Peer Artistry

Peer Art Facilitation
and Social Inclusion for Women

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Introduction

Peer Artistry is a train-the-trainer program for women to design and facilitate their own art programming. The Peer Artistry pilot was held at Sistering from October - December 2016. Six women completed a 6-session art facilitation training and led two art workshops each with other women at Sistering's 24/7 Drop In. Workshop participants had the choice to include their art in a group exhibit held at Sistering in February 2017.

Sistering works with women who are homeless or marginally housed and often struggle with social isolation, mental health and addictions. Many of the women who come to Sistering's Drop In have a depth of artistic skills. However, due to precarious living situations and daily struggles, they have faced a lack of opportunity to develop their leadership and share these skills. Based on input women have given, there is great interest and need for arts programming and art-based income generation opportunities. The aim of the Peer Artistry pilot project was to increase avenues of social inclusion within the drop-in, build the capacity of women to earn income from their art skills, and engage their creative skills as community leaders.

The Peer Artistry pilot included research on the impact of peer-led art programming on the social inclusion of women facing issues of social marginalization. In particular, the project looked at how art facilitation training and peer-led art workshops impacted self esteem, social participation, and access to resources for women who access Sistering's 24/7 Drop In. The Peer Artistry pilot led to learnings about best practices for art programming within drop-in settings. As well, the Peer Artistry model showed indicators for why arts and culture programming and professional training opportunities are important to the well being of women who face systemic issues around poverty, gender violence, and social marginalization.

Best Practices

▶ Create opportunities for adult education, training and leadership development so that women learn the skills to lead their own programming.

▶ Peer art facilitator training should help facilitators understand their roles and as peers, as well as set boundaries around involvement in emotional support and crisis response.

▶ Include curriculum on accessibility, learning styles & learning levels, and design of cuturally relevant art exercises within peer art facilitator trainings.

▶ Create options for continued collaboration between peer art facilitators so that they can build mutual confidence, support, feedback, and encouragement around workshop facilitation.

▶ Give facilitators access to the space and resources they need to prepare their own curriculum and workshops, eg access to art supplies, computers & printers, and available work spaces.

▶ Hold art workshops in spaces where women can take a break from distractions and daily stresses.

▶ Create ways for women to feel enjoyment so that they can find a sense of accomplishment and success.

▶ Assure that project budgets reflect all of the labor expected of peer art facilitators, including training, curriculum design, prep of art exercises, facilitation, follow-up, and design & production of community art events.

▶ Improve access to social and economic resources by connecting women to professional arts-based opportunities and skill development, such as grant-writing, art exhibits, networking opportunities, and employment supports.

▶ Assure that staff are aware and informed about peer-led programming. Remove barriers so that facilitators can successfully fulfill their roles and responsibilities as leaders.

▶ Consider the impact that conflict and gaps in communication between staff and clients may have on art programming.

▶ Create options for women to choose what happens with their art when a workshop is over. Because some women may be facing issues of health or homelessness, they might want to make choices about how to keep and share their work.

▶ Provide ways for women to interact with the wider community through their artwork, such as by sharing within a drop-in space or an art exhibit.

Literature Review

Social Inclusion

Recent government and organizational reports show that Peer Artistry could serve as a timely model for social inclusion, given its combined attention to arts and peer leadership. The 2010 Mental Health Commission of Canada Round Table on Social Inclusion and Mental Health called for increased funding for "consumer to consumer services", "development of peer accreditation", and "capacity building for consumer survivor initiatives including jobs and services" (5). The committee noted the importance of arts and culture approaches to social inclusion as very important, calling for increased support, recognition, and funding of such initiatives (5). The YWCA issued a 2014 report providing insight into best practices within shelter settings for women and children across Canada, highlighting harm reduction, strength-based, client-centered, and trauma-informed approaches as principles for success across the board (Bopp 2014). An inclusion approach means saying "yes" to client choices about what is important to them, as much as possible. Working from women's strengths means focusing on resilience and assets: having expectations that women can succeed in learning new skills and abilities; acknowledging their coping skills and resilience as a foundation for next steps; and making opportunities to contribute to the creation of community (Bopp 2014, 12). Within a trauma-informed, harm reduction framework, indicators of programming success include increased feelings of trust, increased willingness to express and advocate for needs, willingness to share stories and narratives, and setting and fulfilling short-term, achievable goals (Bopp 2014, 24-26).

Wider efforts to increase social inclusion include actions to confront poverty and racism, address unemployment, increase civic engagement, and improve access to resources (Canadian Urban Libraries Council 2010). But rather than a set of outcomes, social inclusion can be understood as a *process* for addressing socio-economic disadvantage that evolves over time (Ponic and Frisby 2010, 1521, 1523, 1526-1527; Barraket 2005, 2). The process can include ways of

"creating spaces and structures that foster women's opportunities to make choices about how and when to participate in health-promoting activities" (Ponic and Frisby 2010, 1528). Social inclusion can be considered to include "psychosocial, relational, organizational, and participatory dimensions" that interact over time (1521, 1523). Though definitions vary, the literature suggests that social inclusion processes involve overlapping relationships between individual learning/personal agency and social/political action, seen within the context of the structural issues that impact women's lives (Clover & Craig 2009, 31; Ponic and Frisby 2010, 1521, 1523; Barraket 2005, 2). The convergence of art and social inclusion processes may create avenues for women to draw connections between the personal and political in ways that uniquely respond to their own priorities.

