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Effects on Students' Academic and Non-academic Outcomes and Student Participation in Theatre Arts: A Research Synthesis

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Abstract: *Research suggests theatre arts participation benefits student's academic and non-academic outcomes. The purpose of this literature review was to identify the extent to which a relationship exists between participation in theatre arts and student outcomes for students K-12. Fourteen articles met the inclusion criteria. Results found theatre arts programs were positively related to self-beliefs, provide positive outcome experiences, foster student development, increase interpersonal and social skills, and expand theatre arts skills. The results indicate the importance of the creative process in theatre arts, which includes play production, theatre devising and theatre workshops and classes. The evidence from these findings suggest that students may benefit from the experiences of participation in a theatre arts program through the creative process and increase student outcomes through social and emotional development, enhancing self-beliefs, and increasing theatre arts skills. This informs current practice in implantation of a theatre arts program, which could include play production, theatre devising and theatre classes and workshops.*

Key Words: theatre, drama, outcomes, self-beliefs, synthesis, performance art, creative

Research suggests theatre arts participation benefits student's academic and non-academic outcomes. Participation in theatre strengthens development of identity, sense of belonging, builds confidence and provides an outlet for expression. Theatre arts programs have lifelong impacts in creativity, cognitive thinking, communication, and personal development (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; McCammon, Saldaña, Hines, & Omasta, 2012; Ngo, 2016; Sonn, Quayle, Belanji, & Baker, 2015). The term theatre arts encompasses the overarching term to describe theatre and drama (Davis, Ferholt, Clemson, Jansson, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2015; National Core Arts Standards, 2014). The distinction between theatre and drama is that theatre refers to the live performance of a theatrical piece, whereas drama refers to the creative process. In this study we will use the term theatre arts except when we need to identify a specific component or form under the term theatre arts. While research suggests the possible benefits of theatre arts for students, there is a dearth in qualitative research in the educational setting for theatre arts and students' learning outcomes and how the theatrical process contributes to these outcomes (Daykin

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et al., 2008; Joronen et al., 2008). What does the current research indicate about student participation in theatre arts and learning outcomes and what are the theatrical processes that contribute to these outcomes?

BENEFITS OF THEATRE ARTS ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

In order to frame the research problem and purpose, we will first discuss the general research on theatre arts and students' learning outcomes. Research suggests theatre arts participation benefits students' academic and non-academic learning outcomes. Academic learning outcomes refers to students acquiring knowledge and skills in the student-learning objectives and standards, graduation rates, and school-based achievement. Non-academic learning outcomes refer to the larger notion of societal and life outcomes in relation to self-beliefs (Great School Partnership, 2013).

First, theatre arts positively impact academic learning outcomes, including academic achievement, supporting varying learning styles, cultivating a positive learning environment, and increases retention rates. Theatre arts skills can transfer to general education skills leading to greater academic achievement (Kindelan, 2001). Theatre arts benefit students in reading, language skills, mathematical skills, thinking skills, social skills, motivation and creates an overall positive learning environment (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Kindelan, 2001; Ruppert, 2006). Theatre arts reaches students who might not traditionally succeed in school, and aids those with different learning styles (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Furthermore, theatre arts foster cooperation between students and creates a positive school environment, where students are more likely to be excited to learn, thus transferring to student success (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Hoxie & Debellis, 2014). Enrollment in a theatre arts program leads some students, who do not enjoy other classes, to attend school, thus increasing retention rates and student engagement contributing to student academic learning outcomes (McLauchlan, 2010). These programs can provide non-traditional educational practices and engage students who may have negative school experiences, thus reinvigorating their learning, leading to successful academic learning outcomes (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Hoxie & Debellis, 2014; Ruppert, 2006).

Second, theatre arts positively influences students' non-academic learning outcomes including: development of identity, emotional development, and social and personal development. Participation in theatre strengthens the development of identity by providing a sense of belonging, building confidence, and offering an outlet for expression (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001). Theatre arts participation strengthens emotional development by exposing students to risks and uncertainty in a supportive structure, provides opportunities for one to explore self through a creative process and supports social development for students by encouraging expression, risk taking, and reinforcing social skills (Hughes & Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, theatre arts participation supports emotional development by having similar traits of positive affective development found in families (e.g., emotional predictability, emotional openness, adults playing a positive supportive role) (Larson & Brown, 2007; McCammon et al. 2012). Theatre arts programs have lifelong impacts in social and personal development (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; McCammon, Saldaña, Hines, & Omasta, 2012; Ngo, 2016; Sonn, Quayle, Belanji, & Baker, 2015). Adolescents learn social reality through the creative drama process, and they learn they can create new roles for themselves in their own life (Conrad, 2010).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This systematic review of the literature examines relevant literature related to the impact of students' participation in theatre arts on academic and non-academic learning outcomes. The first step in this review of literature was to systematically identify and summarize the findings of previous relevant literature. Second, I conducted a systematic literature review to answer the following question: What is the relationship between students' participation in theatre arts and academic and non-academic learning outcomes and what aspects of theatre arts affect the relationship? This review included identifying search terms and inclusion criteria; this was followed by a successive three-phase design, which included an electronic database search, hand search, and reference review (Cooper, 2017) to provide an in-depth review of the literature. The sections that follow summarize the findings from previous literature reviews on theatre participation and students' academic and/or non-academic learning outcomes, describe the systematic review purpose and search procedures, identify, describe the results, and discuss the findings of the included studies that were included.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEWS

In order to locate previous relevant reviews of literature a search was conducted on all dates up to October, 23, 2018 using the following search terms: "theatre", "theater", "drama" AND "systematic review", "synthesis", "meta-analysis", "literature review". The inclusion criteria were the following: (a) included K-12 students, (b) included at least one form of theatre arts, (c) addressed academic or non-academic learning outcomes, (d) published in peer reviewed journals (e) published in any country as long as it was in English. The results revealed three systematic reviews of the literature that discuss the relevant literature on the impact on academic and non-academic learning outcomes for students participating in theatre arts (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen, Rankin, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2008). These will be summarized in the sections that follow.

