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Arts-Based Approaches and Methodology for Social Cohesion and Collective Psychosocial Healing of Affected Communities

by

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Key Concepts

Throughout this paper, we will be referring to the following abstract terms in our discussion: **art-based, psychosocial, social cohesion, and affected communities**. As such, we will begin by defining these terms for the sake of clarity and the logical basis of our research.

Definitions

Art-Based: An art-based intervention uses a creative methodology such as performing arts (theater, music, dance, etc.), literary arts (poetry, creative writing, etc.), visual arts (painting, illustration, pottery, photography, etc.), or others as a means of personal expression and identity exploration. For the purposes of our research on social cohesion, we also include cultural rituals such as community sporting events, burial ceremonies, therapeutic play, and other cultural practices in our definition of “creative” or “art-based” interventions. Due to the results of increased social cohesion and community healing associated with these practices, it is appropriate to include these in our analysis of art-based approaches. According to Herbert, rituals and ceremonies can be a means of culturally reinforcing social expression, as well as a way for communities to engage with traumatic events in a “safe and preventative way.”¹ This illustrates the benefit of its inclusion within the context of art-based approaches to community healing and well-being.

Psychosocial: This term refers to the interaction of the interpersonal or “social” world with one’s psyche. We will be building off of the definition of psychosocial elucidated in Armaghanyan’s research on theater as a psychosocial intervention in humanitarian settings. Armaghanyan’s work demonstrates that psychosocial well-being is not limited to only the individual sphere, but the collective well-being of a community.² Further, psychosocial well-being forms the foundation of the relationship between the mind and society as well as culture and identity. As such, a As

¹ Herbert, “The development of well-being.”

² Armaghanyan, “Theater as Psychosocial Approach in Humanitarian Settings.”

such, the psychosocial element is the target of interventions that aim to increase social cohesion and community well-being.

Social cohesion: Social cohesion is the extent to which a community or group of people feel a connection to one another. One common result of traumatic experiences of displacement or loss is populations feeling disconnected from their communities, identities, and physical locations.³ Social cohesion refers to mutual tolerance, acceptance, understanding, and feelings of belonging within a group. Schiefer and van der Noll’s research suggests “three essential dimensions of social cohesion: (1) social relations, (2) identification with the geographical unit, and (3) orientation towards the common good. Each dimension is further differentiated into several sub-dimensions.”⁴ Increased levels of social cohesion are associated with higher levels of community resilience, quality of life, and shared values.⁵ Our research will focus on ways of producing social cohesion in affected communities, especially in and following times of crisis.

Affected Community: An affected community is one that experiences marginalization in some way- through external means such as social classification or natural disaster. For example, those of marginalized races, classes, abilities or socioeconomic statuses are considered “affected.” Groups of people who have experienced natural disasters, genocide, forced migration, gender-based violence, and other traumatic experiences are considered affected. As such, socially dominant groups can become affected through external means. Further, we are using an intersectional framework in the definition of “affected.” As such, this definition recognizes that intersecting identities- such as being a woman of color in the global north- carry different connotations, challenges, and implications based on cultural and historical context. The goal of our research is to define best practices for uplifting affected communities through art-based methods. We acknowledge that the concept of “affected” is a dynamic, and will be used as a means of defining a community group that is the target of art-based approaches within research interventions.

³ UNDP, *Strengthening Social Cohesion*, 45.

⁴ Schiefer and van der Noll, “The Essentials of Social Cohesion.”

⁵ Ibid, 581-585.

Framework: Based on a preliminary review of literature regarding arts-based approaches social cohesion and psychosocial wellbeing in affected communities, we have developed a framework for selection and analysis of literature. The following is a list of elements we consider necessary for a comprehensive and effective study on perception change, psychosocial wellbeing, and social cohesion. While not an exhaustive list, this framework will be used consistently throughout our research to determine best practices and identify themes. The framework will be used in the literature review process, best-practices development, and as a basis for analyzing relevant research. This framework is intended to be used for affected communities in a humanitarian, crisis, or marginalized context.

A pilot project conducted by IOM identifies various thematic elements that produce social cohesion through poetry workshops in Somali populations. For the purposes of our research, we have adapted these elements for our analysis framework. These include: *1. Identity and Belonging; 2. Trust and Understanding; 3. Empathy and Acceptance; and 4. Forgiveness and Reconciliation.*⁶ Because these elements are abstract and subjective, art-based approaches are valuable for promoting self-expression and visual exploration needed for social cohesion and wellbeing, while still honoring pluralities of experiences.

We will use these elements as the basis indicators of perception change, social cohesion, and psychosocial wellbeing throughout our research. This framework will also be used as a tool to identify commonalities and best-practices among existing literature. These elements will help us identify effectiveness and generalizability of art-based approaches and methodologies for social cohesion and collective psychosocial healing. It is our hope that this will allow us to establish scalable processes for global contexts.

The primary, internal elements of social cohesion are *Identity and Belonging*. These two factors play a fundamental role in psychosocial wellbeing for individuals that can extend to their communities. Because displacement and trauma can affect perceptions of identity (both internally and externally), *Identity and Belonging* contribute to the social-cultural (re)integration process. IOM’s “Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

⁶ International Organization for Migration (IOM), “Connecting Through Poetry,” (Mogadishu: IOM, 2020).

(MHPSS) in Emergencies and Displacement” defines identity as “multifaceted” and includes self-perception, social factors such as culture, gender, race, occupation, etc., and the way others perceive us.⁷ Art-based approaches can be used to help individuals explore aspects of their identity and reflect on their emotions and relation to others.

Trust and Understanding are necessary to building, maintaining, and repairing harmonious community relationships. Through building trust and understanding, community members can experience an increased sense of safety, social connectedness, hope, and self-esteem. Especially in the reintegration process of previously separated or conflict-affected communities, *Trust and Understanding* allows community members to safely rebuild trust in themselves and their communities that was broken due to difficult experiences. This allows communities to mobilize towards common goals and offers support to “address conflict issues and relationship challenges constructively.”⁸

Empathy and Acceptance are often a by-product of the establishment of *Trust and Understanding* within communities. *Empathy* encourages acceptance of the idea of different identities, which raises tolerance levels and lowers stigmatization among community members. These community changes promote social cohesion through integration of marginalized groups or identities such as LGBTQ+ or refugee populations.

Lastly, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* are often common elements explored within art-based approaches for social cohesion. Art-based approaches can foster forgiveness and reconciliation through deeper understanding of self and others, thus enhancing social ties. We acknowledge that the term “Reconciliation” can have controversial connotations in the context of transitional justice and peacebuilding. According to Fairey, there is a difference between “work that seeks to record and remember the stories of the victims of violence” and “arts work that seeks to ease inter-ethnic tension and conflict.”⁹ This is a valid critique, but is outside the current scope of our work. For our purposes, we will solely be analyzing *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* as indicators of perception changes as a result of arts-based approaches. These elements

⁷ International Organization for Migration (IOM), “Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Emergencies and Displacement- Second Edition,” (Geneva: IOM, 2022), 17-125.

⁸ IOM, “Manual on CBMHPSS,” 125.

⁹ Tiffany Fairey, “Participatory Arts and Peace-building: Embodying and Challenging Reconciliation,” *Participatory Arts for Invisible Communities: PAIC*; Irena Sertić (ed), (2018): 204-214.

discussed above will be used throughout the research process as a means to evaluate best-practices, perception change, and assess the success of social-cohesion interventions.

