

# The Outcomes of Arts Engagement for Individuals and Communities

Executive  
Summary

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**Research team**

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# Research Review: The Outcomes of Arts Engagement for Individuals and Communities

Engaging with the arts—whether creating or consuming art, practicing cultural traditions, or otherwise taking advantage of arts opportunities in one’s home or community—is purported to offer myriad personal and social benefits. For example, arts engagement is often cited as a contributor to individuals’ health, wellbeing, and connection to community; as a vehicle for strengthening social bonds and reinforcing cultural identities; and as a driver for community livability, resilience, and economic vitality. Research seeking to investigate this wide array of benefits spans many disciplines, including the social sciences, psychology, medicine, business, economics, criminal justice, and urban and community development. Due in part to the spread across disciplines—each with its own theoretical and methodological research approaches and challenges—the degree to which different benefits have been tested through evidence-based research also varies considerably.

To take stock of the current state of research that empirically addresses these benefits, the William Penn Foundation commissioned NORC at the University of Chicago to conduct a review and assessment of existing research on the outcomes of arts engagement for individuals and communities. This Executive Summary accompanies a full report which describes the results of this work and provides a synthesis of academic, policy, and practitioner research and evaluation on the outcomes of arts engagement published from 2000-2020. These outcomes are realized at different “levels”: the individual level involves personal benefits, the social level involves relationship- or group-oriented benefits, and the community level involves benefits for a designated geographic area, whether it be a neighborhood, city, or region. Both the Executive Summary and the full report are organized according to these levels:

- **In Chapter 1, individual-level outcomes explored include:**
  - **Mental and physical health and wellbeing outcomes** (e.g., promotion of mental and physical wellness, and prevention or treatment of mental or physical illness)
  - **Prosocial outcomes** (e.g., voting, volunteering, and civic participation or rehabilitation)
- **In Chapter 2, social outcomes explored include:**
  - **Relationship-focused outcomes** (e.g., strengthening existing relationships, forging new relationships, and breaking down divides between disparate groups)

- **Identity-focused outcomes** (e.g., engendering a sense of social inclusion and belonging; and transmitting, reinforcing, or reimagining shared cultural identities)
- **In Chapter 3, community-level outcomes explored include:**
  - **People-focused outcomes** (e.g., fostering community identity, attachment, pride; building community resilience; and advancing public health objectives)
  - **Place-focused outcomes** (e.g., supporting community livability and vibrancy, spurring gentrification and displacement, and promoting public safety)
  - **Economic outcomes** (e.g., making direct, indirect, and public good contributions to a community’s economy, including its property values, tax revenues, business innovation, and tourism)

The guiding objective of this undertaking was to synthesize current research to better understand the various levels of development—the maturity—of research supporting or challenging claims about the benefits of arts engagement. We used a “maturity assessment” lens to help readers make sense of the cumulative state of knowledge in each topic area, and to enable comparison of maturity levels between outcome areas.

When undertaking our review, our research team applied three criteria to assess the maturity of a given body of research. The first, **integrity**, speaks to the overall robustness of the research studies supporting the evidence on a given topic. To determine whether this criterion was met, we asked questions including: *were most studies on a topic rooted in specific research questions, clear and measurable outcomes, and appropriate methods? How well was the research process executed, and did the authors include a discussion of limitations or risk of bias?* The second criterion, **volume**, speaks to the total amount of consistent evidence on a topic. To assess whether this criterion was met, we asked questions including: *do reviews of existing research exist (i.e., systematic reviews, meta-analyses, narrative syntheses), or only standalone studies? Do just a few research reviews and/or standalone studies exist, or do they number in the dozens or hundreds?* Here, our assessments were in part informed by what other summaries of research found with regard to the volume of literature on a given topic. The final criterion, **detail**, involves the levels of specificity and nuance reached in the overall evidence base. For this criterion, we considered the following: *could contextual factors be gleaned about under what conditions or for what populations outcomes might be expected to occur? Are mechanisms behind the outcomes understood? To what extent were potential explanatory factors beyond arts engagement itself controlled or accounted for?*

According to this maturity assessment process, we categorized the research pertaining to a given outcome area into one of three levels of maturity: **emergent, progressing, or advanced**. This approach is summarized in TABLE A.