Conrad and Asher (2000) investigated self-concept and self-esteem through drama. The inclusion criteria comprised the following: (a) experimental or quasi-experimental in design, (b) studies used creative drama as a teaching strategy, and (c) studies examined the effects of creative drama on self-concept or self-esteem. All of the selected studies ($n = 8$) were doctoral dissertations. The authors did not define search years. Authors find creative drama has no effect on the self-concept of elementary students. The authors note and the findings suggest a need for more research for other affective and cognitive variables.

Daykin et al. (2008) report on participation in the performing arts and its effects on health and behavior. Their mixed-methods synthesis includes performing arts (i.e., music, drama, performance, dance), health (e.g., HIV/AIDS, alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs), and social benefits (e.g., peer interaction, social skills, empowerment). The inclusion criteria were: (a) participants were between 11 to 18 years of age, (b) in community settings, (c) studies were published between 1994 and 2004, (d) studies included a drama, dance or music intervention outside the curriculum, (e) studies were published in English.

The authors identified 14 studies meeting their inclusion criteria. The participants were actively involved in drama or participating as audience members. The authors identified key themes related to the positive effect of theatre arts participation on students' learning outcomes, including academic improvement, mental health, empowerment, behavior, social skills development and increase in peer interaction in regard to performing arts participation (Douglas

et al., 2000; Lasic & Kenny, 2002; Mattingly, 2001; McArdle et al., 2002). Overall, the findings suggest drama interventions benefit participant's academic learning outcomes, health, and social development.

In addition, Daykin et al. identified three articles which either find that theatre arts had a limited effect or negative effect on social development, or the study was low in quality (Jackson, 2003; Lasic & Kenny, 2002; Walsh-Bowers & Basso, 1999). The authors note many qualitative studies lacks detail such as data collection procedures and data analysis. The authors suggest the qualitative research should be more rigorous and researcher should apply reflexivity in their qualitative research (Daykin et al., 2008).

At the time of publication, the authors find a dearth in the research on drama interventions for students outside clinical settings and suggest areas for potential future research in student outcomes, performing arts processes, and data collections and analysis procedures. The authors also suggest while there is a need for more quantitative and qualitative research in this field, qualitative research may be the better form of research to gain insight on the process of performing arts and health (Daykin et a., 2008).

Finally, Joronen et al. (2008) reviewed the literature on school-based drama intervention for health promotion. They report focused on health behavior (e.g., HIV, smoking and eating) and social and mental health, which is associated with non-academic learning outcomes (e.g., self-concept, social skills, social transition). The study inclusion criteria contained: (a) drama or theatre as the primary method in the intervention program, (b) evidence of effectiveness of the intervention, (c) participants between the ages 6 to 18, and (d) published in peer-reviewed journals. The authors identified only four articles that met the inclusion criteria (Freeman et al., 2003; Wright, 2006; Walsh-Bowers, 1992; Walsh-Bowers & Basso, 1999). The authors indicate that school-based drama intervention positively effects health promotions (e.g., anti-smoking, drug prevention) in students; however, studies lacked statistically significant effects on non-academic learning outcomes in self-concept. The authors also note that the studies contained weak or insufficient reporting of methodology and supporting theory in drama intervention. The authors suggest that future research should include qualitative research to understand the entire drama process and not just the outcomes. The findings suggest drama interventions positively effects health awareness but does not impact non-academic learning outcomes in self-concept. The authors suggest currently the research on school-based drama intervention methodology is weak on describing the drama process used in the interventions as most of the research reports on outcomes and not the drama process used in the intervention (Joronen et al., 2008).

Systematic reviews by Conrad and Asher (2000), Daykin et al. (20008), and Joronen et al. (2008) present several convergent findings. First, all three of the study's findings converge on the need for more research on the effects of theatre arts on students. Conrad and Asher (2000) find the need for more detailed and quality research. Second, Daykin et al. (2008) and Joronen et al. (2008) find a need for qualitative research to examine the process of participation in theatre arts rather than just focusing on the outcome. Third, two of the studies find positive health outcomes for students receiving a theatre arts intervention (Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al., 2008). The studies diverge on their findings on the effects relating to student outcomes. While Daykin et al. (20008) find several impacts of theatre arts developing self-confidence, social skills, improved interaction with peers and increased co-operation, Conrad and Asher (2000) and Joronen et al. (2008) find no significant effects of a theatre arts intervention in relation to student outcomes, and find the studies are inconclusive. Fourth, previous systematic literature reviews are inconclusive on the impact of theatre arts participation and student outcomes; however, they agree on the need for more research

on participation in theatre and student outcomes (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al.; 2008). Overall, more research is needed to examine the relationship between participation in theatre arts and student academic and non-academic learning outcomes.

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to update and expand upon the previous literature reviews (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al.; 2008) I conducted a systematic review of the literature. In expanding upon previous literature reviews (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al.; 2008), I developed an inclusion criterion, then followed a sequential three-phase search procedure to identify all relevant studies on theatre arts participation and student academic and non-academic learning outcomes (Cooper, 2017).