Social Inclusion for Women

Social inclusion may have particular meanings for women living in poverty and/or with experiences of mental health and addictions. A starting point for understanding social inclusion is to look at how women and girls may develop and maintain relationships. Oliver and Cheff (2012) carried out 8 life-history interviews with young women in Toronto, between the ages of 15 and 21 (642, 648). They asked what kinds of spaces and people provide homeless young women a sense of belonging and access to social capital that comes from 'community engagement' (646). In particular, their research explored the meaning of social capital for homeless youth whose lives are not organized through the nuclear family unit (644). Their research drew on previous literature to highlight that feelings of trust and belonging are essential to gaining social capital through participation in communities and organizations (Putnam 2000, as cited in Oliver and Cheff 2012, 645). "For homeless youth, building social capital is not simply a matter of connecting young people to services and shelters but rather in allying with them to create spaces and relationships in which they feel that they belong" (645). The study revealed 3 kinds of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking (645-646).[i] Girls were most able to form familial-like relationships with peers as well as through some long-term relationships with service providers such as teachers and social workers (657). Strong relationships with service-providers also helped them with bridging, or developing relations with outside

groups and employment/self-advancement (657). Overall, the study found that, "access to social capital and social networks was positively correlated to women's sense of agency, to their positive association with services, and to better overall health outcomes" (643). In particular, the authors assert the need for "strength-based approaches" that recognize the proactive agency of homeless young women as necessary for increasing their social capital (659).

A 2009 study on the experiences of Toronto-based homeless transwomen looked at "the forms of social support they provided for each other as a form of survival" using PAR, arts-based research (Sakamota et al. 2009, 2). Transwomen provide each other family-like social support in transitioning and coming out, amidst systemic barriers to services due to staff transphobia and heteronormativity within social service and health care settings (Sakamota et al. 2009, 13). "In light of the lack of social services that are trans-positive, and due to the fact that trans-phobia is so widespread in Canadian society, it was important to focus on how central social supports and social networks were to transwomen to survive and buffer the mental health impact of transphobia" (Sakamota et al. 2009, 14). Trans-women stated their needs to be included in spaces for women, but also have the choice to have their own spaces (Sakamota et al. 2009, 14).

Matheson et al. (2015) explored the personal transformations of women living in poverty who have experienced trauma from intimate partner violence, with a focus on understanding how mental well being, self-esteem and self-identity factor into recovery processes. Women identified "self-awareness", "self-reflection" and "reestablishment of self-identity and self-worth" as important to their process of recovery. These aspects were contrasted with "erosion of self-identity and self-esteem" that originated within relationships of intimate partner violence (565). Recovery was gained in specific ways, such as when women were able to identify and make choices about their coping mechanisms (such as the use of drugs and alcohol) (566). As well, this process involved recognition of the ways in which substance abuse was actually related to trauma experience (566). By sharing, women were able to validate each other and their own experiences (566). This research draws on previous literature on peer-based interventions, which have been shown to have positive impacts on "personal resilience, self-esteem, and

resourcefulness", increased social connectedness, motivation and self-belief (567-568). The study recommended that practice and policy interventions be oriented towards peer-based strategies to increase social support for women who have experienced and are seeking to escape intimate partner violence, accompanied by holistic and long-term service delivery supports (567-578).

Arts and Social Inclusion

It is important to consider how the arts are positioned within the growing field of theory and practice on social inclusion and social determinants of health. Rather than simply being an add-on to social service delivery, the arts may have specific meanings and pathways of impact. Close attention to art processes can help us understand the importance of arts-based programmatic approaches for social inclusion. Findings from the literature indicate that these particular pathways of social inclusion in relation to the arts include:

▶ Art programming can be a first point of contact for community engagement for women who are experiencing multiple forms of marginalization (Thomas et al. 2011, 431).

▶ Rehabilitative, trauma-informed, and harm reduction approaches to arts programming are essential, because social belonging is not a passive process, nor is it necessarily generated just by taking part in recreational activities (Stickley 2010, 31, Bopp 2014, Sapouna and Pamer 2016, 10).

▶ Shifting identification away from stigmatized associations such as 'service user' or 'patient', and towards ones such as 'artist', invokes new social roles and a sense of personal and economic potential (Stickley 2010, 31; Clover & Craig 2009, 28, Thomas et al 2011, 434).

▶ The arts create opportunities and forums for engagement with the public and wider community networks for people with mental health and addictions challenges (Clover & Craig 2009, 28, Thomas et al. 2011, 433-444, Nugent et all 2011, 363, Sapouna and Pamer 2016, 9).

▶ The arts mediate between personal/individual and political/social aspects of social inclusion (Clover & Craig 2009, 29-31, Ponic and Frisby 2010, 1521, 1523).