Overall, we found substantial variation in the maturity of different outcome areas. We found that much of the most advanced research stems from health fields investigating outcomes of arts engagement related to individuals’ health and wellbeing; this mirrors an area of advanced research on the community-level: research examining the efficacy of community-based arts interventions for advancing public health goals. Advanced research also underpins each of the social-level outcomes we investigated, including outcomes of arts engagement relating to the building and strengthening of relationships, and the reinforcement and transmission of group and cultural identities. On the other end of the maturity spectrum, we found that several outcome areas on the community-level are as-yet emergent; these include outcomes related to community resilience, displacement



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TABLE A. Maturity assessment overview

	INTEGRITY	VOLUME	DETAIL
EMERGENT	✓ High-integrity research	Few studies with similar conclusions	No detail regarding context or mechanisms
PROGRESSING (VOLUME)	✓ High-integrity research	✓ Several or more studies with similar conclusions	No detail regarding context or mechanisms
PROGRESSING (DETAIL)	✓ High-integrity research	Few studies with similar conclusions	✓ Some detail regarding context or mechanisms
ADVANCED	✓ High-integrity research	✓ Several or more studies with similar conclusions	✓ Some detail regarding context or mechanisms

of community members, public safety, and “public good” economic contributions to communities. And in-between, several areas of research are best categorized as progressing, either due to current limitations in understanding of how, why, and under what circumstances outcomes occur, or due to conflicting findings within a given body of research. These areas of progressing maturity include outcomes related to civic engagement, community attachment and livability, and the direct and indirect economic outcomes of community arts assets.

What follows is a summary of findings from the full report, organized by the specific research questions we investigated under each outcome level, which were derived from the major topic areas in which we identified studies pertinent to this research review. This Executive Summary is chiefly concerned with recapping the maturity assessment for each research question. In addition to maturity assessments, the full report also provides synopses of key studies which inform the research base, and discusses the extent to which current research is able to offer conclusive evidence about the efficacy of particular art forms, providers, durations, or contexts in which arts engagement occurs; the extent to which research addresses or calls attention to matters of racial, ethnic, economic, and geographic equity; and key gaps in current knowledge, among other topics. All told, this research review provides perspective on what is currently understood about the outcomes of arts engagement, areas in which there is more to be understood, and potential avenues for further building out evidence-based knowledge.

# 1. Individual-Level Outcomes of Arts Engagement

Empirical research attempting to measure the impacts of arts experiences on individuals is abundant, and numerous efforts look to summarize and draw conclusions from this body of research. From our synthesis of both primary research and existing research reviews, we identified two broad outcome areas: 1) how arts participation relates to people's health and wellbeing; and 2) how arts participation relates to people's civic engagement and prosocial attitudes and behaviors.

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## 1.1 Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

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Within the Western medical field, "health" is now widely considered to be not just the absence of disease, but also an individual's experience of wellness or wellbeing. Accordingly, health is conceptualized as a spectrum, with illness on one end and wellness on the other.

On the whole, research on arts participation's relationship to individuals' health across the illness-to-wellness spectrum can be categorized as the most advanced subfield of research reviewed throughout this report. For the majority of health-and-wellbeing outcomes areas explored in this report, the evidence falls within the advanced maturity category due to the volume of consistent, high-integrity evidence presented, levels of contextual specificity offered, and understanding of mechanisms identified throughout. However, some select outcomes areas are of progressing or emergent maturity due to conflicting results from studies of similar aims, or, in instances when results were consistent, a lack of contextual detail or understanding of mechanisms driving the results.