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW PURPOSE AND QUESTION

Many students have low levels of positive academic and non-academic outcomes (Buhs, 2005; Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003; NCES, 2016). Research suggests students with low outcomes tend to doubt their abilities and focus on their insufficiencies, are less independent, unmotivated, have behavioral issues and perform at a lower level academically and socially, contributing to feelings of failure (Bandura, 1994; Quiroga, et al., 2013; Valentine, DuBois & Cooper, 2004). This may lead to high levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Students displaying these symptoms achieve at a lower rate academically, have a higher dropout rate and low self-beliefs (Bandura, 1994; Donnellan et al., 2005; Quiroga, et al., 2013). Fortunately, theatre arts have been shown to improve academic and non-academic outcomes which improve school performance and enhance self-beliefs (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Hoxie & Debellis, 2014; Larson & Brown, 2007; McCammon et al. 2012; Ruppert, 2006). Researchers and practitioners are still unclear on the best method to integrate and implement theatre arts programing to improve students' outcomes (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008).

The purpose of this qualitative research synthesis is to see if a relationship exists between theatre arts participation and students' outcomes. This qualitative research synthesis expands on previous synthesis findings by updating the research on qualitative studies about relationship between theatre arts programs in grades K-12 and students' outcomes. We chose qualitative research based on the lack of qualitative research noted in previous research synthesis (Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al., 2008) and because qualitative research addresses the need explore and understand the complex nature of theatre arts participation and students' outcome (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, this synthesis will explore existing research on qualitative research on theatre arts programs. This review will synthesize relevant studies on all student outcomes and participation in a theatre arts program in order to answer the following research questions: What is the relationship between participation in a theatre arts program and students' outcomes?, what types of theatre participation associates with students' academic and non-academic outcomes?

METHODS

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW SEARCH PROCEDURES

To locate relevant studies, I delineated inclusion criteria. Next, I conducted a literature search using a successive three-phase design. The successive three-phase design included an electronic database search, hand search, and reference review (Cooper, 2017).

INCLUSION CRITERIA

I selected the following inclusion criteria:

- K-12 students participated in a theatre arts program. K-12 was chosen because in includes all primary and secondary grade levels education systems of formal schooling (Corsi-Bunker, 2015);
- studies with adults were included if they also contained students K-12, or if adults reflected on their K-12 experiences;
- studies included academic learning outcomes (e.g., grades, retention) or non-academic learning outcomes (e.g. self-efficacy, self-concept, self-esteem, self-perception, motivation);
- studies were published in a peer-reviewed journal;
- studies were conducted in a school or after-school setting;
- study methodology was qualitative;
- studies were published through all dates prior to October 23, 2018; and
- studies were conducted in any country as long as they were published in English.

Studies were excluded if they were a theatre arts or drama program whose purpose was therapeutic in nature (e.g., group therapy session, health awareness), or non-traditional theatre program settings (e.g., Applied Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre in Education). These studies were excluded because the aim was to identify studies with general theatre programs to understand the relationship between theatre arts and student outcomes for programs in a traditional theatre setting.

ELECTRONIC DATABASE SEARCH

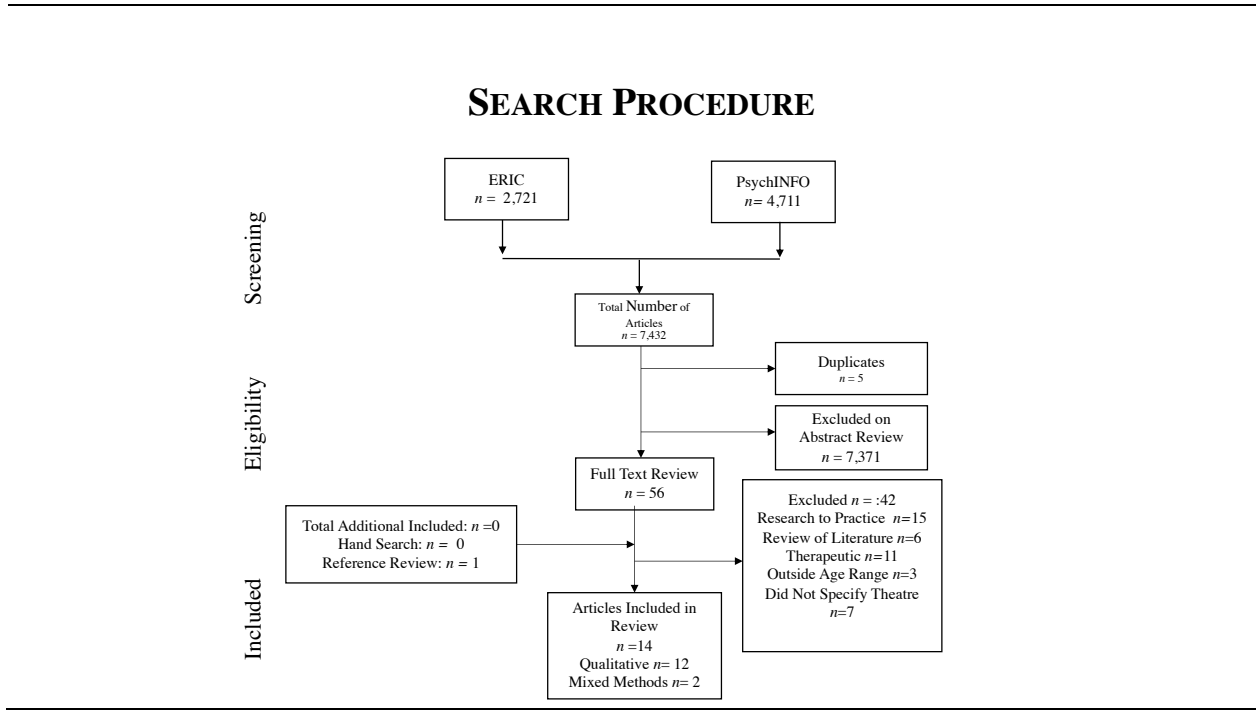
The first phase of the search procedure was an electronic database search of ERIC and PsychINFO through October 23, 2018. The search used a combination of the following search terms: youth, adolescen*, teenage*, pupil*, student*, school*, curricul*, and drama*, theatre, theater, "Improv", "Improvisation", "performing arts", and self*, motivation, affect, identity, "student voice", efficacy, perception, confidence, determination OR "drop-out", "drop out", grades, GPA, retention, "at risk", social, math, language, read*, and school, community. The electronic database search yielded 7,432 articles. Five articles were excluded as duplicates and 7,371 articles were excluded on the abstract review. The full text review excluded 42 articles for the following reasons: research to practice article (n=15), therapeutic in nature (n=11), review of literature (n=6), outside the inclusion age range (n=3), did not specify theatre or drama program (n=7).