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of research on art-based approaches to social cohesion and psychosocial well-being in humanitarian settings. The research highlights the gap in large-scale, quantitative evidence in this field and emphasizes the need for further investigation. While the theoretical foundation for the individual and collective impact of art-based modalities has been well-established, there is a lack of large-scale, quantitative evidence, especially in the humanitarian space. This analysis seeks to bridge this gap by examining the potential of art-based approaches to promote social cohesion, and community health, and change attitudes within affected populations.

This report includes

- I. An overview of the types of art interventions and approaches used throughout the existing literature and an examination of the kinds of quantitative assessments used for rigorous analysis;
- II. Examples of relevant literature and research on the use of arts-based approaches in affected communities as well as an open source data sheet including further information into the collected sources used to generate this report;
- III. A mechanism for observing the process of arts-based interventions for social cohesion, psychosocial healing, and perception change through the utilization of knowledge translation;
- IV. And a framework for future arts-based interventions in the humanitarian sector including:
 - A. Intervention type**
 - B. Creative team**
 - C. Objectives & goals**
 - D. Reflection**
 - E. Co-creation & participation**
 - F. Knowledge translation**
 - G. Organization & results**
 - H. Evaluation**

The research proposes the use of a systematic framework described above, including a systematic analysis, to identify trends and patterns in the existing literature. The analysis aims to generate scalable indicators of arts-based interventions that facilitate psychosocial healing, social cohesion, and perception change among affected communities. While qualitative methodologies

have been primarily employed, the researchers aim to provide a best-practices recommendation for future arts-based interventions based on available data.

In conclusion, this research analysis highlights the significance of art-based approaches in promoting social cohesion, psychosocial well-being, and perception change within affected communities in humanitarian settings. The study calls for further quantitative research to generate large-scale evidence and provide scalable indicators for arts-based interventions. The findings and best practices identified through this analysis can inform future interventions aimed at improving the psychosocial, cultural, and social functioning of affected populations.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Aims and Objectives

Art-based approaches to social cohesion and psychosocial wellbeing have been used throughout history to foster identity, sustain cultural norms and stories, and build community. Art therapy and research has shown how engaging in creative methods such as performance and visual arts can be effective ways to mitigate stress. The use of art-based approaches have been especially beneficial for communities affected by traumatic events or cultural intolerance.¹⁰ This positive impact has been studied and confirmed across populations; including children and adults, refugees, LGBTQ+ populations among others. Expressive and interpretive arts can provide individuals with a sense of power, community, and autonomy through the process of healing and sense-making. While theory surrounding the individual and collective impact of art-based modalities has been well-established in psychological science, a gap exists in large-scale, quantitative evidence, especially in the humanitarian space. More research on the ability of arts-based approaches to promote social cohesion and change attitudes among affected populations on a global, quantitative scale in humanitarian contexts is necessary.

In this analysis, we hypothesize that art-based approaches to social cohesion, community health and healing, and psychosocial well-being can foster transformation within communities in humanitarian settings. This includes changing attitudes towards increasing mutual understanding, respect, and tolerance within communities. Our initial findings indicate that the positive impacts of art-based interventions are visible regardless of modality (i.e. visual vs performing arts). However, this analysis aims to assess whether some modalities are more effective than others. Further, we will analyze trends in art-based interventions to identify best-practices of implementation in humanitarian settings. We advocate for further quantitative research on art-based approaches to community building in international humanitarian sectors for the purpose of scalable research and funding. Our research will include existing literature on this

¹⁰ Jeffrey Pufahl et. al, “Even Mists Have Silver Linings;” Baumann et al., “Exploring Community Art.”

topic, describe methodologies used for research, and finally, describe how our findings can be applied to affected populations in a way that improves their psychosocial, cultural, and social cohesive functioning.

Identifying best practices for art-based approaches to psychosocial healing can be difficult due to pluralities of experience. While our research aims to establish scalable methods of art-based approaches for social cohesion, we are careful to recognize that interventions must vary based on cultural, historical, and identity context. Through the research process we have been able to identify general patterns in the way arts-based interventions are performed and how they are measured. This will support the creation of a best-practice framework in our research. The present report aims to compile a comprehensive desk review of findings from various art-based and socio-cultural projects, activities, and studies worldwide, demonstrating their effectiveness in influencing and contributing to psychosocial healing, socio-relational and social (re)integration processes, and social cohesion among community members from diverse backgrounds and pluralities of experience.

1.2 History of Art-Based Approaches

Ancient Greece and Rome had open-air theaters in nearly every major city. Egyptians used hieroglyphics and image-based narrative to tell stories and record history. Song and dance have been used in Indigenous spiritual rituals across time. These images and examples show us the link between creative expression and community cohesion throughout time. While the practice of Western art therapy began in Britain in the mid-1900s,¹¹ research suggests art has been a therapeutic and integral part of communal ritual, cultural narrative, and self-expression. For example, “art was assigned a role in regimes of moral therapy at the end of the eighteenth century,”¹² with purportedly “curative” properties. This displays the importance of art-based approaches in transmitting and changing cultural norms.

Scholars purport that Greek theater dates back to circa 472 B.C., where theater served as a community gathering activity.¹³ Plays would often serve as social and political commentary,

¹¹ Hogan, *Healing Arts*, 13-27.

¹² *ibid.*, 13-27

¹³ Hemingway, “Theater in Ancient Greece.”

encouraging discussion and exploration of contemporary issues. In the US in the 1920s, practitioners of the Little Theater movement “believed that theater could be used for the betterment of American society and for self-expression.”¹⁴ The narrative and interactive approach of theater is beneficial for exploring social themes, promoting conversation, and creating collective memory. All of these factors can produce higher levels of cohesion within communities.

In the early 1970s, Brazilian playwright Augusto Boal developed the sustaining *O Teatro do Oprimido* (or, as it will be referred to in this paper, Theatre of the Oppressed, TotO). Based on our research so far, theater is one of the most popular approaches to both individual and communal healing of affected communities. According to an article by Liam Klenk, TotO: “[F]osters democratic and cooperative forms of interaction amongst its participants...The Theatre of the Oppressed helped all involved to better understand themselves, their communities, and the world.”¹⁵

The Theater of the Oppressed’s consciousness-raising techniques caused it to be used for community transformation as well as activism. “In a political sense, Boal saw theater as a rehearsal space for people who want to learn ways of fighting against oppression in their daily lives.”¹⁶ This demonstrates the importance of art-based interventions such as theater in personal identity exploration as well as fostering community solidarity and political activism. In this way, art-based interventions of affected communities can serve as an empowerment practice as well as creative outlet.

Expanding to other art-based modalities, anthropologist Roland Littlewood states: “[t]he healing potential of visual imagery has been recognised in all societies I know. In the West, there is a long-standing recognition that ‘art’ can be an active response to personal trauma, a reframing of the problem and its working through.”¹⁷ His quote emphasizes the more individual aspect of art-based approaches in working through trauma, but reifies the temporal relevance of art in healing. Evidence also suggests that art-based interventions extend beyond the personal to

¹⁴ Chansky, “Little Theater Movement.”

¹⁵ Klenk, “Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed.”

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Littlewood, “Foreword,” viii.

provide benefits to larger communities as a whole.¹⁸ The historical, individual, and collective importance of art-based approaches to social cohesion and psychosocial wellbeing underscore the urgency of producing large-scale, generalizable research for humanitarian sectors.