### 1.1.1 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and supporting and promoting individuals' mental and physical wellbeing?

On the wellness end of the health spectrum, researchers have employed a wide variety of medical and social science methods and outcome measures to study the potential effects of arts engagement on aspects of adults' 1) mental wellbeing and 2) physical wellbeing. This is a relatively young area of research, much of it taking place over the last decade.

Mental wellbeing research is of advanced maturity, while the maturity levels for specific outcomes within physical wellbeing research are mixed, ranging from emergent to advanced.

- **Mental wellbeing:** The literature on arts engagement’s relationship to mental wellbeing is of advanced maturity. First, research indicates that arts engagement can be positively linked to individuals’ **personal development (“eudemonic” wellbeing)** through processes of enabling self-expression and self-reflection in addition to learning new things about oneself and the world. Generally qualitative approaches to measuring these outcomes have produced consistent results over many studies. Most commonly, research on personal development outcomes of arts engagement frames these outcomes as either occurring alongside others, which collectively contribute to individuals’ mental health, or as occurring not as “outcomes” themselves but rather as mechanisms through which other outcomes occur. The research that does directly assess personal development outcomes of arts engagement tends to focus on specific populations who are often socially marginalized, such as older adults or differently-abled individuals. Second, among the general population, multiple large-scale, quantitative studies employing clinical scales have found a positive relationship between individuals’ arts engagement behaviors and their perceived **happiness and life satisfaction (“hedonic” wellbeing)**, though this evidence is punctuated by outstanding questions regarding the strength of this relationship. Complementary qualitative work has made strides regarding theories and mechanisms behind this association. A central critique of this research base has been that large-scale general population surveys obscure differences between subpopulations; in the last decade some population-specific research has been conducted assessing outcomes across a variety of art forms. This evidence suggests that those with lower levels of mental wellbeing may benefit from arts engagement the most.
- **Physical wellbeing:** The extensive body of literature on the relationship between arts engagement and physical wellbeing is of mixed maturity. First, research on how arts engagement relates to individuals’ immediate **cognitive and physiological functioning** is advanced. It comprises a large evidence base providing some contextual nuance and an understanding of some underlying mechanisms, including one mechanism—arts engagement’s relationship to increasing neuroplasticity—that has proven to be causal. Evidence is particularly abundant for the potential health-boosting effects of active, participatory forms of arts engagement such as dance, both for adults in general and for healthy older adults who may be at risk of developing cognitive or physical health problems as they age. Second, research on how arts engagement may relate to individuals’ overall **self-rated health** is emergent, characterized by mixed results between large-scale household survey studies, making definitive conclusions difficult to reach. Finally, research on how arts engagement may relate to peoples’ **life expectancy** is progressing. Across several large-scale longitudinal studies, researchers have found a positive correlation between some forms of arts engagement and improved life expectancy among the general population of adults in several countries. However, no understanding of contextual factors or mechanisms underlying the association is available in the current research base.

### 1.1.2 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and managing and treating individuals' mental and physical health conditions?

On the illness end of the health spectrum, the body of research focusing on the efficacy of arts interventions—most commonly formal art therapies administered within clinical contexts—with the intention of ameliorating 1) mental health conditions or 2) physical health conditions is rich, vast, and diverse. Its combination of breadth, depth, and volume distinguishes this evidence base as the single most advanced in maturity among those evaluated throughout this report, indicating that arts interventions are increasingly becoming a serious, evidence-based approach to treating health conditions within the Western health paradigm.