HAND SEARCH AND REFERENCE REVIEW

The next two phases of the search were a hand search of journals and a reference review. The hand search reviewed the previous five years of journals which included articles meeting the inclusion criteria: *Applied Theatre Research/ IDEA Journal, Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, Child Development, Children's Theatre Review, Drama Research: International Journal of Drama in Education, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, Encounters in Theory and History of Education, Journal of Youth Studies, Music Education Research, Psychology of Education, Qualitative Psychology, Research in Drama Education, Social Work with Groups, Teachers College Record, The Journal of Educational Research, The School Counsel,* and *Youth Theatre Journal.* The last phase of the literature search was a full reference review of all articles meeting the inclusion criteria, and appropriate previous research syntheses and meta-analyses

(Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002; Conrad & Asher, 2007; Daykin et al., 2008; Dutton, 2001; Ennis & Tonkin, 2018; Guest, 2018; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Joronen, Rankin, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2008; Larson & Brown, 2007; McCammon, 2010; McCammon et al., 2012; McLauchlan, 2001; McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014; Österlind, 2011;Pitts, 2007). Figure 1 displays the search procedure.

Figure 1
Search Procedure Flow Chart



IDENTIFIED ARTICLES

The search process yielded 14 articles meeting the inclusion criteria (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Ennis & Tonkin, 2018; Guest, 2018; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Larson & Brown, 2007; McCammon, 2010; McCammon et al., 2012; McLauchlan, 2001; McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014; Österlind, 2011; Pitts, 2007). Table 1 displays study descriptions. Data in Burton (2002) was not included from the *Melbourne Youth Theatre: The Millennium Project* portion of the study because it emphasized the youth to adult transition and contained participants age outside the inclusion criteria. Table 2.1 displays the characteristics of each study. Three studies (McCammon et al., 2012; McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014) used a mixed-methods design. This included the qualitive strand of these studies. Five of the studies use a play production of an existing play to perform for the community (Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Guest, 2018; Larson & Brown; 2007; Pitts; 2007). Three of the studies included other elements of a theatre arts program (e.g., play devising, theatrical workshops, undefined performances) without specifying a full play production for the community (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Ennis & Tonkin, 2018; Hughes & Wilson, 2004). Six studies include participation in the school's theatre program (McCammon, 2010; McCammon et al., 2012; McLauchlan, 2001;

McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014; Österlind, 201). Of the identified studies, nine took place in a school setting (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Guest, 2018; Larson & Brown, 2007; McCammon, 2010; McLauchlan, 2001; McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014; Österlind, 2011; Pitts, 2007), three studies occurred in a community arts setting (Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Ennis & Tonkin, 2018), one study was in multiple types of theatre and in multiple settings (i.e., experimental, county, sessional, commercial, applied, musical, youth arts, theatre arts, rural, issue-based, independent, young people-led, one wo/man bands, television company, community, building-based, theatre building-based, special initiatives, disability focused, national, stage schools, armature dramatics, theatre in education, dance, satellite) (Hughes & Wilson, 2004), and one study was conducted with adults reflecting on their high school theatre/speech participation (McCammon et al., 2012).

Table 1
Study Descriptions

Author(s)	Partic.	Setting	Country	Method	Theatre Used	Findings
Beare & Belliveau (2007)	*n*=10-20 Age=Secondary	Secondary school	Canada	Performative inquiry	Play creating process: 1) Script writing 2) Rehearsing 3) Performing 4) Reflecting.	Positive development in: 1) Inclusion 2) Control 3) Intimacy 4) Empowerment 5) Vision.
Burton (2002)	*n*= 9 Age= 15-25 (6 were 15-17)	Youth theatre program	Austra-lia	Ethnography	Brisbane Youth Theatre: Explores cross-cultural and multi-cultural issues	Maturity which required autonomy and mastery, the cultural significance of the play and the role of morality within the play, opposition to the decisions made by adults.
Dutton (2001)	*n*=10 Ages=10-13	Youth recreation center theatre program	USA	Unspecified qualitative	After school theatre group: Play production with improvised skits, writing fractured fairy tales, and personal background	Decision making/ competence and group identity-pride, strength, and support.