1.3 Art-Based Approaches in Humanitarian Settings

Research illustrates how community building and psychosocial improvement can result from art-based interventions especially in an individual sense. However, there is a lack of research on art-based interventions as a vehicle for attitude change (such as increased tolerance, acceptance, etc.). While research has shown that art-based interventions have beneficial outcomes following crises, there is also a gap in literature showing evidence of art-based approaches to social cohesion in the humanitarian context.¹⁹ These contexts include large International and National Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working to support affected populations.

We maintain that large-scale art-based methods can produce short and long-term improvements to social cohesion and psychosocial well-being in a humanitarian context. Many international organizations are implementing mental health and psychosocial support teams in order to increase mental health and well-being on a community scale. This indicates the relevance and importance of developing large-scale approaches to psychosocial well-being through various modalities. In this analysis, we argue that art-based interventions are beneficial, accessible, and scalable for these purposes.

One example of this is Sonya Armaghanyan's master's dissertation research:²⁰ *Theatre as Psychosocial Approach in Humanitarian Settings*. The results of Armaghanyan's study in Somalia suggests community theater can foster social cohesion in a humanitarian context. When taken in conjunction with smaller studies done on art-based approaches in affected communities, it stands to reason that various modalities can be beneficial on a larger scale. Psychosocial well-being interventions should integrate socio-cultural/economic, bio-physiological, and cultural-anthropological elements. Armaghanyan argues that theater as an art-based approach

¹⁸ Spiegel et al., "Social Transformation."

¹⁹ Gavron, "The Power of Art to Cope With Trauma."

²⁰ An unpublished master's thesis by Sonya Armaghanyan written in 2018.

encompasses these requirements to implement psychosocial healing.²¹ The positive results of this study exemplify the benefit of art-based approaches in a humanitarian context. Because of the limited number of participants and singular communal scope of this study, more literature is needed to fill the gap in other contexts to determine generalizability.

The use of arts based approaches in humanitarian contexts must be implemented with proper cultural understanding. Scholar and MHPSS professional Guglielmo Schininà suggests a dislike for “imposing” theater into spheres that are potentially less interested in creative arts, but rather to use theater as a process of community building.²² This emphasizes the community-focused aspect of art-based approaches and suggests a potential for art-based integration in the global humanitarian context.

Additionally, Schininà explains that psychosocial interventions aimed at community building in communities affected by crises or trauma should contain three elements: relationships, communication, and creativity.²³ Schininà also provides a ‘*ritual model of a complex circle*’ which is a model that demonstrates how theater operates through communication with the overall goal of facilitating changed perception through varying and multiple streams of storytelling and communication.²⁴ While these examples specify theater as the art-based approach used in humanitarian settings, this report will expand and build upon these connections of psychosocial healing, perception change, and the use of an arts-based intervention.

1.4 Background and Context

The present study will first provide a literature review which aims at identifying the connections between arts-based interventions and social cohesion, with the goal of developing a best practice framework that can be applied to programs in the humanitarian sector. For this review, we searched broadly for articles that measure the impacts of arts-based interventions both qualitatively and quantitatively using an established list of key-words. While quantitative research appears to be limited, our report aims to provide a basic framework for scaled-up

²¹ Armaghanyan, “Theater as Psychosocial Approach,” 12.

²² Schininà, “Far Away, So Close.”

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

indicators of arts-based approaches which can be used to measure the effect size of change within communities at a later stage.

As a result, two common themes of the effectiveness of art-based interventions are found in the existing literature which are 1) targeted population at individual or community level (Communal Health and Healing, Individual vs Community Benefit); and 2) type of approaches that have been applied (Participatory Action Research and Storytelling). Regardless of target population or art modality used, this analysis found these themes to be consistent across literature. In addition, they will assist this report in discussing and developing evidence-based practices for art-based interventions with affected communities.

1.4.1 Community Health and Healing

First and foremost, Community Health and Healing appears to be the most common theme. Indeed, public health experts agree that the health of a community can have significant impacts on individual health and beyond. For instance, Brooks points out that community health sheds influence on every facet of human life, from tangible elements like education and social safety, to more psychological ones such as financial well-being and happiness.²⁵ In other words, healing can occur through collective narration of a tragedy through participation in art-based approaches such as community theater and creative collaboration.

For example, Baumann et al. sought to gain a deeper understanding of the role of community art for promoting health, cohesion, and community resilience in a post disaster context. Their research identified that community art can offer solace and serves as a coping mechanism for disaster-related stress. It can also be a communication tool to foster connections and conversation while also providing an opportunity to spread messages of hope. Ultimately, this approach improves community cohesiveness by establishing a common ground and safe places on an emotional and physical level. According to the scholars, painting a mural may help the community recover from a calamity while simultaneously spreading messages of optimism.²⁶

Similarly, evidence of art-based approaches that support community healing following crisis or trauma was also demonstrated after the 2011 Tsunami in Japan. In his article, Gavron

²⁵ Brooks, “What Is Community Health and Why Is It Important?”

²⁶ Baumann et al., “Exploring Community Art.”

describes the “evidence that psychosocial interventions can ease the psychological stress associated with natural disasters and foster resilience”²⁷ through art-based approaches to healing. The study shows that using art in MHPSS interventions is effective primarily because it allows for non-verbal communication and experiential-creative orientations to come to the fore during solo art activities and group art work.²⁸ Last, circus is another performance art that fosters social transformation and collective health. Following a shift in governmental power in Ecuador, the political commitment to *Buen Vivir* (good living) resulted in the establishment of social circus programs across the country, which aims to improve physical and social community health and provide spaces for learning, growth, and skill development. Social circus includes practices such as juggling, acrobatics, aerial performance, and balancing acts among others.²⁹ The Ecuadorian case study analyzed multiple social circus programs, indicators like individuals’ feelings of health and wellness, self-esteem, personal growth, sense of security are utilized before and after long-term participation. It thus uncovered positive increases in well-being following participation because social performance can improve self-expression, community building, and increase economic participation through learning employment skills.³⁰ Notably, such a national approach to affected communities emphasizes how art-based programs may be generalized to larger political and humanitarian settings so as to have broad impact.

1.4.2 Individual vs Community Benefit

Aside from benefits at a community level, art-based interventions also allow for an expression of self-representation within a social context and increase relational communication. They provide a vehicle for identity exploration, introspection, and meaning-making in an individual and community context. As discussed above, psychological and anthropological research has established the link between art-based interventions and social cohesion or psychosocial well-being.

Havsteen-Franklin et al. analyzed short and long-term community benefits following art-based interventions across populations. This systematic review of literature analyzed six

²⁷ Gavron, “Power of Art,” 3.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 2.

²⁹ Spiegel et al., “Social Transformation,” 899-922.

³⁰ Spiegel et al., “Social Transformation.”

articles that used art-based interventions for psychosocial healing for care workers following acute crises. They summarized attitudes on crisis intervention as being “defined by the level and nature of human interactions relating to the event.”³¹ Hence, their study suggests that community responses, feelings, and actions during and following crises have a profound impact on individual emotions and communal post-trauma growth following disasters.

Notably, Havsteen-Franklin et al. highlights the relevance of individual vs communal benefit by developing psychosocial skills to support peers.³² The article states: “[i]t was apparent that in all examples of the use of arts-based crisis interventions, this wasn’t only developing existing skills and knowledge, but providing new learning that could be internalized and utilized for others.”³³ According to the writers, the importance of establishing community cohesiveness and growth was frequently a bigger goal of the intervention, outside the team and organization. This was due to the magnitude of the influence being on a cultural and social level that extended beyond the local individuals being served.³⁴ Therefore, community as a healing resource can produce cohesion and growth on a larger cultural and social level. This also illustrates how the benefits of art-based interventions post-crises can be extended to humanitarian contexts as well. The study’s evidence of varied art-based approaches with similar positive outcomes across populations indicates the broad applicability of art-based approaches in affected communities regardless of modality.