- **Mental health:** Research on arts engagement's relationship to the treatment of mental health conditions such as **anxiety, depression, and stress** comprises an advanced evidence base. Arts intervention approaches to treating non-psychotic mental health conditions have been extensively studied in clinical and, to a lesser extent, community contexts. Evidence includes information about specific contexts, populations, art forms, and intervention types for which outcomes might be expected to occur, in addition to providing some understanding of intra-personal and social mechanisms for change. Music therapies in particular have been a subject of focus, with numerous systematic reviews or meta-analyses finding largely positive results with regard to reductions in self-reported anxiety and depression for specific clinical populations.
- **Physical health:** There is a large evidence base of advanced maturity regarding arts engagement's relationship to treating and managing a vast array of physical health conditions, including **cognitive or neurological disorders** such as strokes or dementias, **acute physiological conditions** such as heart disease, **short-term recovery** after surgeries or childbirth, or **palliative care** for critical illnesses, particularly cancer. Generally, these studies take place in clinical settings and assess change quantitatively against control groups, though researchers have also taken qualitative approaches to further explore possible reasons behind observed changes. There exists a particular abundance of high-quality research related to music therapies and programs for patients in health care settings, and among music-based treatments for physical health outcomes, contextual factors are identifiable and mechanisms related to self-efficacy and coping skills are well understood.

## 1.2 Civic Engagement and Prosocial Outcomes

A common discussion around arts engagement concerns the ways it may enrich individuals' relationships to their broader community and their contributions to civic life—in other words, how participating in the arts may affect individuals' prosocial or civic-minded attitudes and behaviors.

Overall, the literature on the relationship between arts engagement and civic or prosocial engagement is centered on two specific outcome areas, and can be categorized as mixed in maturity. Both outcome areas in which we identified research—1) arts participation's relationship to individuals' civic engagement behaviors such as voting, volunteering, making charitable donations, and attending community meetings, and 2) its relationship

to making progress toward reintegration into civic life among individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system—have been the subjects of extensive research, yet research in each outcome area still needs to be further developed.

### 1.2.1 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and individuals' civic engagement?

Numerous large-scale survey-based studies have amounted to an evidence base of progressing maturity which demonstrates a clear association between individuals' civic engagement behaviors such as **volunteering, making charitable donations, voting, and getting involved in community events** and both arts engagement overall, and certain art forms more specifically. At this point, little nuance or detail is available in the literature: the associative link relates to the general population of adults only, and causal mechanisms are currently not well-understood, though they have been theorized to relate to the arts' ability to nurture individuals' empathy, self-efficacy, and concern for community.

### 1.2.2 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and prosocial attitudes and behaviors among individuals involved with the criminal justice system?

For individuals who have been involved with the criminal justice system through current or former incarceration, or who may be at risk of incarceration, engagement with the arts is posited to be a means of evolving relationships with oneself, others, and one's community, all of which are considered necessary to work toward the ultimate goal of desistance—successful, permanent integration back into civic life. Research on outcomes of arts engagement for individuals involved with the criminal justice system revolves around three types of outcomes, depending on the context of the arts engagement: 1) arts interventions taking place in prevention contexts focus on arts engagement's potential role in preventing those at-risk of offending from doing so; 2) those in institutional contexts focus on arts engagement's potential role in shifting the attitudes and behaviors of individuals who are incarcerated; and 3) those in rehabilitation contexts focus on arts engagement's potential role in reintegrating ex-offenders into their communities, as well as preventing re-offending in the longer-term. This research is varied in maturity.

- **Prevention contexts:** Multiple research reviews conducted by academics, policymakers, and advocacy groups have found participatory arts interventions to be positively linked to the **prevention of offending behaviors**. However, for the purposes of this research review a limitation of the current body of literature is that it focuses almost exclusively on youth and young adults up to age 25, with few studies focusing solely on adults aged 18+, indicating that for adults, this area of research is of emergent maturity.
- **Institutional contexts:** Research of advanced maturity provides positive evidence regarding **"intermediate" attitudinal and behavioral outcomes** of arts engagement within institutional contexts. Numerous high-integrity studies employing diverse methods and outcome measures suggest that arts engagement in institutional settings is linked to the development of various "hard" and "soft" personal skills that are considered important on the path to desistance. Some commonalities have been identified across programs that seem to be important for achieving outcomes, such as offering actively participatory projects that offer opportunities for sharing work with peers, loved ones, and/or a broader public.