					inspired themes	
Ennis & Tonkin (2018)	*n*= 17 Age=Adults reflecting on youth	Youth arts company	Austra-lia	Narrative	Youth arts: program with drama, circus, and performance	Social connection, confidence, self-knowledge/ identity, interpersonal skills, improved mental health, a new 'physicality'.
Guest (2018)	*n*=40-60 Age=High school	High school	USA	Ethnography with grounded theory foundations	Extra-curricular theatre production.	Teamwork experiences.
Hughes & Wilson (2004)	Qualitative student interviews *n*= 23 Age=undefined	Youth theatre workshop	England	Mixed methods; qualitative strand used grounded theory and narrative	Experimental, county, sessional, commercial, applied, musical, youth arts, theatre arts, rural, issue-based, independent, young people-led, one wo/man bands, television company, community, building-based, theatre building-based, special initiatives, disability focused,	Youth theatre develop a range of personal skills and resources, informal and supportive context for personal and social development, theatre encourages young people to participate in their communities, and the creative process.

					national, stage schools, armature dramatics, theatre in education, dance, satellite.	
Larson & Brown (2007)	*n*=10 Age=14-17	High school	USA	Grounded theory	Extra-curricular production.	Emotional experiences, managing anger and interpersonal stress, how youth learned the developmental process.
McCammon (2010)	*n*=36 Age=16-18	High school	USA	Qualitative questionnaire	High school theatre program.	Praise and recognition, new experiences, responsibility, love and security.
McCammon et al. (2012)	*n*=234 Age=Undefined	High school	USA	Mixed methods survey	High school theatre/ speech experiences.	Cultural rituals and rites of passage, confidence, and lifelong impact.
McLauchlan (2001)	*n*=15-undefined	High school	Canada	Case study	Children's theatre course	Student engagement, positive work environment, peer respect, creation of classroom norms, creativity, collaborative culture, and shared student identity.

McLauchlan (2010)	*n*=33 Age=17-18	High school	Canada	Case study	High school year 4 theatre course	Students studied drama for peer collaboration, the teacher, performing, drama classroom atmosphere. Students valued drama's differences from other classes, the teacher as part of the positive experience, drama enhances learning, drama engages students emotionally, and students value the noncurricular outcomes in drama.
McLauchlan & Winters (2014)	*n*=54 Age=14-15	High school	Canada	Mixed methods survey and interviews	High school year 1 theatre course	Students choose drama for diverse reasons, students value drama's differences from other courses, the teacher is a vital component of a productive classroom drama experience, drama class enhances student growth, students attach highest value of drama's capacity for enhancing personal growth.
Österlind (2011)	*n*=30 Age=18-19	Upper secondary school	Sweden	Phenomenology	High school theatre students	Source of fellowship and fun, motivation, personal development, development of subject specific skills, general competencies.

Pitts (2007)	Survey *n*=198 Audio diary *n*=4 Age=11-15	Secondary school	England	Case study	Extra-curricular production.	Student personal growth, increased confidence, sense of belonging, and musical development.

RESULTS

The following sections discusses the themes that emerged from the review of the literature. The articles were first coded using key terminology discussed below. Then themes and sub-themes emerged through the coding process. The first theme is the creative process with the subthemes of play production, theatre devising, and theatre workshops or classes. The second theme is students' academic and non-academic learning outcomes, with subthemes in self-concept and identity, positive experiences, student developments, interpersonal and social skills, and theatre and drama skills.

We identified themes and sub-themes by analyzing the included study's findings (see table 1) for students' outcomes. Students' outcomes include academic outcomes in attaining knowledge and skills in the student learning objectives and standards, and school-based achievement. Non-academic outcomes were in societal and life outcomes as they relate to self-beliefs (Great School Partnership, 2013). Self-beliefs include self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, self-perception, and self-competence. Each of these components effects students' academic outcomes (e.g., school achievement, dropout rates, academic motivation, academic self-beliefs) and non-academic outcomes (e.g., self-beliefs, mental health). The self-beliefs develop though various types of experiences (e.g., vicarious, mastery, personal).

Furthermore, self-concept develops through experiences and is how an individual perceives themselves. Research suggests students with higher levels of self-concept display signs of independence, consciousness of actions and adaptability to social norms. Additionally, students with higher levels of self-concept perform higher academically and socially, while students with lower levels of self-concept are less independent, less adaptive to social norms, and have lower levels of performance in school (Dévai, 1990; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976).

Self-esteem follows a three-stage hierarchy order. First, global self-esteem refers to a person's evaluation of their overall worth. Second, specific self-esteem is a person's evaluation of certain life situations (e.g., relationships, education, peer interactions) or specific aspects of a person's life (e.g., competence, appearance, intelligence). Third, task-specific or situational self-esteem is a person's evaluation of a specific situation (Simpson & Boyle, 1975). Self-competence is often considered a component of self-esteem and should be considered when measuring self-esteem. Self-competence refers to a person's emotional stability, personality traits related to task focus, intelligence, creativity and responsibility, and is a high predictor of academic achievement and creativity (Mar, DeYoung, Higgins, & Peterson, 2006; Tafadori & Swann, 1995).

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

All studies noted the use of a creative process. The creative process included three distinct theatre processes: play production, theatre devising and theatre workshops. Play production is when the participants in the study rehearse and perform productions of a play for an audience. Theatre or play devising is creating a theatre piece through the emerging collaboration of an

ensemble (Oddey, 1994), or through theatre workshops. In their findings examining a variety of theatre programs (e.g., youth arts, theatre arts, stage school), Hughes and Wilson (2004) highlighted the students enhanced personal and social development by going through the creative process in a theatre program. Three of the studies noted creativity in the drama classroom (McLauchlan, 2001; McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014).