A number of recent peer projects have incorporated art into activities and programming. The Mood Disorders Association of Ontario has a program entitled, "Coping Through the Arts and Peer Support" that offers skills for stress reduction through music, conversations with peers, and creative skills for recovery (Coping Through the Arts and Peer Support, 2016). The Healing Arts and Recovery with Peer Support (HARPS) program based in Hamilton, ON, "is a peer

led program to explore art, build connections and open the doors to recovery" (HARPS - Healing Arts and Recovery with Peer Support, 2016). HARPS is a peer-run program that invites artists (not necessarily peers) to teach art workshops and classes. Vancouver Recovery Through Art Society supports The Art Studios, a space where people with mental health challenges can take part in multiple forms of art-making (Vancouver Recovery Through Art Society, 2016). Participants are able to receive on-site support from occupational therapists and rehab therapists (Vancouver Recovery Through Art Society, 2016). Gwen Hayes, a Toronto-based peer support worker (trained in WRAP and Pathways to Recovery), has developed a methodology that she entitles, "Arts-Infused Peer Support" (Art for Wellness, 2016). She distinguishes this group-based methodology from art therapy. "Groups run for 10 to 12-weeks for 3-hours a week and support people in identifying and developing resilience factors and in building general models for self-care, self-expression, self-reflection, and self-understanding that enhance quality of life and well-being" (Art for Wellness, 2016).

Other programs focus on creating venues to support artists with mental health challenges to inform and challenge wider audiences about stigma. These programs take advocacy and public education approaches to supporting and mobilizing the work of artists. CUE, which began as a youth-led project of Sketch in Toronto, supports artists with the resources and spaces they need to create their work.

> *CUE has developed a high-access funding program, specifically supporting artists who live on the margins and face barriers to connecting with arts funding and other professional opportunities. In addition to providing financial support for art projects, CUE offers extensive consultation and mentorship in developing and writing project proposals, budget planning, peer-support throughout the production process, and opportunity for public exhibition.*
>
> *(About, 2012)*

Another model is Art with Impact, a San Francisco based organization that re-ceives digital media-based submissions from applicants anywhere, and mobilizes them on their website and through a film festival. Art with Impact offers work shops in schools, universities, corporate settings, and a number of other venues, using the media to educate and inform the public about mental health,

including films and panel discussions (Film and Mental Health Workshops, 2016). This organization mobilizes learning remotely, through the sharing and distribution of media.

The arts have been shown to have positive effects on mental health and to create pathways for social interaction and education (Nugent & Loucks 2011, 358-360). Studies taken up in community-oriented, rehabilitative contexts as well as clinical-focused, bio-medical settings have shown much evidence that the arts can improve health and well being (Sapouna and Pamer 2016, Stucky and Nobel 2010, 261). Yet there is a disciplinary tension between health research and communty-centred arts about how to approach and understand arts engagement. The health sector is often focused on empirical evidence around the health impacts of the arts, versus a study of the nuances and politics of art engagement (Putland 2008, 266). For example, in a review of literature from 1995 to 2007, Stucky and Nobel found 4 main areas of art practice within the convergence of arts and health that have shown many positive impacts: "music engagement, visual arts therapy, movement-based creative expression, and expressive writing" (2010, 255). They comment that the methodologies of many studies on the inter-relationship between arts and health have been observational, with small sample sizes, no control groups, and possibly affected by issues of responder bias (Stucky and Nobel 2010, 261). This review largely frames art within functional terms. Conversely, the community arts field has resisted the instrumentalization of arts processes (Putland 2008, 266). Yet there also often a general and uncritical implication within this field that art has the power to create social change. Rather than simply thinking of 'art as a tool' for social change or health outcomes, it is helpful to consider how experiences of art making can reveal personal, collective, and political significance in connection with indicators of health.

Some recent projects have spoken to the nuances of art initiatives that include a focus on social inclusion. Clover and Craig led a study using feminist approaches to adult education with homeless/street-involved women who took part in 18 months of art workshops in Victoria, BC (2009, 22). They found four categories for what women found important around art-based learning: belonging/connecting, meaning-making, identity, and empowerment. A tension that emerged

in researcher and artist-facilitator conversations was whether the art was personal/therapeutic vs social/political. Comments from the participants showed that notions of healing spanned these ways of thinking, in that the ability to be heard and take action was important to healing on a personal level (31).

A 2011 study by Thomas et al. explored the value of art within a non-governmental program for homeless adults in Australia (429). They found that the choice of participants to be involved in whatever ways they wanted was important for them to make choices to engage in community (434). Being part of a group was important to regular participation (433). It took some time for participants to decide if and how they wanted to take part, but the art provided a sense of weekly regularity and continuity in ways that were important to people with transient lifestyles (432). As well, participants were able to find continuity with past times in their lives, by drawing connections to previous achievements and life experiences (432). The art was a process of discovery in regards to self-awareness, was an outlet for focused activity, and helped participants make small, creative choices that at times let to other, larger life decisions (432). These decisions included management and choices about their use of substances and alcohol (433). The art helped provide relief from mental health symptoms (433). As well, the program was an avenue to "respect and public recognition" since the audiences from beyond the drop-in visitors and staff were invited to view the work. There was a sense of respect around skills, mutual learning and cultural inclusiveness between participants (433). Overall, this study found that there is a need for arts opportunities that can reduce stigma through "recognition and acceptance in local communities" (434).