- **Rehabilitation contexts:** Multiple evidence reviews have noted a particular dearth of literature examining programs' **long-term desistance outcomes** as measured by rates of reoffending. Evidence regarding the link between arts engagement and long-term desistance outcomes is of **emergent maturity**, characterized by few studies overall, and mixed results among the few high-integrity studies which do exist.

## 2. Social Outcomes of Arts Engagement

Participation in arts activities with others, whether involving active artmaking or more passive arts consumption or attendance, has long been associated with positive social benefits. In this chapter, we review the research on how “bonding” and “bridging” social capital are thought to be generated or sustained through group arts participation. The research can be broadly split into two categories: research focused on 1) arts engagement’s potential role in strengthening or building relationships and 2) its potential role in fostering or reinforcing collective identities.

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### 2.1 Relationship-Focused Outcomes

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Shared arts experiences are thought to play both bonding and bridging roles in building or strengthening relationships between individuals or groups. They may play a bonding role by deepening existing relationships, whether they be longstanding personal relationships, such as those between friends or family members; or professional relationships, such as those between colleagues or professional caregivers and those in their care. They may play a bridging role by creating opportunities for members of disparate groups to come together who may not otherwise have the opportunity or inclination to do so. In some cases, these shared experiences have been found not just to facilitate the commingling of people who otherwise would not meet, but also to help break down existing prejudices or biases.

Overall, the body of literature on how arts engagement may contribute to building and strengthening relationships is of advanced maturity. Many high-integrity studies ranging from ethnographies to controlled experiments point to similar conclusions, and central mechanisms for change are well understood. The research indicates that many forms of group arts engagement—including music, dance, storytelling, theatre, and literature—are linked with outcomes, and underlying mechanisms are particularly well understood for music-based forms of engagement, such as group music-making or dancing.

### 2.1.1 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and strengthening interpersonal relationships?

A body of research of advanced maturity explores the question of whether arts engagement can be linked to the strengthening and reinforcement of existing relationships, in line with conceptualizations of social bonding. These questions largely have been explored through survey research, as well as participant observations. Overall, the research indicates a generally positive link between arts participation and social bonding outcomes across a **range of specific relationship contexts**, including **caregiver relationships** and to a lesser extent **familial relationships and friendships**, as well as **professional relationships**. Many of the studies we reviewed identified specific mechanisms through which social bonds were observed to be deepened during shared arts engagement, including strengthening individuals' capacities for communication and cooperation, as well as building empathy. Music is the art form for which the most advanced knowledge exists in terms of locating and demonstrating these mechanisms empirically.

### 2.1.2 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and forging new relationships and breaking down divides between disparate groups?

Research of advanced maturity indicates that shared arts engagement can promote social bridging between disparate groups in two ways: 1) **organically** as people who are unlike one another cross paths in community arts contexts, and 2) through more **intentional** efforts to break down existing prejudices and biases between racial/ethnic, generational, and civic groups. These findings are drawn from high-integrity studies ranging from ethnographies to controlled experiments pointing to similar conclusions. Central mechanisms for change have been identified, and relate to arts engagement serving as a vehicle through which to build tolerance, trust, and understanding. Many forms of arts participation—including music, dance, storytelling, theatre, and literature—have been seen to contribute to bridging outcomes; and mechanisms for change are particularly well understood for group participation in music.

## 2.2 Identity-Focused Outcomes

While engaging in the arts can be a means through which individuals develop and express their personal identities, identity development and expression can also occur on the group level, and social identity theory positions the groups with which one identifies to be a crucial feature of one's personal identity and self-understanding. Research indicates that arts engagement can be a means of both building and expressing group identities through 1) engendering a sense of inclusion and belonging among individuals who build affinities through shared artistic expression, or 2) transmitting, reinforcing, or reimagining cultural traditions central to the identities of racial, ethnic, or cultural minority groups, including immigrants and refugees.