A case study done in Japan after the 2011 tsunami mirrored the findings above. Conducted by Gavron, his research acknowledges that art-based interventions can be administered individually and produce broader communal benefits. The results indicated that such approaches produced increased feelings of connectedness, hope, and authentic expression. For example, participants might experience a transformation in emotion from hopelessness to capability, as well as a strengthened sense of cultural cohesion. Measurements were based on the author’s thorough written descriptions of the art-based intervention including both verbal and nonverbal activities - participants’ post-intervention remarks, images taken throughout the procedure, and artworks, are considered as indicators. Thus, by implementing an art-based

³¹ Havsteen-Franklin et al., “Arts-Based Interventions for Professionals.”

³² *ibid.*, 6-13.

³³ *ibid.*, 10.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 19.

intervention to community health practitioners, Gavron improved the health of the primary participants, and indirectly influenced the health and psychosocial well-being of their extended communities. This study is particularly significant in its cross-cultural implications which can provide guidance for humanitarian settings. Though the individuals administering the study were from different cultures, special attention was paid to creating a culturally relevant and sensitive approach to communal healing in a Japanese context. In doing so, a safe space was created for individuals to share their experience and create social cohesion. This not only represents best-practice in art-based interventions, but emphasizes cultural awareness as a potential factor in effectiveness of interventions.

1.4.3 PAR & Storytelling

Another pool of literature emphasized more on the *approach* of creating art-based programs. For instance, researchers prefer engaging the affected community members to assist in intervention design. Such a method ensures a deeper understanding of culture prior to implementing interventions or administering surveys.³⁵ This is also a key element to the development of best practices regarding research in the assessment of the positive impact of art interventions. Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Storytelling are the most common approaches identified in this review.

One example is illustrated in the community-based theater intervention for LGBTQ+ acceptance in India.³⁶ This intervention included the method PAR, which is an overarching term for action-oriented research that contains participatory elements - includes researchers and participants working in conjunction to improve a problematic issue or situation.³⁷ According to the research, implementation of PAR suggests that individuals respond to culturally inclusive and contextually created materials. Moreover, storytelling and theater communication helps participants of arts-based interventions reconstruct self identity and community identity.

Gavron's study of a group art-work intervention in post-Tsunami Japan defined "encouragement of verbal sharing" as a key theme in the results that ultimately promoted

³⁵ Elizabeth Thomas, et al., "The Crosstown Initiative."

³⁶ Pufahl et. al., "Even Mists Have Silver Linings," 252-259.

³⁷ Kinson et al., *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place.*

enhanced cohesion among the group.³⁸ The joint artwork increased the participants' expression in the overall group setting and increased mutual feelings of connectedness.³⁹ To achieve this result, the research team developed art-based interventions specifically designed for and around the cultural environment in which it was administered. Similarly, the arts-based approach for social inclusion for refugee and asylum seekers (RAS) conducted by Moreira demonstrated a positive correlation between the intervention and the promotion of exchange and dialogue for RAS towards the local community.⁴⁰ Inclusion of personal expression: views, emotions, needs, and stories increased the overall effectiveness of the intervention for participants.⁴¹ This study demonstrates that through a visual art intervention that provides space for open expression via telling stories and sharing experiences corresponds to a positive outcome for participants.⁴²

Culturally connected storytelling provides a basis for a best practice approach to arts-based interventions, as witnessed in much of the literature reviewed for this report. In addition to specific storytelling interventions, Boal's Theater of the Oppressed (TotO) used arts-based approaches to facilitate community healing and included experiential, storytelling, and participatory properties in its approach.⁴³ TotO's element of experiential learning is also seen in the systematic analysis of literature on arts-based approaches for professionals in caregiver roles: "In all contexts, experiential learning was a key element of the crisis intervention as well clear directives, duration and learning outcomes."⁴⁴ Further, a study conducted by Nyirenda used a group-based Digital Storytelling (DST) project to facilitate the exploration of community perceptions of health concerns and individual feelings. This study found that DST promoted confidence and empowerment for participants to articulate concerns and issues they otherwise felt powerless to express.⁴⁵ Consequently, the inclusion of PAR, storytelling, and experiential learning are important elements to consider when initially designing a framework of best practices when implementing arts-based approaches for psychosocial healing.

³⁸ Gavron, "Power of Art," 13.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 1-19.

⁴⁰ Moreira, Ana I. Alves "Re-voicing the Unheard."

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Klenk, "Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed."

⁴⁴ Havsteen-Franklin et al., "Arts-Based Interventions," 6.

⁴⁵ Nyirenda et al., "Power and Powerlessness,"

To summarize, there is supportive evidence to determine that art-interventions situated and designed within cultural understanding have the most positive impact on participants. This is demonstrated in the results from the Crosstown Initiative in Memphis,⁴⁶ the art work design in post-Tsunami Japan, the community based theater in India, *Buen Vivir* social circus in Ecuador.⁴⁷ Throughout these varying art-based approaches across multiple geographic areas, each identified that a cultural understanding of the situation was necessary in building and implementing the intervention for greater positive outcome for participants.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Thomas, et al., “The Crosstown Initiative.”

⁴⁷ Gavron, “Power of Art,” 1-19; Pufahl et. al, “Even Mists Have Silver Linings;” Spiegel et al., “Social Transformation.”

2 Methodology

The goal of this research is to generate scaleable indicators of arts-based interventions that facilitate psychosocial healing, social cohesion, and perception change among affected communities. The term “scaled-up” indicates generalizability in international or global contexts. Specifically, our analysis hopes to establish best practices for cohesion among affected communities. This includes communities that have experienced displacement, disaster, or identity-based discrimination. The literature we found emphasized the benefit of art-based approaches in the context of reintegration, acceptance, perception change, and identity formation. It also became apparent that the preferred methodology for measuring the results of arts-based interventions was qualitative. This limitation makes it difficult to generalize outcomes of arts-based interventions on a larger scale. To rectify this issue of generalizability, our researchers developed a systematic framework with which to identify key sources and determine effective intervention patterns that allow us to identify best practices in a humanitarian context.

Our research aims to analyze patterns in studies on social cohesion and psychosocial well-being using arts-based approaches. We hypothesize finding positive evidence that art-based approaches can have transformational and supportive effects on communities and individuals alike. As such, we will be employing a structured analysis to identify trends and similarities amongst available literature including target communities, methodologies used, or outcomes in order to determine best practices for art intervention implementation. Our researchers have applied a systematic analytical approach using Microsoft Excel to collect the data, identify and code categories that emerge through the research, and finally summarize the categories that can then be applied to future arts-based interventions. However, in the event that large-scale quantitative measures are not available, using our systematic review of smaller-scale studies, we can review the available data to provide a best-practices recommendation for future arts-based interventions. Through this we will categorize the quantitative assessment types used to determine the effectiveness of arts-based approaches for positive outcomes that foster inclusion, acceptance, and tolerance.