Nugent et al. (2011) explored the rehabilitative aspects of arts programming for women incarcerated in Scotland. Findings showed an increase of self-esteem and confidence as a result of participation (362). It was important to participants to have professional artists to learn from, that they be able to take their art or documentation of their work with them at the end, and to be able to share their work with their families and children (362-363). The project created communication between participants and prison staff, mutual encouragement between participants, and improved perceptions of other women in the program via

communication and shared skills (363-364).   As well, the art programming led to increased interest in continued education and programmatic links to further opportunities and work (365).[ii]

Sapouna and Pamer (2016) reported the impact of incorporating the arts into mental health care through recovery-based practices within 3 mental health programs in Ireland (2). The authors defined a recovery-based approach as a "shift from 'the patient' to 'a citizen' role" by "putting individual choices, social inclusion, citizenship and human rights to the centre of practice" (2). Findings showed that art programming was a way for participants to experience and express a range of emotions in an accepting environment where people could build relationships with others (6). However, this also came with frustrations to interaction (6). The programs created opportunities to recognize skills and in-terests, as well as make decisions around the planning of workshops (6-7). Staff took part in the workshops, which created opportunities for interactions that were less stigmatized and more equal (7). It was significant that people were able to move beyond being positioned as patients with diagnoses (7-8). The workshops created "accepting and respectful environments" where input and choices were respected (8). As well, the programs were a way for people to become connect-ed to larger communities outside mental health settings, in ways that reduced stigma and allowed people to be part of a larger network (9). Key findings on the impact of incorporating the arts into mental health care within a recovery-orient-ed approach included people taking on roles that led to "well-being and social inclusion" within community settings; the skills and abilities of participants were recognized; and staff and users developed more egalitarian relationships (10).

Arts programming is often part of broader health and social service settings, and can't be considered in isolation from other service options and barriers. The arts may have particular impact as a form of community engagement because they generate interest and enjoyment, and because they serve as an effective way of building social networks in ways that address conflict and social problems by bringing diverse groups of people together (Barraket 2005, 13). However, it can be difficult to tell whether the impacts of art programming on social inclusion is due to arts practice, or because these projects take place as modes of

community development and engagement (Barraket 2005, 13). Social belonging is not simply an outcome of arts programming, but can also be generated through new forms of collective identity (Stickley 2010, 31). "Thus by creating a collective artist identity, a social answer is created to answer a social problem" (Stickley 2010, 31). Personal & collective assertion around the social role of "artist" is important to explore in relation to arts-based practices within a drop-in setting. As well, artistic production and the artist's role should be seen as extending to wider public contexts that are not defined through service provision (Stickley 2010, 31). It is important then to consider how the combined role of "peer" and "artist" might create new avenues for advocacy, belonging, and health for women facing issues of systemic marginalization.

Methodology

Peer art facilitators were recruited through an open call poster announcement to women who access Sistering's Drop-In and support services. Applicants were asked to fill out a brief, one page application and attend a 15 minute interview. They were asked to bring samples of their art and speak briefly about their leadership experiences and interest in art facilitation. Eight trainees were selected, and six completed the full training.

The Peer Artistry training included six 2-hour sessions and focused on building the capacity of the trainees to design and facilitate their own programming. Two trainings were held per week, and the training spanned 3 weeks. Before the training began, the peer facilitator trainees filled out consent & confidentiality forms and pre-training questionnaires. The trainings were co-facilitated by Erin Howley and Barbara Aikman, who had previously led art programming with Sistering's harm reduction program and Spun Studio textile arts space. Training topics included program parameters, triggers & personal boundaries, group norms, artistic content, group dynamics, art process & product, power dynamics within facilitation practice, managing conflict, problem solving around concerns and challenges of facilitation, personal skills assessments, curriculum design and feedback on draft curriculum, and design of ice breakers and group reflection exercises. The trainees finalized their own curriculum and materials lists and the program facilitators purchased the needed art materials. The peer art facilitators filled out evaluation forms after each training session and a post-training questionnaire once the training was complete.

Each peer art facilitator led two 2-hour workshops during evening drop-in hours, with 3-10 participants per workshop. Two workshops were held per week, over a total of 6 weeks between October - December 2016. Training facilitator and research co-investigator Erin Howley provided facilitation support and led data collection at each workshop. Participants filled out consent and confidentiality forms at the beginning of each art workshop. The workshops focused on a

variety of art skills and mediums depending on each peer art facilitator's unique curriculum design. These included paper arts & collage, cartooning, game boards, 3-D cards, painting, drawing, poetry, and clay sculpture. Participants filled out media release forms, evaluation forms and did group check-outs at the end of each art session. Peer art facilitators did a short interview with the co-investigator after each of their art workshops. Two focus groups were held at the end of the project with peer art facilitator and art workshop participant groups, with 6-8 participants per focus group.

Peer art facilitators took part in two collaborative data analysis sessions. These sessions started with an explanation of a set of preliminary codes that were posted to the wall. Next the group read participant feedback from art workshop check-outs, evaluation forms, and transcripts. The group discussed the data together and added input and revisions to the preliminary codes. This collective input directly informed the findings of the pilot project.

Findings Summary

Self Esteem

Art facilitation training and workshop facilitation led to reciprocal confidence building between facilitators and art workshop participants. The training helped women gain confidence to lead a workshop because it provided clarity around the facilitation role, instruction on how to design and organize a workshop, and set personal and professional boundaries. Peer art facilitator relationships were important to building confidence and support through encouragement around art facilitation skills and practice. Confidence building within art workshops was connected to reciprocal sharing around art skills and art-making; feelings of accomplishment and enjoyment; and changed perceptions between women.

