make in the interview will be photographed in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that the audio and artwork will be used for teaching and/or research purposes.
- 5) I understand the organizations I am affiliated will not be named in the use of the study, and that my individual name will be kept anonymous through the use of a pseudonym.
- 6) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
- 7) I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time.
- 8) I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.
- 9) I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.
- 10) I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.
- 11) In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".
- 12) I understand that Ana Ruth Yela Castillo, can be reached at (323) 237-2088 or at Castillo.anaruth@gmail.com, and will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.
- 13) I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact David Moffet, Ph. D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 at david.moffet@lmu.edu.

Participants Signature



Date

2/23/17



## REFERENCES

- Bennink, J., Gussak D. E., Skowran, M., (2003). The Role of the Art Therapist in a Juvenile Justice Setting. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 30, 163-173.
- Clopton, K. L. (2008). "Are There Other Kids Like Me?" Children With a Parent in Prison. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36, 195-198.
- Deaver, S. (2002). What Constitutes Art Therapy Research? *Art Therapy*, 19(1), 23-27.
- Denhof, M., Spinaris, C.G., Morton, G.R. (2014) Occupational Stressors in Corrections Organizations: Types, Effects and Solutions. National Institute of Corrections. Library ID 028299.
- Dixey, R. & Woodall, J. (2012). The significance of the 'visit' in an English category-B prison: views from prisoners, prisoner's families and prison staff. *Community, Work & Family*, 15, 29-47.
- Dunphy, K. (1999). A Creative Arts Performance Program for Incarcerated Women. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 26, 35-43.
- Edwards, J. (2016). Is there such a thing as qualitative research? *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 47, A1-A2.
- Davis, A.Y. (2003) Are Prisons Obsolete? New York, NY: Seven Stories Press
- Frostig, K. (2005). What is Social Action Art Therapy? *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 22(1), 2.

- Frostig, K. (2011). Arts Activism: Praxis in Social Justice, Critical Discourse, and Radical Modes of Engagement. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 28(2), 50-56.
- Gipson, L. (2015). Is Cultural Competence Enough? Deepening Social Justice Pedagogy in Art Therapy, *Art Therapy*, 32(3) 142-145.
- Gussak, D. E. & Ploumis-Devick, E. (2004). Creating Wellness in Correctional Populations Through the Arts: An Interdisciplinary Model. *Wellness in Correctional Populations Through the Arts*, 35-43.
- Gussak, D. (2009) The Effects of Art Therapy on Male and Female Inmates: Advancing the Research Base. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 36, 5-12.
- Hillman, G. (2009). Arts and Juvenile Justice. *Best Practices in Mental Health*, 5.1, 1-9
- Joseph, C. (2006). Creative Alliance: The Healing Power of Art Therapy. *Art Therapy*, 23(1), 30-33.
- Junge, M. (1989). The Heart of the Matter. *Arts in Psychotherapy*, 16, 77-78.
- Keller-Dupree, E. A., and Perryman, K. (2013). The Effects of an Expressive Arts Therapy Group on Female Counselors-in-Training: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 26(4), 223-235.

- Kjellstrand, J., Cearly, J., Eddy, J.M., Foney, D., Martinez Jr., C.R. (2012). Characteristics of Incarcerated Fathers and Mothers: Implications for Preventive Interventions Targeting Children and Families. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 2409-2415.
- Levy, B. (1978). Art Therapy in a Women's Correctional Facility. *Art Psychotherapy*, 5, 157-166.
- Lu, L., and Yuen, F. (2012). Journey Women: Art Therapy in a Decolonizing Framework of Practice. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 39, 192-200.
- Mallet, C. (2015). The School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Critical Review of the Punitive Paradigm Shift. *Children Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 33, 15-24.
- McCarthy, P., Schiraldi, V., Shark, M. (2016) The Future of Youth Justice: A Community-Based Alternative to the Youth Prison Model, *New Thinking in Community Corrections* (2), 1-36.
- Meiners, E.R. (2011) Ending the school-to-prison pipeline/building abolition futures. *The Urban Review* (43) 4. 547-565.
- Merriam, B. (1998). To Find a Voice: Art Therapy in a Women's Prison. *Women & Therapy*, 21, 157-171.
- Miller, A.L., Weston, L.E., Perryman, J., Horwitz, T., Franzen, S., Cochran, S. (2014). Parenting While Incarcerated: Tailoring the Strengthening Families Program for use with Jailed Mothers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 44, 163-170.