Initially, our team conducted a literature review on quantitative arts-based approaches as a way of identifying scalable strategies for social cohesion and interventions for psychosocial healing. Our team engaged in a Google Scholar search using keywords such as *psychosocial, art-based, social cohesion, and quantitative* to understand the breadth of research available prior to tailoring our database searches. Additional literature was provided by project partners at the International Organization for Migration (IOM). These resources included a master’s unpublished thesis on qualitative research using theater as a psychosocial approach to healing as well as creative mapping for performing arts and oral traditions such as storytelling and poetry.⁴⁸

First Term	Second Term	Third term
Psychosocial	Quantitative	art
Psychosocial	Humanitarian	art
Psychosocial	Intervention	art
Psychosocial	Cultural	art
Psychosocial	Integration	art
Psychosocial	Community Building	art
Psychosocial	Perception Change	art
Psychosocial	Affected Communities	art
Psychosocial	Migration	art
Psychosocial	Peacebuilding	art
Social Cohesion	Quantitative	art
Social Cohesion	Humanitarian	art
Social Cohesion	Intervention	art
Social Cohesion	Cultural	art
Social Cohesion	Integration	art
Social Cohesion	Community Building	art
Social Cohesion	Perception Change	art
Social Cohesion	Affected Communities	art
Social Cohesion	Migration	art
Social Cohesion	Peacebuilding	art

Figure 1: Keyword Search Approach

Due to the aim for scalable, quantitative research in a highly qualitative field, we developed a systematic structure to code the related literature, develop themes, and ultimately develop a processing system for social cohesion, as well as a framework for future research using arts-based approaches.

Through the initial search in Google Scholar, our team identified 15 key sources to use in the review of the literature. To further our analysis, our team narrowed down the search metrics employed to identify additional resources that are relevant in order to create scaled-up indicators of arts-based interventions. Due to the sheer amount of resources available, and the limited time for this project, we agreed upon a framework

that provided the most amount of resources available on the topic given the time constraint.

In coordination with our research project tutor and our program supervisor we determined a list of databases to supplement the literature review scope. The databases included are JSTOR,

⁴⁸ Armaghanyan, “Theater as Psychosocial Approach in Humanitarian Settings;” IOM, *Connecting through Poetry*.

PubMed, and UNESCO. These databases were chosen based on their reputability as well as respective fields. JSTOR was selected for its breadth of cross-disciplinary work, PubMed for its tendency to produce quantitative studies, and UNESCO to target work in the humanitarian space. In each of these databases, the same systematic keyword search was applied that included the words: “*Psychosocial, Social Cohesion, Quantitative, Humanitarian, Intervention, Cultural Integration, Community Building, Perception Change, Affected Communities, Migration, Peacebuilding, and Art.*” Specific words were identified as Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary search terms based on relevance and analysis aims. This process is shown in *Figure 1*.

The initial keyword search yielded a total of 6,966,324 articles across three separate databases, indicating that this broad keyword search approach can generate a wealth of resources relevant in varying degrees to art-based approaches and healing. Further, due to the large-quantity of literature available, our team narrowed the research process to limit the number of irrelevant articles. Due to the large number of terms that could be used in the relevant literature, we determined a set of principal terms for our primary search. These keywords included primary, secondary, and tertiary combinations of the terms: “psychosocial,” “migration,” “art,” “art/s-based,” “peacebuilding,” “humanitarian,” and “social cohesion.”⁴⁹ These searches resulted in an additional 54 relevant articles to be further analyzed. Exclusion criteria included any articles that could not be accessed in English, and articles published after 2010. Searches were sorted by “Most Relevant” based on search terms as well as by “Most/More Recent.” This allowed researchers to find resources most related to the target search terms as well as contemporary research being conducted in this space.

After the keyword searches were completed for each database, researchers identified the most relevant articles for each search. The relevance was determined based on the following criteria: 1) Article must include an art-based approach, 2) Article must be conducted on an affected community, 3) Article must show evidence of perception or psychosocial well-being change.⁵⁰ This was done due to time and resources constraints, to streamline the relevance of

⁴⁹ See “Search metrics” section of ARP Source Document Workbook.

⁵⁰ For the context of this research, the terms “art-based” and “affected community” are defined in the “Key Concepts” section of this report. Here, perception change refers to the change in self or community feelings, beliefs, or practices following an art-based intervention.

Unique ID:			
First Number	Second Number	Third Number	Fourth Number
<i>Quantitative: 1</i>	<i>JSTOR: 1</i>	<i>Performing Arts (Theater, Circus, Dance, Story-telling, etc): 1</i>	<i>Tracked Perception Change (YES): 1</i>
<i>Qualitative: 2</i>	<i>PubMed: 2</i>	<i>Visual Arts (Drawing, painting, Photography, etc): 2</i>	<i>Tracked Perception Change (NO): 0</i>
<i>Both/Mixed Methods: 3</i>	<i>UNESCO: 3</i>	<i>Music (including music performance and participation): 3</i>	
<i>OTHER/NONE: 0</i>	<i>OTHER: 0</i>	<i>Community Sports (Yoga, community sporting events): 4</i>	
		<i>OTHER: 0</i>	

Figure 2: Unique ID Coding

literature, and to maintain the manageability of research content. This resulted in a total of 80 relevant resources to analyze.

The total number of documents based on each keyword were then tracked in Excel and filtered to identify which documents would be used further to create the scaled-up indicators. To

determine which articles were most relevant, they were examined for the type of art intervention used as well as the affected population, how the intervention was evaluated in the research, and how the researchers organized or determined the results. Emphasis was placed on determining whether each outcome evaluation contained a tracked perception change of the community involved in the intervention. Less emphasis was placed on the type of art intervention or the specified community, it was most relevant to use articles that provided an analysis of positive outcomes directly related to the intervention. For the purposes of our research, studies with insignificant results or large analytical reports without clear methodology and results were excluded. Preference was given to studies using quantitative analysis for the purpose of establishing scalable best-practices.

Additionally, the creation of a coding system was applied to quickly identify patterns in the literature. First, we organized a framework in Excel to code each source by quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods; database; the type of art-based approach; and whether the research tracked for a perception change.. For example, each source was labeled 1 for quantitative, 2 for qualitative, and 3 for mixed methods then further labeled on a number scale based on the database and artistic approach (See Figure 2). The approach to coding our sources used in this report was a desire to track where the majority of information lies in this particular field, and what different types of art-based interventions are used most effectively in psychosocial healing or reintegration processes. This coding process helped to scan for articles deemed “highly relevant” meaning they contained an arts-based approach, used a quantitative

measurement in the assessing outcomes, and tracked for perception change amongst community members to assist in reintegration or comfortability in integration.

Finally, In order to develop best-practices and analyze trends within art-based approaches to social cohesion and psychosocial wellbeing, the researchers created a comparison table of the most relevant articles. After establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria, researchers narrowed the analysis to 12 articles based on relevance, intervention, methodology, assessment type, and results (See truncated example table below.) These various elements were used to represent a comprehensive array of communities, regional locations, experiences, methodologies, and assessment types. This was done with the goal of establishing common best-practices and potential approaches for future research.