Social Participation

The Peer Artistry art workshops created a setting where women could share skills, learn about each other, and interact in new ways. Changed interpersonal perceptions may have positively influenced interactions within the drop-in. Holding art workshops in a space aside from the drop-in was important to stress release and self-reflection and influenced women's ability to have positive encounters. Interaction came with experimentation with art materials, as well as appreciation and sharing of individual approaches to art-making. Interaction also involved the potential to share art and create opportunities for healthy self-expression within the drop-in. Peer art facilitators noticed that other women saw them more positively, in relation to their art skills and guidance. A non-hierarchical peer relationship was important because it created trust and an "escape" to a comfortable and stress-free environment.

Access to Resources

Peer-facilitated art workshops can help connect women with further art opportunities through encouragement and peer referrals to employment counselors and resources. Feedback and information requests that stem from art workshops may help organizational staff better understand the interests and ambitions of women for opportunity development in ways that are suited to their needs and abilities. Peer-led art workshops should be connected to skills workshops or further programming around access to art opportunities, such as grant-writing, portfolio development, and self-promotion. As well, issues of economic justice and labor exploitation must be given attention around peer work and art-based professions.

Findings

PEER ART FACILITATOR ROLE

The facilitation role involved inner personal development and was seen as a learning process. In their roles, peer art facilitators mentioned the importance of patience, communication, people skills, and paying attention to the needs of others. In particular, art and creativity were important to faciliate knowledge sharing and group activity. Significantly, facilitators commented that the peer relationship was formed through art-making, rather than by identifying with addiction or mental health issues.

Managing Conflict

Peer art facilitation was seen as more manageable than other drop-in peer work because the role was focused on art skills. The clarity of the role helped the facilitators recognize the difference between their responsibilities and those of drop-in staff. The focus on art helped them maintain ethical boundaries and be clear that their role in working with marginalized women was not crisis intervention or counseling. Yet there were also questions about how to address unresolved conflict with drop-in staff that can negatively affect willingness to participate in programming.

> " *Unresolved conflict, conflict that for those of us doing the peer art facilitation project mostly has nothing to do with us, but mostly is still having a negative impact on the programming. So if women are frustrated and have spent all of their energy all day with unresolved conflict with staff, well maybe when we go ask them if they want to come to our workshop they will say...I participated and I donated some pieces of artwork to your exhibition and for your project but now because I'm angry at the way I've been mistreated I'm going to withdraw it'.* "

There were also questions about how much support to give around requests for assistance with art and career opportunities. One facilitator managed this tension by referring a workshop participant to Sistering's employment officer. counselor.

Peer art facilitators commented that participants saw them in terms of what they could do and who they are, rather than acting out of judgments or negative perceptions.

> *Now she really sees me for who I am as a person...Finally she realized I am just an instructor. I'm not here to assess her. She thinks I'm trying to judge her. Which I'm not...So now that she sees what I do, she may be a bit more at ease. You don't have to be friends with everybody. But at least have the person understand that, I'm not here to intimidate you. I'm just here to have fun a little bit.*

They also commented that the peer art relationship created new ways for women to address issues of conflict and power dynamics. A non-hierarchical or non-staff authority relationship in the peer role was an important aspect of interaction. Participants were able to express their concerns and issues around being able to access programming, such as mis-communication around timing, the impact of conflicts from the drop-in, and their levels of desire to participate. Because of the changed roles and interactions in the art workshops, facilitators saw that women were also able to start relating with each other differently within the drop-in.

The facilitators mentioned the possibility that other women in the drop-in might have reservations about whether peer workers are truthful and trustworthy. Because they are in a position as quasi-staff, peer workers fall into a range of power dynamics as "middle people". For this reason, clients sometimes don't trust that peer conversations can be safe and mutual. This brought up questions around the principles and ethics of peer work within the organization. The facilitators commented on the need to define the role and meaning of peer work, because it is a word that has become widely used and even appropriated for people in privileged positions. The peer art facilitators suggested the usefulness of more clear guidelines for peer work to help maintain their role as advocates with lived experience.

Leadership & Empowerment

Peer art facilitators talked about the need to be respected, trusted, and empowered to carry out their leadership roles. One facilitator found that there was unnecessary bureaucracy that created barriers and caused extra work that was

not compensated. She found it difficult to navigate drop-in protocols in order to access work space or do workshop outreach. The stress caused by a lapse in staff communication and support around her role affected her ability to lead her workshop. Facilitators questioned how to address power dynamics in strategic and diplomatic ways.

> *The whole thing about getting paid is you get hired. I went through an interview process to get this position. I didn't just walk off the street. We need to be treated in an equitable way so that just as staff need to be empowered to do their job, we need to be empowered to do our job to the best of our ability. And that is how we create opportunities for empowerment and access for our peers.*

One way that the peer art facilitators could be assisted to prepare and carry out their work is to make sure staff are informed of workshop logistics and are supportive of their roles. As well, staff can assist peer facilitators with access to space and available resources to prepare and carry out their work. Organizational commitment to peer facilitation also means addressing justice issues around how labor is understood, acknowledged and fairly compensated.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Training

The facilitators generally expressed that they were grateful for the training and facilitation experience, and that it led to a sense of achievement. They thought the training was thorough and provided them with a good understanding of the their role; clarity on what facilitation entails; how to set role-based personal and professional boundaries; and how to manage social dynamics in the drop-in. One facilitator talked about how the training helped her set emotional boundaries and "leave problems at the door". As well, the training helped the women gain confidence to lead a workshop and modeled ways to get people working together as a group. Still, a sense of achievement from the training also sometimes coincided with feelings of insecurity, vulnerabilities, or uncertainty about belonging.