- Miller, H.V., Barnes J.C. (2015). The Association Between Parental Incarceration and Health, Education, and Economic Outcomes in Young Adulthood. *Southern Criminal Justice Association*, 1-20.
- Ng, I. H., Sarri, R. C., & Stoffregen, E. (2013). Intergenerational Incarceration: Risk Factors and Social Exclusion. *Journal Of Poverty*, 17(4), 437-459.
- Rosal, M.L. (1998). Research Thoughts: Learning from the Literature and from Experience. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 15(1), 47-50.
- Scudder, A. T., (2014). Evaluation of an existing parenting class within a women's state correctional facility and parenting class modeled from Parent-Child Interaction Therapy. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 46, 238-247.
- Slayton, S. (2012). Building Community as Social Action: An Art Therapy Group with Adolescent Males. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 39, 179-185.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST

### **AZ HAKIM Foundation**

Address socioeconomic disparities and community trauma that alters the lives of families affected by incarceration  
[www.hakim4kids.com](http://www.hakim4kids.com) | (323) 596-7707

### **California Arts Council**

Grants & Resources for Arts Program in Correctional Facilities & Reentry Programs  
[www.arts.ca.gov](http://www.arts.ca.gov)

### **Californians for Safety & Justice**

Assistance on how to reclassify felonies under Prop. 47  
[Myprop47.org](http://Myprop47.org)

### **Center for Restorative Justice Works**

Unites Children, Families and Communities Separated by Crime and the Criminal Justice System | [www.CRJW.us](http://www.CRJW.us)

### **Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents**

MIRACLE Project at LA County Jails  
Prevention of intergenerational crime and incarceration  
[www.e-ccip.org](http://www.e-ccip.org)

### **Chowchilla Family Express**

Provide free transportation for families to visit their loved ones at women's prison in Chowchilla | [www.familyexpress.us](http://www.familyexpress.us)

### **Chuco Justice Center**

Welcome Home LA Program  
1137 E. Redondo Blvd., Inglewood, CA 90302  
(323) 235-4243

### **dad's back! Academy**

Support for reentry parents  
Los Angeles, CA 90002 | (213) 412-8912

### **Dignity & Power Now**

For all Incarcerated People, Their Families, & Communities  
Email: [info@dignityandpowernow.org](mailto:info@dignityandpowernow.org)  
[DignityAndPowerNow.Org](http://DignityAndPowerNow.Org) | (213) 745-7135

### **Ella Baker Center**

Build the power of black, brown, and poor people to break the cycles of incarceration and poverty | [www.ellabakercenter.org](http://www.ellabakercenter.org) | (510) 428 – 3939 | LOTS of Resources Listed!

### **Ex-Offender Action Network – Center for Health Justice**

Resource Directory Available @ [www.centerforhealthjustice.org](http://www.centerforhealthjustice.org)  
(213) 229-0979

### **Friends Outside in Los Angeles County (FOLA)**

"Breaking the Cycles of Incarceration"  
[www.friendsoutsidelacounty.org](http://www.friendsoutsidelacounty.org)  
(626) 795-7607

**Get on The Bus**

Provides transportation to children and caregivers to visit mothers and fathers in CA prisons  
[www.getonthebus.us](http://www.getonthebus.us) | (818) 980-7714

**I.e.a.p.p.**

Learn Everything About the Parole Process  
<https://instragram.com/leappinfo/>  
email: [leappinfo@gmail.com](mailto:leappinfo@gmail.com)

**MILPA**

Healing informed leadership building  
339 Melody Lane, Salinas, Ca 93901  
[www.milpacollective.org](http://www.milpacollective.org)

**National Compadres Network**

La Cultura Cura | Transformational Health & Healing  
(408) 484-4191 | [www.nationalcompadresnetwork.org](http://www.nationalcompadresnetwork.org)

**National Fatherhood Initiative**

Working to End Father Absence  
[www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

**National Resource Center on Children & Families of the Incarcerated**

<https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/>  
@Rutgers University (856) 225-2718

**Noxtin**

Juveline Justice Think Tank & Strategic Action Organization  
(408) 664-8802 | [www.noxtin.org](http://www.noxtin.org)

**Hunger Action LA: People's Guide to Welfare Health & Other Services**

961 S. Mariposa Ave. suite 205, Los Angeles CA 90006  
Phone 1-213-388-8228  
[info@hungeractionla.org](mailto:info@hungeractionla.org)  
<http://www.hungeractionla.org/peoplesguide>

**POPS the Club - (Pain of the Prison System)**

Enhance the lives of students who have been impacted by the pain of the prison system  
[www.popstheclub.com](http://www.popstheclub.com)  
(323) 286-2438

**Project WHAT!**

Serving youth who have incarcerated parents in Alameda County & San Francisco  
<http://communityworkswest.org/program/project-what/>  
(510) 268-8132

**Statewide Inmate Family Council**

Serving Families and Friends of Incarcerated Loved Ones in the State of CA  
[www.statewide-ifc.com](http://www.statewide-ifc.com)

**Street Poets**

Harnesses the healing power of poetry and music to save lives, create community, transform culture | [www.streetpoetsinc.org](http://www.streetpoetsinc.org) | (323) 737 - 8545