Title	Population Type	Intervention Type	Methodology	Assessment	Results
Even Mists Have Silver Linings: Promoting LGBTQ+ Acceptance and Solidarity through Community-Based Theatre in India ⁵¹	LGBTQ+ community in Mumbai, India.	Community-based theater intervention, community-based play designed to engage people in dialogue about the LGBTQ community to decrease stigma and promote queer identity.	Pre and post-intervention surveys. They used a culturally adapted version of the “Attitudes Towards Difference Survey: The Riddle Scale” specific to the location in India. The survey measured attitudes PRE-intervention: support, admiration, appreciation, and nurturance.	The assessment was analyzed with descriptive statistics. Likert scale questions were evaluated using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank for non-parametric data. Post-intervention surveys looked at attitudes toward prosocial behavior and knowledge of LGBTQ identity, and show reactions.	Measured for the rise in support, admiration, appreciation, and nurturance for the LGBTQ community. Support and admiration growth (minimal) showed a shift in perspective and increased empathy which can motivate prosocial behavior. Overall the results showed an increase in empathy for the LGBTQ community due to this type of intervention.
Research-based Theatre about veterans transitioning home: A mixed-methods evaluation of audience impacts ⁵²	Veteran community in Canada	Research Based Theater (RbT) approach which merges theater with research. Enhance understanding of veterans’ experiences of transitioning to civilian life and evaluate challenges.	The changes were evaluated through pre and post-surveys on a Likert scale. They also held focus groups 6-months post-performance. Development of themes and subthemes.	Assessed through nonparametric Wilcoxon signed rank test. To track long-term impact, the post-performance surveys were administered for attendants that opted in.	Increased knowledge and awareness of transitional challenges for veterans. Post-performance, audience members reported emotional activation alongside new awareness, knowledge, and understanding. Increased gratitude towards veterans, appreciation for the performers’ vulnerability in sharing stories about mental health.

⁵¹ Pufahl et. al., “Even Mists Have Silver Linings.”

⁵² Jennica Nichols, Susan M. Cox, Christina Cook, Graham W. Lea, and George Belliveau, “Research-based Theater about veterans transitioning home: A mixed-methods evaluation of audience impacts,” *Social Science & Medicine* 292, (2022).

Coming from Afar and Rediscovering Oneself: Group Intervention for Immigrant and Refugee Women Having Experienced Violence ⁵³	Immigrant and refugee women having experienced different forms of violence culturally mixed	Creative expression, psycho educational and relaxation activities. Various creative portrait creation, postcard creation, etc	12 weekly group sessions, 2 hours each, 3 groups, 17 participants total. Content analysis and non-parametric analysis, pre and post semi structured interview, notes taken by participant-observers.	Content analysis. Quant: pre and post questionnaires analyzed through Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, WHO quality of life assessment.	Reduction of PTSD symptoms, increase in physical and psych health, better interpersonal relations, lower avoidance and hypervigilance.
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Figure 3: Shortened Analysis Table. For full analysis table, see "Open Data" in Appendix.

⁵³ Benoit et al., "Coming from afar and rediscovering oneself."

3 Discussion and Best Practices

3.1 Knowledge Translation Process for Social Cohesion

Due to the wide range of literature used to generate this report, a mechanism was devised to demonstrate the general framework that arts-based interventions operate within. After analyzing the literature and resources gathered with the methodology, some themes and subthemes became apparent through the use of multiple arts interventions. Firstly, while many of these interventions had different goals based on the type of affected community, geographic location, as well as type of art intervention, the basis within each research example was to generate well-being for those affected by a particular situation as well as the external community (individuals, organizations, physical communities, etc). This concept of well-being, for the sake of our research, is included in the term *social cohesion*. Social cohesion encompasses much of the overall goals mentioned within each of the arts-based intervention examples used for this report. Beyond social cohesion, *knowledge translation* was a key identifiable theme that developed through each intervention. Despite the ‘type’ of community, intervention, or any remaining factors, the capability and effectiveness of knowledge transfer between participants and audience (non-direct participants) were crucial for the development of other goals (subthemes) like empathy, compassion, connection, and contribution or action.

To demonstrate how this process works, we have developed the following mechanism that describes the elements of an arts-based intervention and how to monitor it for effectiveness. This process is shown in Figure 3.

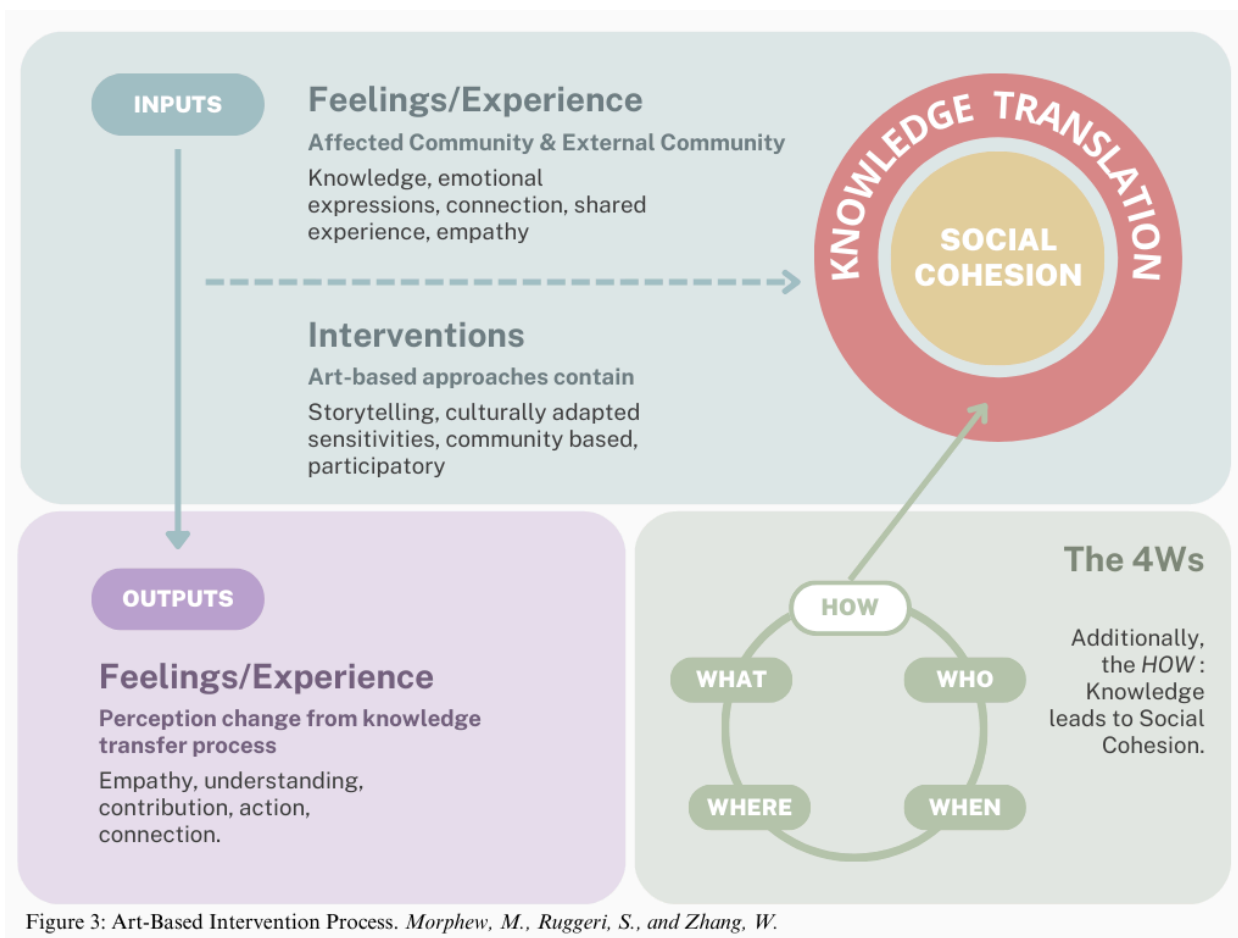


Figure 3: Art-Based Intervention Process. *Morphew, M., Ruggeri, S., and Zhang, W.*

In the above image, the process is demonstrated through inputs and outputs. With the overall goal being social cohesion – the *why*: why a particular intervention is necessary. The actors of these inputs and outputs are the “4Ws”: *who, what, when, and where*, specifically for this mechanism, the population involved in the intervention, and the type of intervention taking place.⁵⁴ Building upon the IOM’s MHPSS Manual’s use of the Inter Agency Standing Committee’s “4Ws” when mapping MHPSS responses in the humanitarian system our team developed a fifth addition: How (H). In order to reach social cohesion amongst community members, the use of knowledge translation is key – the *how* – how the use of interventions function as a tool and how goals can be achieved.⁵⁵ These are all important factors to consider when evaluating the intervention for effectiveness at reaching social cohesion. On both sides of

⁵⁴ IOM, “Manual on CBMHPSS,” 43.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

the mechanism, input and output, the feelings and experiences are important both in how they interact through the affected community as well as with the participants and audience members to lead to a perception change.