Attention to the Needs of Others

Peer art facilitators repeatedly noted the importance of being adaptive to the needs and interests of their workshop participants. This facilitation skill involved managing a planned workshop curriculum while also consistently staying aware of participant interests and needs within the drop-in setting. It also included setting up the space so that everyone felt welcomed and equal. The facilitators had to manage the needs of multiple participants at once, as well as navigate participant pace and experience with the art-making tasks. This involved adapting a lesson plan to different skill levels and interests (e.g. to observe, to draw, to try something new). One facilitator was interested in exploring worshops that are meaningful according to the cultural aesthetics and backgrounds of participants. She thought the workshop would be more engaging if cultural perspectives were reflected in the work, indicating an interest and need for culturally relevant art curriculum.

The peer facilitators gave great attention to the question of how to support women to participate in programming. A couple of the facilitators felt the need to develop more skills around engaging and meeting the needs of women who are quiet, not expressive, or not fully participating. Inviting inclusion involved attention to people's interest and willingness to take part in art exercises, not being too directive, and acknowledging women's choices to participate in different ways, such as by sitting and watching.

Facilitators mentioned the need to be conscientious around accessibility and ableisim. This meant responding to the diverse needs of participants in regards to personal guidance, health, addictions, and language barriers. A number of facilitators mentioned the need to teach according to different learning and thinking styles, and at times found this challenging. For example, one facilitator talked about learning how to help with creative problem solving around one particpant's struggle with a certain art task. Another noticed that the participants were at a higher literacy level than she had expected, and commented about the need to plan her curriculum at a college level.

Time Management

Time management and time-checks were an aspect of skill development that were brought up many times as a challenging aspect of workshop facilitation. These challenges included not having enough time for the workshop given logistical issues in the drop-in, having more time than planned, or needing more than two hours to teach a skill-based art class. Another issue was how to allow for people to join in the workshop, despite coming in late or last minute. Given this input, future art facilitation training could include a specific component on various aspects of time management.

Workshop Design & Organization

Workshop planning and readiness was a learned skill that helped facilitators be clear about what they were offering to their participants. Workshop design involved innovating on things done in the past, as well as planning and feeling prepared to facilitate. One facilitator mentioned the importance of feeling organized, which was affected by program logistics such as workshop schedule changes within the drop-in. Further interest in skill development included how to design a workshop to allow for personal sharing and group reflection on artwork. As well, there was interest in the logistics of staying organized around a curriculum plan in regards to materials, timing, and participant needs. A couple of facilitators mentioned wanting to create further skill-based options in their workshop, building on the art basics they had started with.

Observational Skills

The facilitators showed a great degree of observational skill around group dynamics and participant achievements. Examples included the ways that participants managed their personal work space, as well as their focus, attention, and involvement in art-making. One facilitator noticed how her workshop exercises shifted the power dynamic in the group to a "level playing field" through structured ice breakers or meditative exercises. Another talked about how there was a different energy level according to the number of participants in her group, as well as how they supported each other. A number of facilitators

commented on emotional dynamics of the group work, such as how calm and happy participants were to be in the group, or how they were able to work in a group with out judging each other.

Emotional Regulation

Not getting distracted by drop-in dynamics came up as a main challenge of facilitating. The ability to emotionally detach from what was happening in the drop-in was mentioned as an important aspect of the work. One facilitator talked about not taking things personally and maintaining boundaries by not forcing participants to do things in a certain way or pace. For another, preparation for facilitation involved an inner process of getting grounded and not letting "personal stuff" get in the way.

Facilitator Collaboration

Co-facilitation was important and useful when there were disruptions, in case the facilitator didn't feel sure about what to do or how to address a situation. Co-facilitation was also important to help keep the workshop space organized, manage the art materials and make sure participants had what they needed. There was an interest in having more of a working relationship between peer facilitators in terms of attending and debriefing each other's workshops. Closer and ongoing collaboration could help facilitators build confidence and support, gain feedback, and get further ideas and encouragement.

Access to Opportunities and Resources

Facilitators and participants wanted advice and support around fundraising and art careers. They expressed a need for information workshops led by professionals around grant writing, portfolio development, and media documentation, especially for people who face multiple barriers due to marginalization. It is important for peer leaders and participants to receive documentation of their art and leadership for use towards resumes, gaining further opportunities, and applications to grant proposals. Access to resources should include work space and art resources for workshop preparation (e.g. easy to access art supply cabinet). As well, computers and photocopies should be available for use in researching art exercises and providing examples to participants.