The literature on arts engagement's role in building and reinforcing group belonging and identities is of advanced maturity overall. Across both areas of research explored in this section, consistent outcomes are supported by many, largely qualitative studies, which

also provide extensive contextual detail regarding specific art forms and populations for which outcomes can be expected. Understanding of mechanisms is more limited.

### 2.2.1 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and engendering group inclusion and belonging?

Research of advanced maturity indicates that shared arts experiences can play a role in engendering or reaffirming group bonding and a sense of inclusion and belonging. The majority of studies we identified found, through a variety of methodological approaches, that group arts participation was linked with positive outcomes related to social inclusion and belonging. Research indicates that this holds true among **groups in general** as well as among specific **minority groups that may feel marginalized from mainstream society** such as older adults, the formerly homeless, and the differently-abled, providing some context regarding populations for whom outcomes may be expected. Some evidence exists regarding physiological and operational mechanisms underlying arts engagement's fostering of group bonding and inclusion. However, it is worth noting that while the evidence we identified on arts engagement's role in inclusion and belonging was largely positive, theory and some audience research suggest that arts participation could equally contribute to social exclusion outcomes.

### 2.2.2 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and transmitting, reinforcing, and reimagining shared cultural identities?

Research of advanced maturity indicates that engagement in arts and culture may strengthen not just personal identities, but also **reinforce and transmit the shared identities of cultural groups**, facilitating social bonding within these groups. Research also suggests that arts engagement can be a means to **challenge or reimagine traditional cultural identities**, which can serve to bridge specific cultural groups with broader society. Much of this research has involved ethnography and has focused specifically on migrant populations that often must be proactive in expressing and preserving their cultural traditions as they integrate into new host societies. As numerous studies have made similar conclusions and provided contextual detail regarding the specific populations that may be expected to experience outcomes, this evidence base can be considered advanced; however, we identified no research that has focused on mechanisms through which the outcomes occur.

## 3. Community Outcomes of Arts Engagement

Within arts research and evaluation, wellbeing outcomes at the community level are recognized as being particularly difficult to measure due to the gradual, nonlinear, and deeply complex nature of community change processes. This is further complicated by the various applications of the term “community,” which can imply hyper-local geographies to macro regions, in research and evaluation contexts. Despite these challenges, significant efforts have been made to understand the nuances of the effects arts assets and opportunities may have on a place, and to evolve the methods used to capture them. Research on community-level outcomes of arts engagement falls within three broad topic areas: the potential impacts of community arts assets and opportunities on 1) the people residing within a community, 2) place-based qualities and living conditions, and 3) local economic conditions.

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### 3.1 People-Focused Outcomes

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The outcomes explored in this section focus on research measuring outcomes for community members—at the neighborhood or municipal level—as a collective. Our research review identified three more specifically defined outcomes within the area of people-focused outcomes—arts assets and opportunities’ potential impacts on advancing 1) community attachment and pride, 2) community resilience, and 3) community-wide public health objectives—that have been formally assessed using a variety of methodologies. In most cases these outcomes are seen to occur through communal arts experiences or opportunities.

Overall, the evidence base for these three outcome areas is of mixed maturity. Research focused on outcomes related to community attachment and pride has foundations in identity-building and place-attachment theory and a progressing evidence base built upon survey-based and qualitative research and program evaluations. Few high-integrity studies have tested for outcomes related to arts engagement’s role in aiding post-traumatic resilience within communities, though the few studies that do exist indicate positive findings, amounting to an evidence base of emergent maturity. Finally, research on the public health outcomes of community arts interventions comprises an advanced evidence base, with numerous research reviews and studies indicating the interventions’ positive

role in meeting community-wide physical and mental health objectives. The literature identifies specific art forms and contexts in which positive community health results may be expected to be seen, as well as potential mechanisms behind these results, though further testing of mechanisms is needed.