3.2 Intervention Types

Across the studies we have evaluated for this analysis, specific types of arts based interventions were used in each case. The type of art intervention used was tailored to the goals of the study, keeping in mind the population involved and the intended results.

The art-based intervention types used in this evaluation:

- Theater
- Sports
- Storytelling
- Music creation and performance
- Community art exhibitions
- Social circus performance
- Digital storytelling
- Participatory acting and performance
- Community arts programming
- Museum exhibitions
- Guided group art and movement therapy
- Participatory group artwork
- Participatory individual artwork and subsequent presentation or discussion
- Social practice art and community presentations

These types of interventions are wide-ranging and were built or designed uniquely for each specified study. This demonstrates that using a singular arts-based approach is unnecessary to achieve positive outcomes for participants. In all of the studies used in this research, whether the impact was highly statistically significant or qualitatively assessed, they all achieved some positive impact based on the identified results. Further, the benefit of such wide-ranging

interventions provides an excellent selection of arts-based approaches that can be used in the future to facilitate positive change and influence emotional well-being.

3.3 Quantitative Evaluation Methods

Article Title	Assessment Type	Description
<i>Participatory art-based activity, community-dwelling older adults and T changes in health condition: Results from a pre-post intervention, single-arm, prospective and longitudinal study</i> ⁵⁶	<u>Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales</u> (WEMWBS) ⁵⁷	A 14 item scale with 5 response categories developed to monitor mental wellbeing used in programming designed to increase mental wellbeing. ⁵⁸
	<u>Centre of Excellence Self-Administered</u> questionnaire (CESAM)	A self-administered questionnaire designed specifically to measure frailty in senior adults. Higher scoring on a CESAM test is associated with increased frailty levels. ⁵⁹
	<u>EQ-5D</u> – standardized measure of health-related quality of life ⁶⁰	A questionnaire developed to measure the quality of life through 5 dimensions of health: mobility, self-care, usual activities, pain and discomfort, and anxiety and depression. The answers are then converted into a number scale to quantitatively assess overall health. ⁶¹
<i>A Creative and Movement-Based Blended Intervention for Children in Outpatient Residential Care: A Mixed-Method, Multi-Center, Single-Arm Feasibility Trial</i> ⁶²	<u>Beck’s Youth Inventory</u> ⁶³	A self-assessment that measures symptoms of depression, anxiety, anger, disruptive behavior, and self-concept in youth through a set of 5 inventories. ⁶⁴

⁵⁶ Beauchet et al., “Participatory art-based activity.”

⁵⁷ Warwick Medical School, “The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.”

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Lee et al., “Validating the Center of Excellence on Longevity Self-Administered (CESAM) Questionnaire,” 1984.e1.

⁶⁰ EuroQol Research Foundation, “EQ-5D.”

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² Birnkammer et al., “A Creative and Movement-Based Blended Intervention,” 207.

⁶³ Child Outcomes Research Consortium, “Beck Youth Inventory.”

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

<i>Coming from afar and finding oneself: group intervention for immigrant and refugee women who have experienced violence</i> ⁶⁵	<u>Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ)</u> ⁶⁶	A checklist questionnaire that gauges trauma responses and measures emotional symptoms commonly occurring alongside traumatic events. The test has 6 current versions and has been used to assess refugee trauma in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. ⁶⁷
	<u>World Health Organization Quality of life (WHOQOL-Bref)</u> ⁶⁸	A quality of life assessment created by the World Health Organization that is designed to be cross-culturally effective in measuring health. ⁶⁹

The use of quantitative assessments and methods are important to point out for this report. In order to find and create scaled-up indicators of arts-based approaches, their outcomes must be measured quantitatively. There are many kinds of assessments, notably within mental health based research, however these well-being assessments have been applied to examine the effects of arts based approaches in the research articles in the above table. In the article *Coming from afar and finding oneself: group intervention for immigrant and refugee women who have experienced violence*, the researchers used multiple assessments to measure associated trauma as well as quality of life and health quantitatively.⁷⁰ Additionally, within the results of this particular article, the researchers found a link between the intervention and how the affected community (the participants) experienced increased positivity towards integration into their community environment.⁷¹ Due to the use of quantitative measures to assess this positive outcome, the results are concretely observed and this dual use of the HTQ and WHOQOL-Bref assessments could be replicated for future arts-based interventions that wish to track for perception change and create a positive integration or reintegration process for RAS and other affected communities within the humanitarian sector.

⁶⁵ Benoit et al., “Coming from afar and rediscovering oneself.”
⁶⁶ Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, see link <https://hpvt-cambridge.org/screening/harvard-trauma-questionnaire>
⁶⁷ *ibid.*
⁶⁸ World Health Organization: Measuring Quality of Life, more info see <https://www.who.int/tools/whoqol>
⁶⁹ *ibid.*
⁷⁰ Benoit et al., “Coming from afar and rediscovering oneself.”
⁷¹ *ibid.*

3.4 Recommendations and Best-Practices

Additionally, there are particular elements contained within each intervention examined for this research that could be used to provide an initial framework for future arts-based programs to promote psychosocial healing and social cohesion. These are intervention type, objectives and goals, creative team, reflection, co-creation and participation, knowledge translation, evaluation, and results and organization. Each of them plays a crucial role in determining the need for art intervention, developing the precise art-based instrument to accomplish the desired result, and how best to evaluate the positive impacts of said intervention. This section groups these elements and provides three broader recommendations for art-based approaches framework. In the meantime, the eight components are presented individually in the image below for clarity.