> *So often we are asked to come into these spaces and participate in programming and we kind of get utilized as participants and nobody asks us what are our ambitions, what are our interests. Which is really not fair. It is not equitable to be treated that way...And I'm hoping very much that as peer art facilitation, that it will continue and develop at this centre and also throughout the city and that...we get the type of training and information around how to take our art to the next level and pursue opportunities.*

ACHIEVEMENT

Enjoyment

Inclusiveness was related to a sense of happiness and accomplishment around art-making. Being accepted was important for participants to build self confidence and restore self respect, and was connected to a sense of having fun and learning new skills. When facilitators noticed participants enjoying themselves, they were feeling happy together, expressing mutual support, being engrossed in their work, and finding relaxation. As well, happiness and enjoyment were important because these feelings helped women focus and manage the stress of the drop-in. The facilitators mentioned that the ability to have fun in the face of hardship can in itself be seen as an achievement.

Achievement for the peer art facilitators included a sense of purpose around helping and working with others. A sense of accomplishment for one facilitator came out of seeing others create and complete their own artwork. Accomplishment for another facilitator included "getting outside" of herself and feeling a bit happier when she saw that participants were enjoying themselves. Facilitators noticed participant interest, involvement, inclusion, enthusiam, and lack of hesitation to take part in their workshops.

> *I was really impressed by the ladies. It is almost like they felt they were part of something. It is like I said, I'm just trying to picture myself if I'm in a drop-in. I'm feeling vulnerable. So I'm being a part of something with all of these women that are doing something together. It changes. It helps. There is a certain calmness amongst people. There is a little bit of happiness there. I think that makes such a big difference.*

Focus

Focus was an important aspect of art-making for the facilitators as well as participants. Focus was connected to a sense of enjoyment as well as stress release and came along with being with other people. Facilitators noticed the ability of participants to maintain a focus on art-making despite what was happening around them, and that their own ability to stay focused was necessary to manage distractions. One facilitator talked about how surprised she was at the concentration of the women, despite trying something new. Another felt that the focus, attention, and engagement in art-making by the workshop participants was a compliment and achievement.

The ability to stay present and focused was an essential aspect of facilitation because it allowed the facilitators to pay attention to the needs of others, as well as gain enjoyment from their work. One facilitator commented that being focused alongside others helped her manage her own emotions. She was able to be in the present and put personal worries and problems aside for a while. Another facilitator felt she was part of something along with the participants. This feeling of "being part" was connected to the ability for her and the participants to maintain focus on the moment, and be calm and supportive together as part of a group.

Space

Facilitators and participants mentioned the challenges of doing programming within the drop-in setting, and they preferred a separate room. They mentioned the need to have time to disengage and decompress from the drop-in in order to make the workshops a space for stress release and to sense that positive life changes are possible. Facilitators and participants thought that noise and unpredictability in the drop-in would detract from positive aspects of art-making, and mentioned the challenge of distractions. One facilitator felt the "open space" of the drop-in meant that there is little control over people coming and going, and this requires additional facilitation skills. She thought that not everyone can handle the drop-in and that it can require "damage control" to run a workshop. Another challenge of the drop-in was not having enough work space for everyone. Doing the workshops in a separate room brought a sense of relief, since women often feel they have little choice about chaos and personal space within

the the drop-in. One facilitator recognized that participants struggle to feel good and find autonomy in a crowded area. It was a challenge for her to manage being a drop-in participant, while at the same time taking on a professional role.

> " *My challenges personally is I come here as a participant upstairs. Because when you are a participant upstairs and then you have to be more professional, it takes quite a bit out of you. In a sense that you have to remind yourself that people are individuals and when they are worn out at survival trying to find a place, trying to feel good, trying to have some autonomy in a crowded area, and people with bags everywhere. Its like, where can I call my little home and my little peace and when you are a participant you see that you can't erase it from your brain.* "

Facilitation for her required not being at the drop-in for a few days before her workshop in order to gain solitude, to decompress, and to ground herself. It also involved being able to gain distance from harsh events or trauma in order to not impact others. For these reasons, having a separate space from the drop-in for art workshops was seen as necessary, positive, or ideal by many of the facilitators and participants.

Art-Making

Experimentation with art materials led to increased participation & social involvement, self-expression, interpersonal support, and rapport between the participants. Working with art supplies, facilitators noticed some participants shifted from being disruptive to taking part and engaging with others. The art workshop brought women together instead of focusing on differences, for example listening to each other and sharing leadership without judging or fighting. As well, participants felt like they were part of something despite their vulnerabilities and drop-in dynamics. Achievement and satisfaction around completion of art tasks came with release from anxiety and stress and helped participants feel they had a sense of purpose and potential around trying something new.

> " *There is not a lot of programs here necessarily that involve, to just have fun. Its not a therapy. It is just to have fun and people would prefer that as opposed to medical stuff. People say, 'is this a medical thing?" and I am like no no no. No assessing anybody, it is just to have fun. Enjoy, work with your skills, basic stuff.* "

One facilitator commented that art programs get seen as a kind of "classism", where some women get to participate in an exclusionary way. The peer art-making sessions were instead a way for women to integrate into the drop-in, rather than setting them apart. She thought that art-making could lead to interaction if participants are able to bring their art into the drop-in space, because it goes against group-think. In this way, she saw art-making as leading to interactions within the larger drop-in that could help women set boundaries and make steps towards self-expression. The choice for women to take their art with them was also important because transience and health challenges could mean that they are not able to get their work at a later time. Having their art could be comforting amidst transition and daily challenges.