PLAY PRODUCTION

A play production is a performance of a play for an audience. The play production process includes rehearsing the play and performing the play for an audience. Five articles addressed play production. Burton (2002) used play production in both groups of their study. One group, The Melbourne Youth Theatre, used theatre devising while the second group, The Brisbane Youth Theatre, used Christopher Marlow's *Dr. Faustus* as their play production. Burton found both groups showed an increase in self-awareness, self-esteem, and identity. In Dutton's (2001) study, the theatre program produced William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as their play production. In their study with adults reflecting back on their experiences with their youth theatre experiences, Ennis and Tonkin (2018) did not specify a play production, however, they noted participation in the programs included a play production. Their findings suggest participation in a play production may increase social connections, confidence, identity, interpersonal skills, and improved mental health. Guest (2018) found an increase of teamwork through play production in two different schools with varying social economic status students both producing the same play dealing with social justice themes. Larson and Brown (2007) examined the production of *Les Misérables* and found within the experiences in a play production, students experienced a range of emotions, managed anger and stress, and learned the emotional developmental process. Finally, Pitts (2007) found participation in a school's production of *Anything Goes* provided social experiences and personal development experiences. Participation in a play production utilizd the creative process and increasd self-beliefs (Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Ennis & Tonkin, 2018; Guest, 2018; Larson & Brown, 2007; Pitts, 2007).

THEATRE DEVISING

Four articles addressed theatre devising within the program. Beare and Belliveau (2007) focused on a four-step play creating process which included script writing, rehearsing, performing and reflecting. This led to findings on self, consisting of five developmental stages of performing arts, inclusion, control, intimacy, empowerment and vision. Authors found the steps in the creative process intertwine with the developmental stages of performing arts. The authors suggested participants move continuously though externalization and internalization throughout the stages. Theatre (i.e., script writing, rehearsing, performing and reflecting) may illicit the externalization and the developmental phases may illicit the internalization (i.e., inclusion, control, intimacy, empowerment and vision). The developmental process brought forth external and internal dialogue, which might have enhanced positive youth development. Burton (2002) used play devising for one group in the study where they created and performed an original devised piece of theatre. Dutton (2001) began theatre devising through improvisational skits and fractured fairy tales for a performance for family members but changed course during the process and chose to perform William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* instead of a devised piece, therefor no specific outcomes related to theatre devising. McLauchlan (2001) applied play devising in a children's theatre course for high school students. In devising theatre, the students created a children's play to be performed. The course included three curricular units, which included creating the script,

rehearsals and pre-production, and production. Theatre devising generally included creating a script, rehearsal, and performance. The four identified articles found theatre devising might have positive student non-academic learning outcomes in self-beliefs (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002; McLauchlan, 2001).

THEATRE WORKSHOPS OR CLASSES

Five of the studies associated theatre workshops or class lessons within the theatre arts program (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Ennis & Tonkin, 2018; Hughes & Wilson, 2004). Theatre workshops and classes present in the identified articles included direction, drama games, drama skills training, performance, play devising, improvisation, lighting, publicity, script writing, sound, and stage management.

STUDENTS' ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

Across all identified articles (n=14) student outcomes broadly fit into five main themes, self-concept, self-esteem, and identity, positive experiences, student development, interpersonal and social skills, and theatre and drama skills. These sub-themes using key terminology as mentioned in self-beliefs as well as terminology in experiences, development, and skills.

SELF-CONCEPT

Six studies found student outcomes in the themes of self-concept and identity. In a community-based theatre program, Dutton (2001) found enhanced decision-making and competence, which increased their self-concept, and group identity including pride and strength within group support. Guest (2018) found participation in a play production increased teamwork relating to group identity. Through a youth theatre production of *Dr. Faustus*, Burton (2002) found non-academic learning outcomes in maturity though autonomy, increases in self-awareness, self-esteem, and identity formation. McLauchlan (2001) found through peer collaboration in a positive work environment, students created a group identity. McLauchlan (2010) found personal growth in the form of increased self-esteem, self-reflection and confidence. McLauchlan and Winters (2014) found drama students have increased confidence, and students ranked this personal growth as the most important aspect of drama participation. Finally, in relation to play production, Pitts (2007) found participation in a play production provided increases in confidence and a sense of belonging within the group identity. Research suggests participation in theatre arts might increase self-concept and identity through group work and experiences in self-awareness and confidence (Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Guest, 2018; McLauchlan, 2010, McLauchlan & Winters, 2014; Pitts, 2007).

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Three identified studies suggested theatre participation provided a positive experience for students. Analyzing two high school theatre programs, McCammon (2010) found non-academic learning outcomes with students receiving praise and recognition with the teacher and peers, new experiences with peers, and the program provided a sense of love and security. In a survey for adults reflecting on their past theatre experiences, McCammon et al. (2012) found that theatre arts had a lifelong impact, especially in students' cultural rituals and rites of passage within the group. Using the same student questionnaire as McCammon (2010), Österlind (2011) found theatre was a source of fellowship and fun within the group. According to the research, theatre arts

participation can potentially provide positive experiences for students (McCammon, 2010; McCammon et al., 2012; Österlind, 2011).