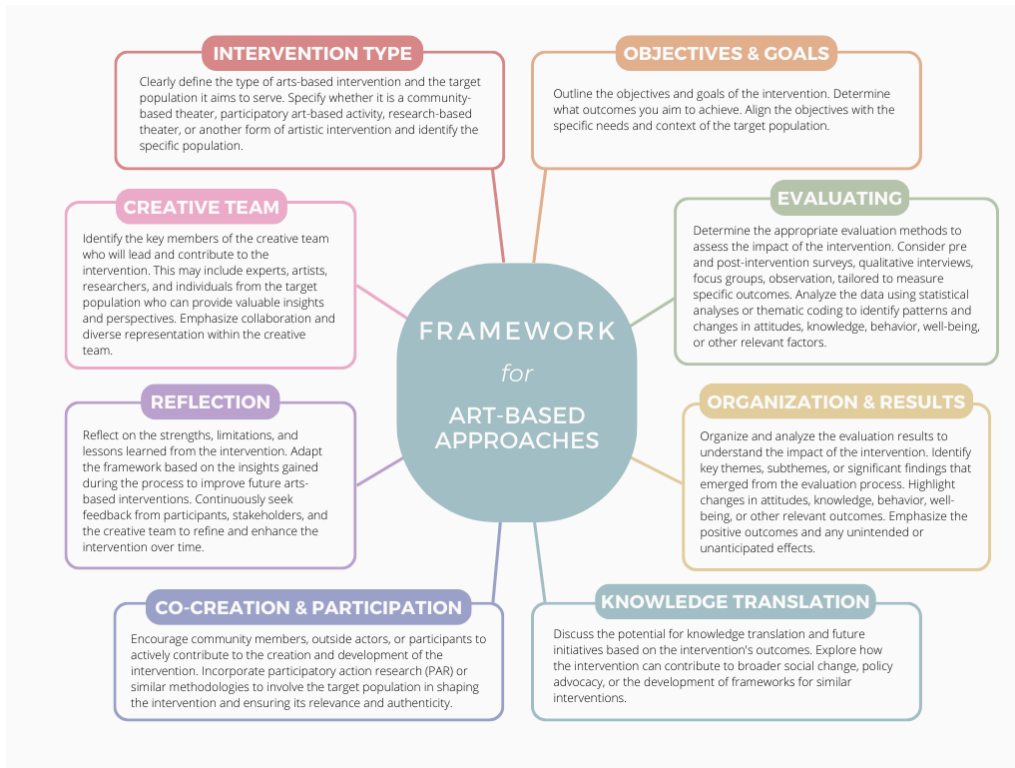


Figure 4: Framework for Art-Based Approaches. Morphey, M., Ruggeri, S., Zhang, W.

1.Design & Implementation

The first set of suggestions pertains to the design phase. This report recommends that a clearly defined intervention type, its objectives and goals, and the creative team are the

fundamental elements to an effective art-based program framework. For example, *what are the targeted populations, which theater program works better for them*, might be considered. It is also crucial to outline the aims of the intervention and ensure they align with the needs of participants. Last, a creative team seems necessary at this stage. This is because essential individuals like artists, academics, and relevant professionals can bring valuable insights to the intervention. Notably, it is also proposed that such creative teams may need to have a diverse representation.

2. Evaluation & Review

Later, a detailed assessment and evaluation process is recommended after designing and implementing an art-based program. Three key steps are evaluation, reflection, and organization. First, determine the proper evaluation method to assess the impact of the intervention. For instance, techniques such as pre- and post survey, focus groups observation, and qualitative interviews are the most common practices appearing in the existing literature. Furthermore, a systematic analysis and categorization of the outcomes is essential to better understand the impact and success of the intervention. As it has been shown in previous studies, change of attitudes, behaviors, knowledge and so forth might be worth considering. The results should highlight the positive outcomes as well as any unintended consequences. Finally, reflection is another indispensable element of this framework. Seeking for feedback from participants, stakeholders, and the creative team also helps refine and enhance the intervention over time. This report specifically advocates for additional efforts on the long-term impact of art-based interventions. The majority of the studies analyzed in this research only included pre- and post-surveys, and some included follow-up interviews within a few weeks. It hence recommends that professionals and researchers should reflect on the strengths and limitations from the intervention so they can update the framework to improve future programs.

3. Other considerations

There are two other variables to consider for art-based interventions: co-creation & involvement, and knowledge translation. The first one speaks to community members and external actors and encourages them to actively contribute to the program creation and development. PAR, for example, serves as a favorable technique to build the bridge between community and targeted population. Finally, this report emphasizes the need to discuss potential

knowledge translation. It asserts that knowledge translation contributes to explain how art-based approaches can have broader social change, policy advocacy, as well as the development of future interventions with a similar focus.

3.5 Limitations

Despite the valuable insights acquired from this study, it is crucial to highlight certain limitations that may have impacted the findings and should be considered when it comes to broader interpretation. There are three main concerns.

→ *Time constraints*

- ◆ Due to time limits, it may have been difficult to investigate every relevant source and undertake a thorough evaluation of the existing literature. This report only used JSTOR, PubMed, and UNESCO as primary search engines. In order to map out a more comprehensive analysis, other major databases like EBSCO, ScienceDirect, the World Bank etc., should also be included in further investigation.

→ *Different nature of Databases*

- ◆ The current analysis relied on three significant databases - JSTOR, PubMed, and UNESCO - which could have reduced the amount of literature available in terms of the breadth and depth of pertinent research. For instance, whereas JSTOR and the UNESCO database may have more articles in the social sciences, PubMed focuses more on the literature in the biomedical field. Thus, even using the same keywords for searching, different results could be obtained.

→ *Inclusion of Variables*

- ◆ It should be noted that not all of the research included in this study included every aspect of importance, such as the specific humanitarian environment or the use of quantitative methodologies. Each study included in the analysis, however, supplied aspects that were linked with the keyword search and provided relevant and valuable information for constructing the framework and comprehending the social cohesion process in art intervention research.

4 Conclusions

Evidence shows that creative approaches to individual and community well-being can improve feelings of safety, confidence, acceptance, and emotional resilience within communities that have experienced trauma, conflict, or displacement. This report builds on the existing evidence and processes related to implementation of art-based interventions for social cohesion and psychosocial wellbeing. Namely, it builds off of the research gathered by IOM’s *Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies and Displacement*,⁷² a tool for implementing supportive interventions in humanitarian and crisis contexts. We also developed a framework for analysis of perception change based on the IOM’s poetry workshop pilot program.⁷³ This framework identifies the elements of 1. *Identity and Belonging*; 2. *Trust and Understanding*; 3. *Empathy and Acceptance*; and 4. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* as indicators of perception change within studies on peacebuilding, social cohesion, and wellbeing.

Our work identified and aimed to fill the gap in literature surrounding quantitative and scalable research on art-based approaches to social cohesion in the humanitarian space. More research is needed in order to further develop and understand best-practices for the implementation of creative interventions in affected communities. Using a systematic analysis approach, we used relevant keyword searches to identify and analyze trends in literature to develop a best-practices framework for potential use in future research. Our findings suggest that establishing Intervention type, Creative team, Objectives & goals, Reflection, Co-creation & participation, Knowledge translation, Organization & results, and Evaluation is an effective framework for implementing art-based interventions for social cohesion in affected communities. These steps allow researchers and interventionists to identify appropriate research design, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring to ensure targeted and culturally sensitive implementation.

⁷² IOM, “Manual on CBMHPSS.”

⁷³ IOM, “Connecting Through Poetry.”

Additionally, our research proposes a process for how perception change occurs within art-based interventions through Knowledge Translation. Inputs such as feelings, experiences, and interventions interact with the “four w’s,” (who, what, where, when)⁷⁴ to produce perception change within participants. It is key to understand how this process takes place to better understand ways to implement effective interventions and promote social cohesion. More research is needed on how the knowledge translation process occurs. Finally, we summarize quantitative and mixed-methods assessments for arts-based interventions. Our research found that the majority of arts-based interventions are evaluated qualitatively- resulting in a dearth of results that can be scaled up for more general use. The identification of quantitative assessments can be used in future studies to close this gap and develop further insights into broader best-practices.

We suggest future research use a similar framework to that identified in this paper as a means for exploring best-practices for art-based interventions. Additionally, we emphasize the need for ongoing research that is quantitative, large-scale, and generalizable in nature in the humanitarian space. We hope The findings and best practices identified through this analysis can inform future interventions for social cohesion and psychosocial wellbeing in affected populations across the globe.

⁷⁴ IOM, “Manual on CBMHPSS,” 43.

Appendix

Data Availability Statement:

The data that supported the findings in this report are openly available at:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/open-data-arts-based-approaches>

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