### 3.1.1 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and building a collective sense of attachment to and pride in communities?

Research explicitly investigating the link between arts engagement and **community attachment and pride** can be characterized as progressing. While the research base is modest, multiple high-integrity studies and program evaluations deploying varied methodologies, including survey-based and qualitative work, have found similar results. Research on both citywide and neighborhood-specific levels have demonstrated associations between a community's arts and cultural opportunities and the levels of attachment and pride residents feel to the community, and contextual details and mechanisms have been explored within individual studies, though much more information is needed. However, these positive findings have also raised questions regarding equity of access to those opportunities for different community members.

### 3.1.2 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and fostering community resilience?

Our review of the literature found research exploring arts engagement's potential for aiding community-wide healing and resilience after trauma to be emergent. This body of literature is characterized by just a few high-quality studies, though the studies that do exist consistently point to positive outcomes. Those studies tended to focus on the arts as a potential vehicle for addressing certain community traumas over others—namely, **event-based traumas such as natural disasters and violent conflicts** as opposed to socially-embedded traumas such as persistent racial inequities, poverty, and community disinvestment. This area of research is in need of further exploration, especially with regard to forms of socially-embedded community trauma.

### 3.1.3 What is known about the relationship between arts engagement and advancing community-wide public health objectives?

Research on the outcomes of community arts interventions aimed at achieving public health objectives comprises an advanced evidence base, with many research reviews and studies indicating these interventions' positive role in meeting specific **community-based physical and mental health goals**. Interventions were found to be particularly effective under certain conditions, such as when the intervention was tailored to the community context, or employed certain art forms, particularly storytelling. Some mechanisms for change have also been posited based on self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and social capital theory, but are in nascent stages of testing in research, indicating an avenue for further exploration..

## 3.2 Place-Focused Outcomes

The outcomes in this section address the relationship between the arts opportunities or assets available in a community, and potential changes in the quality or features of that community—in other words, place-based change. In general, whether the arts prove to play a role in place-based change is, for many potential outcome areas, largely still at theoretical and program-identification stages of development, and untested by research. Three specific outcome areas—1) community livability, 2) gentrification and displacement, and 3) public safety—are somewhat further along, having been the subject of some empirical research.

These three areas comprise a research base of mixed maturity. Research on community livability outcomes is of progressing maturity, with a growing evidence base of consistent results. The latter two outcome areas are of emergent maturity, characterized by mixed results across the modest number of studies that exist. Across all three outcome areas, researchers remain challenged by clearly defining the concepts to be measured, identifying appropriate measurement approaches, and executing research designs that sufficiently account for the other contextual factors that may contribute to change.

### 3.2.1 What is known about the relationship between arts assets and opportunities in communities and overall community livability and vibrancy?

Community-based arts programs and assets, including creative placemaking initiatives, have been conceptualized as important contributors to a community's "livability," "vitality," "vibrancy," or "revitalization," concepts that are admittedly "fuzzy" and typically used interchangeably to indicate the overall quality of life a community affords its residents. Accordingly, though much research has been conducted on arts opportunities or assets' relationship to **community livability** and its related concepts, the tools and outcome measures employed have varied considerably across studies, as have the integrity of these approaches, revealing ongoing challenges regarding how best to measure such broad concepts. However, a smaller number of high-integrity studies centered on community residents' accounts of changes in local conditions, alongside some supporting quantitative data, have produced generally consistent, positive findings about the relationship between a community's arts assets and changes in at least some dimensions of livability. These studies have also provided some contextual details about the circumstances under which livability outcomes might be expected to occur, indicating that this body of research is of progressing maturity.

### 3.2.2 What is known about the relationship between arts assets and opportunities in communities and gentrification and residents' physical or cultural displacement?