GIVING BACK TO COMMUNITY

Confidence & Reciprocity

Social inclusion involved having a way to give back to the drop-in community in a reciprocal way. It involved increased confidence in others and oneself simultaneously. For the facilitators, the ability to assure, give inspiration, and bring about confidence in others was important, specifically around their capabilities in art-making. Skill-building was passed between participants, as well as from the facilitators who learned art and shared what they learned simultaneously. In this way, leadership involved a sense of belonging and feeling good as part of a group. Participant compliments and support meant that facilitators also received encouragement. Facilitators mentioned that this sense of reciprocity and interaction created friendlier, more cooperative interactions within the drop-in.

> *You teach them how to see something. And you build on their skill. Anything you teach will build self confidence. Somebody can see something in front of them and say 'I didn't know I could do that'.*

Interaction

Facilitators mentioned interaction as an important aspect of leadership and achievement in their peer role. For one facilitator, interaction meant that everyone was included and seen as equally human. Interaction involved reciprocal help and support as well as skill sharing around the use of art materials. It also involved making choices about how much to participate in an art exercise, and how much to stand back and help others with their work. One facilitator thought

that the choice to show finished work within the drop-in might help women find new ways of interacting with each other through healthy self-expression. This was seen as important because of the link between lack of personal expression and vulnerability to mental, emotional, physical, and financial abuse.

By sharing ideas and pictures, women who might often be in conflict with each other started treating each other differently by seeing good points and finding a peaceful common ground. Facilitators saw that respect was possible because women were not in "survival mode" and could see a different side of each other. Participants interacted with other women from the drop-in in kind, supportive, non-hostile ways, such as by sharing and teaching each other.

As well, non-hierarchical or non-staff authority relationships in the peer role were an important aspect of interaction. This may have helped some women talk about what they felt upset or bothered about and feel listened to by others. Facilitators commented that because they were not seen as authority figures, peer leadership was important to the willingness of women to interact in new ways. Accordingly, learning and sharing was passed on from the peer facilitators as if in a ripple effect, so that signs of leadership and skill sharing also started to appear between workshop participants. As well, facilitators saw their peer role as important to a sense of belonging because women were able to speak about what was bothering them, providing opportunities for self-reflection and self-expression.

Facilitators commented that the ability to feel a sense of respect and belonging is very significant for women who are marginalized. Some of the participants mentioned that they still felt excluded or uncomfortable in the workshops, even when they were welcomed. As well, a concern of facilitators was how to help build confidence and continued participation for women who might be facing life challenges or mental health issues. Still most decided to stay, which the facilitators saw as significant because it can be difficult for women to make the choice to participate and try something new. The facilitators mentioned that it is important to show women that they can experience or have something more, though they are conditioned to feeling a great deal of exclusion. They saw

self-expression as an important part of moving out of isolation and reactive behavior. It is an important sign when women feel that they can come to the table, because social isolation can be extreme and have very large consequences in regards to safety and trust. Because participants asked for more workshops and continued peer art programming, the facilitators saw Peer Artistry as an avenue for inclusion and belonging.

Conclusion

The Peer Artistry findings are relevant to the development of funding priorities and project design for community-engaged arts and social service programming. Importantly, the findings point the importance of leadership and decision-making to social inclusion. Leadership can be supported through meaningful opportunities for training & adult education around facilitation, curriculum development, group dynamics, and arts-based skill building. Staff should be aware of the forms of leadership development that are taking place so that they can support project logistics and work with peers to connect participant with information and resources when needed. As well, staff can support leadership and decision making by working with peers around access to space, materials, and computers. Special attention should be given to building the capacity of women to make personal life choices through access to opportunities for economic advancement including grant writing, networking, documentation of work, job readiness, goal setting and other creative opportunities. The model should receive ongoing resourcing in order to support women to make individual and collective choices that can positively impact their social and economic inclusion.

The Peer Artistry pilot can provide guidelines for the evaluation of community-engaged arts practice in regards to social inclusion. Indicators of social inclusion include arts based skill-building, enjoyment, mutual encouragement, a sense of accomplishment, increased confidence, a sense of group belonging, observation and response to the needs of others, new possibilities for social interaction, ability to gain space from stressful situations or environments, and positive perceptions of others. Access to networking and job advancement could be evaluated by paying attention to how arts-based resources and opportunities are provided according to participant interests, skill levels, and needs for technology and material resources.

The pilot also showed markers for the evaluation of peer programming within drop-in and other social service settings. The peer art facilitators critiqued the

power dynamics of peer work, especially in regards to the labor of mediating between the needs of clients and the oversight of staff. They asserted that peer workers should be respected as advocates around issues of economic and social justice and not become further marginalized through unrecognized or unpaid labor. Thus client-centered evaluation of peer programming should pay attention to the sensed ability of peer workers to communicate with staff and have influence on the way that programming is compensated, supported and carried out. Evaluation of peer programming should include assessment of organizational responsiveness, adaptability, and accountability around the individual and collective choices of the people they serve.

FOOTNOTES

i "Bonding social capital allows young people to get by in their world, usually through familial-type relationships. Bridging social capital formulates relationships with other groups, assisting in the search for employment and other self-advancement tasks. Linking social capital connects people to groups carrying different social status, which is arguably the most difficult to attain" (Oliver and Cheff 2012, 645-646).

ii An issue of note with this study is that it was carried out with attention to changes in behavior of women who were termed in the study as 'prisoners', with commentary and assessment given by prison staff, and without critique of the carceral-institutional context of the study.

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