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Participation in a theatre program intertwined the four-step play creating process (i.e., script writing, rehearsing, performing, reflecting) with five sequential developmental stages of performing arts (i.e., inclusion, control, intimacy, empowerment, vision), which promoted a positive youth development model. Each experience in theatre enabled the participants to experience the developmental phase at a more complex level, thus allowing them to move to the next level (e.g., sequentially moving up in the developmental phases) (Beare & Belliveau, 2007).

The inclusion phase of development related how the student fits in to the group. Once students felt acceptance of the group, they were able to proceed to control. Theatre students used their theatre skills by exploring their boundaries and limits to find their voice within the group. Once the students experienced control over their group inclusion they moved to intimacy, where the main focus was friendship and strong connections with peers. Once the students felt completely comfortable with the group and the theatre process, they reached the empowerment stage. In this stage the sense of self intertwined with the theatre process. The students connected their personal self and their theatre process. Finally, students in the vision phase tended to be the leaders in the play-creating process. They had keen insight on how others moved through the stages in the play-creating process and helped facilitate the process for others in leadership positions.

Beare and Belliveau (2007) found participation in a theatre program promoted positive sequential student development (i.e., inclusion, control, intimacy, empowerment, vision) through the four-step play creating process (i.e., script writing, rehearsing, performing, reflecting). The authors found most of the students operated within the first three developmental phases (i.e., inclusion, control, intimacy), with each participant experience being unique. The study suggested that identifying with the theatre group, honing theatre arts skills, and creating a friend group was the main focus of the student participants.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Four identified studies reported on the development of interpersonal and social skills through theatre arts. Hughes and Wilson (2004) described the findings in a large study examining 25 different types of theatre organizations. They found a relationship between participation in theatre arts and the development of personal and social skills. Students were potentially more likely to participate in their communities, and placed importance in the creative process within the theatre program. Larson and Brown (2007) found participation in a play production provided students with emotional experiences and taught them how to manage anger and interpersonal stress to help youth learn the developmental process. McLauchlan (2010) found the interpersonal skills learned in a drama class transfers to the students' social and collaborative skills. Relatedly, McLauchlan and Winters (2014) found drama helped students develop their social and collaborative skills through group dynamics. Overall, the research suggests theatre arts programs have been shown to improve interpersonal and social skills through roleplaying, participating within the community, and social collaboration (Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Larson & Brown, 2007; McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan, & Winters, 2014).

THEATRE AND DRAMA SKILLS

Two studies specifically addressed the academic outcome of theatre and drama knowledge and skill development. Students who participated in theatre arts gained a deeper understanding of theatre arts and expanded their theatre arts skills (McLauchlan, 2014; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014). The research suggests participation in theatre arts helped students develop skills in theatre and drama (e.g., acting, improvising, performing, scriptwriting). McLauchlan (2014) found students learn theatre skills through drama classes and the theatrical production process in which students found improvement in acting skills, improvising skills, play-building, performing, and scriptwriting. Similarly, McLauchlan and Winters (2014) found an increase in theatrical skills, performance and production in first year drama students.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review addressed the extent to which theatre arts impacts students' learning outcomes and the types of theatre participation was associated with students' academic and non-academic learning outcomes. Findings suggested that theatre arts programs for youth vary from school programs, extracurricular school programs, and community-based theatre arts programs. Programs varied in theatrical components, with some programs using multiple components of theatre arts (e.g., theatre classes, play production). Common program components include full play production (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002, Dutton, 2001; Guest, 2018; Larson & Brown, 2007; Pitts, 2007), theatre devising (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; McLauchlan, 2001), various theatre workshops (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Hughes & Wilson, 2004) and drama classes (McLauchlan, 2001; McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014), with the most prevalent component being full play production (n=7).

The common themes in students' outcomes and participation in theatre arts include self-concept and identity (Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Guest, 2018; McLauchlan, 2010, McLauchlan & Winters, 2014; Pitts, 2007), positive experiences (McCammon, 2010; McCammon et al., 2012; Österlind, 2011), student development (Beare & Belliveau, 2007), the development of interpersonal and social skills (Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Larson & Brown, 2007; McLauchlan, 2010; MacLauchlan, & Winters, 2014), and improved theatre and drama skills (McLauchlan, 2010; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014).

Findings advised that school and after school programs could implement and integrate theatre arts programs in their curriculum. Findings suggested play production, play devising, theatre workshops, and drama classes are effective theatre components for positive student academic and non-academic learning outcomes. Participation in a full play production included performing an existing play or creating a new play to perform. The key similarity in play production was the production process which included rehearsing and performing for an audience. Participation in a theatre production naturally promotes positive development through the process of rehearsing, performing and reflecting. It helps youth develop identity and strengthen self-beliefs. Additionally, it promotes creative thinking and develops theatre specific skills. Students are proud to present theatrical productions to their communities and peers. Theatre arts programs could implement full play production within their curriculum to benefit students' academic and non-academic learning outcomes (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002, Dutton, 2001; Guest, 2018; Larson & Brown, 2007; Pitts, 2007).

Research indicates when play devising is implemented in a theatre arts program, students' benefit in decision making competency, group collaboration and peer respect, and positive group

identity (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; McLauchlan, 2001). Furthermore, theatre programs can integrate play devising to create a script for play production. By integrating play devising in play production, students have the added benefit of script writing, which promotes positive youth development and foster creative expression (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Dutton, 2001).