Research on the relationship between arts assets in a community and changes in that community's resident composition—specifically with regard to gentrification and the physical and cultural displacement of longtime residents—is of emergent maturity. Questions of the arts' role in physical and intangible or cultural displacement are gaining momentum in research, but currently findings are deeply mixed, precluding decisive conclusions. **Physical displacement** has been the subject of more research than cultural displacement, with several quantitative studies focused on investigating the physical

displacement of community residents over time. Overall, these studies suggest that an increased presence of arts assets in a community may or may not play a role in spurring resident displacement, and whether it occurs may be dependent on contextual factors. While the potential for arts assets' relationship to **cultural displacement** within communities has been extensively theorized, few studies exist on this topic, and those that do have also produced mixed results across studies.

### 3.2.3 What is known about the relationship between arts assets and opportunities in communities and public safety?

Research and evaluation on the arts' role in community safety often center on the potential effects of a community's new public artworks or arts organizations on **changes in blight, the usage of public space, or deterrence of criminal activity**. Research on the presence of community arts initiatives for the purposes of advancing such public safety objectives is of emergent maturity. This relationship has been explored in a small number of studies, using a variety of outcome measures and methodological approaches including qualitative community-based studies, local and national public opinion surveys, and mixed-methods studies. However, while findings lean positive, including longitudinally, enough variation in outcomes exists that this body of research is best characterized as emergent.

## 3.3 Economic Outcomes

Though there is significant debate within arts scholarship and policy over how much emphasis to place on the potential economic benefits of community arts assets and opportunities, research on the subject has proliferated. We reviewed research on the potential economic benefits of the arts at the neighborhood or community level, though these benefits can also be calculated at national, state, or regional level. The range of benefits claimed generally fall within three broad categories: 1) direct benefits, 2) indirect benefits, and 3) nonfinancial or "public good" benefits.

The evidence base regarding the benefits of arts and culture for local communities is of mixed maturity. Research of progressing maturity investigates the arts' contribution to economies in terms of direct and indirect benefits, generally calculated using economic impact analysis approaches, though in the past decade new methods have emerged to work toward addressing concerns related to equity and opportunity costs. Research attempting to quantify the potential non-monetary "public good" benefits is, at this time, emergent.

### 3.3.1 What is known about the relationship between arts assets and opportunities in communities and direct and indirect economic outcomes for communities?

Widely claimed and extensively theorized, the direct and indirect benefits of arts and culture for communities are the subject of a large body of research using economic impact analysis methodologies. This research is focused particularly on the benefits certain forms of community arts opportunities—specifically those which create a clear "flow of spending," including **arts institutions, events, and workers**—may have on factors such as

community property values, tax revenues, business innovation, and per capita income. Rarely represented in the research on direct and indirect benefits are participatory forms of arts engagement that occur, for example, informally in the home or in community spaces. While on the whole much research on the economic impacts of arts assets, events, and workers leans positive, many other studies document mixed outcomes, particularly regarding potential inequities in which different community groups experience economic benefits or costs. Thus, despite the large quantity of studies focused on direct and indirect outcomes, and despite recent studies which have begun to factor in equity concerns and fill in contextual details under which outcomes may occur, this body of research remains of progressing maturity.

### 3.3.2 What is known about the relationship between arts assets and opportunities in communities and “public good” economic outcomes for communities?

Research attempting to quantify the potential non-monetary “public good” benefits is, at this time, emergent. The thinking on what constitutes public good benefits has evolved over the years, with these potential benefits generally proving more difficult to assess, though this challenge is not unique to outcomes related to arts and culture. Most literature on this subject is still at theoretical stages and has not been tested in research. However, a small number of empirical studies have demonstrated positive results regarding arts and culture’s role in three specific public good outcome areas: 1) encouraging **workforce innovation**, 2) decreasing public spending through **improvements to community members’ health and wellbeing**, and 3) decreasing public spending through providing **opportunities for positive development for those involved in the criminal justice system**.