Theatre workshops and classes can be integrated into theatre programs as well to further enhance student outcomes. Theatre workshops and classes included direction, drama games, drama skills training, performance, play devising, improvisation, lighting, publicity, script writing, sound, and stage management. Workshops and classes can provide new experiences to promote student engagement and build student confidence, self-knowledge and improve their mental health (Beare & Belliveau, 2007; Burton, 2002; Dutton, 2001; Ennis & Tonkin; Hughes & Wilson, 2004).

Research indicates implementing a theatre arts program or integrating certain components to a theatre arts program can potentially increase students' academic and non-academic learning outcomes. It is important to note that while the research suggested benefits in theatre arts programming, a major component of the participants' outcomes rely on individual beliefs and are not necessarily casual in nature. Thus, the qualitative research seeks transferability. Key components of a theatre arts program include play production, theatre devising, theatre workshops and drama classes. The qualitative studies each examine a specific group or setting. Thus, it is important in qualitative research to not over generalize the findings, as is the case with this research synthesis of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Gibbs, 2007).

Finally, the range of qualitative methodologies offer a promising means in which to study theatre arts programing in education to reflect the beliefs of the participants. In reviewing research methodologies of included studies, a breadth of qualitative methods were applied. The most prevalent methods were case study n=3 (McLauchlan, 2001; McLauchlan, 2010; Pitts, 2007) and grounded theory or grounded theory foundations n=3 (Guest, 2018; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Larson & Brown, 2007). Several of the studies referenced qualitative methods but did not define a specific qualitative methodology. McCammon (2010), McCammon et al. (2012), and McLauchlan and Winters (2014) utilized a survey to inform their qualitative data. Additional methodologies included ethnography (Burton, 2002; Guest, 2018), narrative (Ennis & Tonkin, 2018; Hughes & Wilson, 2004), phenomenology (Österlind, 2011), and unspecified qualitative methods (Dutton, 2001). The data collection and analysis in the studies where consistent with their respective methodologies, which included interviews, observations, surveys, and artifact collection. In each article themes and sub-themes were extracted consistent with the particular qualitative methodology used within the study. Specific analysis of research methodologies for theatre arts would be an area for future research.

LIMITATIONS

This review has several limitations. First, it is difficult to generalize the results since this is a review of qualitative research, and the nature of qualitative research makes it difficult to generalize to a larger population. The intention is not generalization but rather transferability, where findings can transfer to similar experiences and situations (Creswell, 2013; Gibbs, 2007). As such, the participant outcomes are the beliefs and thoughts of the participants the qualitative research design is not necessarily casual in nature. Additionally, student outcomes are a broad definition, and it is difficult to divide and classify each outcome in a wide range of studies. The studies use different terminology in their findings, which makes it difficult to classify and

synthesize. We defined the general terms of students' outcomes, but there is a broad range of terminology across studies, which made cross-comparison difficult.

Finally, there are limitations based on the study designs. The studies presented a wide range of qualitative methodology used in their design. The different approaches in qualitative research report their findings in different methods, therefor there is no unified reporting method in comparing studies. Additionally, there were various forms of theatre arts used in the included studies (e.g., theatre class, theatre production, play devising), and program setting (school, community, adults reflecting on their past experiences), which presented challenges in synthesizing the data. It is difficult to compare the different kinds, components and settings of theatre arts participation in relation to students' outcomes. Furthermore, the search parameters included K-12 programs. Thus, the participant population represents a wide range of students' developmental progression. Additionally, not all studies included the participants' age. Therefor it is difficult to compare the relationship between theatre participation and students' learning outcomes and the developmental stage of the participants. Finally, the studies lack in longitudinal data to see if the findings were consistent in follow-up studies with the same participants.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This synthesis highlights the association between theatre arts programs and student outcomes. However, as Conrad and Asher (2000), Daykin et al. (2008) and Joronen, et al. (2008) noted, the research generally lacks on the effects of theatre arts participation and students' outcomes. Future research would contribute to the literature on this field, which would help advise educational practice.

Future research implications should address the intentions of a theatre arts program. Empirical research on the theatre programs intentions would enable researchers to know the desired students' outcomes of participation in the theatre arts program. In analyzing these intentions, researchers would be able to know if the students' outcomes align or misalign with the theatre program's intentions. In turn, this will affect practice by understanding why the intentions align or misalign with the outcomes, which can help to inform how to successfully implement a theatre arts program.

Future research could consider the components of a theatre arts curriculum (e.g., acting, technical theatre, directing, play analysis) and theatre arts program at large (e.g., classes, productions, theatre club) in relation to students' outcomes. Understanding how the components of a theatre arts curriculum and program affect specific student outcomes and participant demographics would enable practitioners to more readily integrate these components into their curriculum and programs at large.

While the future research implications would inform and enhance practice, the current research synthesis suggests future practice should include the play production process, including a performance for peers and community members. The theatre program should offer a variety of theatre workshops and classes, which should include play devising. Furthermore, play devising could be a part of the play performance process.

CONCLUSION

Previous reviews of literature on the effects on constructs of self and student participation in a theatre arts program are inconclusive. While they hold convergent findings on the positive health effects in relation to student participation in theatre arts, their findings diverge on the effects

of the constructs of self and are inconclusive. The literature suggests the need for more research in this field with additional qualitative data. This leads to the purpose of this review of literature which is to update the current literature and expand the qualitative research on the relationship between theatre arts participation and students' learning outcomes.

A systematic search yielded 14 articles meeting the inclusion criteria. Synthesizing the results identified the importance of the creative process on student outcomes. Components of the creative process includes play production, theatre devising, and varying theatre workshops. These components affect social development, emotional development, and self-esteem, identity, and empowerment.

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**Indicates article included in this synthesis.*