

Beginning at the Beginning in Social Work Education:
A Case for Incorporating Arts-based Approaches to Working with War Affected
Children and Their Families

Abstract

Building on the growing body of work that recognizes the value of participatory arts based methods such as drawing, collage, photovoice and drama in work with war-affected children and young people and their families, this article now asks the question: how can the findings from practice based interventions become central to the work of preparing social workers who are at the beginning of their professional programs? As the article highlights, there has been only limited attention in the literature on what these methods might mean for social work education, particularly in relation to family practices and especially in working with children of war. What could arts-based family practices with war affected children look like? The article maps out a framework, which draws together two bodies of literature, the literature on the arts in Social Work education, and literature on the arts and war affected children and their families. Central to this framework is a set of five pedagogical practices that align well with arts-based methodologies. These include, reflexivity, situating one's self, observation, ethical practice and taking action. The article concludes that although arts based methods as central to the Social Work curricula are not a panacea, 'learning by doing' is a promising practice for those starting out in the profession.

INTRODUCTION

This article builds on the growing body of work that recognizes the value of participatory arts-based methods such as photovoice, participatory video, drawing, Image theatre and storytelling, in work with children and youth who have been affected by war. As D'Amico, Denov, Khan, Linds and Akesson (2016) observe, such methods have been found to be particularly effective in 'giving voice' to children and youth through meaningful participation, while at the same time, offering researchers and practitioners an entry point into gaining insight in relation to understanding the serious issues arising from living within the context of global adversity. War and armed conflict can lead to displacement and separation from families and community involvement and has a significant effect on children and youth's developmental trajectory and well-being (Osofsky & Osofsky, 2018). For a large number of war-affected children and youth now involved in various interventions, arts-based methods may allow them to express themselves in a developmentally appropriate, culturally adaptable manner, and amplifies the therapeutic effort of the interventions in a way that reverberates through the family system model and socio-ecological continuum of social work intervention and practice. The existing research has highlighted that arts-based methods allow children and youth to represent their experiences in contexts of embodied empathy, promote activism and empowerment, and for the most part, as a successful intervention for children who may have limited vocabulary to express their feelings (Harris, 2007; Gangi & Barowsky, 2009; Moletsane et al., 2007). Jackson (2015) also highlights the ways in which arts-based methods can open a back door to the inner self, bringing to light important concerns from individuals, which they cannot put into words, facilitating possible therapeutic goals and - social work is no exception.

To date however, there has been a paucity of literature on what these methods might mean

for social work education as it relates to the core values of a family systems approach, especially in working with children and youth affected by armed conflict. While numerous health interventions in conflict zones are carried out to deal with the daily realities of children and youth facing profound adversity, there is a substantial gap between translating and disseminating these results at the policy and practitioner level (D'Amico et al., 2016) in areas such as social work education and practice. In using participatory arts-based methodologies, social workers can both have an emotional response to the subject material as well as a cognitive understanding of the social reality that children and youth living within the context of global adversity experience and the resulting psychosocial adversity they face. Indeed, Foster (2012) argues that arts based methods fit the 'ethos' of social work practice and allows the participants to 'facilitate empathy and challenge misconceptions' by giving social workers and other professionals working with at risk groups in society insights into aspects of their lived experiences" (p. 533). Thus, this article takes what we term a 'beginning at the beginning' approach that seeks to explore the question: how can arts-based approaches which are particularly effective in working with war affected children and their families be incorporated into social work education particularly in the context of preparing new social researchers and social workers to work with war affected children and their families? In essence, can the findings from practice-based interventions become central to the work of preparing social workers that are at the beginning of their professional programs?

To address this question, the article is divided into 4 sections. First we offer an overview of participatory arts-based methodologies (What are they? How are they currently being used) as a way to set the stage. In the next section we draw together two areas of literature, the arts in social work practice and the arts in working with children, youth and families. Our intention in bringing these two together is to develop a framework for using arts-based approaches in social work practice in relation to working with war affected children and their families. Next we map out what we describe as a set of pedagogical features in using the arts in social work practice with war-affected children and their families. In the conclusion and reflecting forward section, we consider some of the implications of this work for professional development.

PARTICIPATORY ARTS-BASED METHODS

Previous work has identified and outlined the potential of such arts based approaches as photovoice, participatory video, digital storytelling, drawing, painting and mapmaking and Image theatre, to operate as both method and intervention that simultaneously seek to empower and actively engage children and youth affected by war (D'Amico et al., 2016). For example, Photovoice (giving cameras to participants) has been used with children and youth is a way for the participants to identify through photography features of their community that are of importance to them along with situations that need to be changed. By engaging in photovoice, children and youth reflect in their own way, their community's resilience and challenges. Taking photographs and developing captions for these photographs promotes critical dialogue about the important issues in the community; by representing and disseminating the photographs and/or exhibiting them, photovoice aims to reach those who have the power to implement structural changes in the community such as policy makers (Wang & Burris, 1997). Photovoice empowers marginalized youth and "groups of people who do not normally get to speak" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 51) and "has been documented as a powerful tool to engage communities to enable a deeper understanding of the lives of marginalized youth" (Burke, 2006, as cited in D'Amico et al., 2016, p. 531.). Of relevance to this article, photovoice has been found to be particularly valuable in work with novice

social workers in relation to developing critical reflection skills and in addressing issues of social justice (Peabody, 2013).

Participatory video (PV) has been described by Lunch and Lunch (2006) as “a set of techniques to involve a group or community in shaping and creating their own film. The idea behind this is that making a video is easy and accessible, and is a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns or simply to be creative and tell stories” (p. 10). PV (and increasingly carried out through cellphones and other devices (Mitchell, De Lange & Moletsane, 2017) makes available for children and youth opportunities to spontaneously record what they see through their own eyes, providing a child-based understanding of knowledge that is focused in their neighborhood (Pink, 2001; Sandercock & Attali, 2010). PV minimizes reliance on literacy skills and allows communicating a message without a reliance on writing or reading and as a result, becomes an ‘equalizing’ tool (Okahashi, 2000). The process of videotaping, editing and screening can be both educational and therapeutic giving way to personal growth (Sandercock & Attali, 2010). Additionally, the use of PV promotes participation and encourages the right to have a voice, ‘has long term implications for participatory citizenship’ (Pascal & Bertram, 2009, p. 249).

Children and youth have increasingly available multimedia tools and a wide array of social network platforms, which provide them opportunities to share their stories by using their own voices through digital storytelling. Digital storytelling is a “workshop-based process by which “ordinary people” create their own short autobiographical films that can be streamed on the Web or broadcast on television’ (Burgess, 2006, p. 207). Children’s stories are expressed by using a combination of methods such as images, drawings, voice and videos to develop a short (3-5 minute) digital story to share with others. These child-led productions, by using a multiple modalities, “can be a transformative experience due to its potential for their meaningful engagement with their topic and engagement in deeper learning, critical reflection, meaning-making, self-expression, and effective communication” (D’Amico et al., 2016, p. 537).

Other tools that are ‘low tech’ such as drawing, painting, and mapmaking have been used with children and youth affected by global adversity in order to better understand their experiences and the way that they see and understand the world. As D’Amico et al. (2016) argue, these visual tools create an environment where the children and youth, may be more at ease and therefore, where they may feel more capable to express themselves freely, and where they do not feel as much of a risk of giving a ‘wrong’ answer as they may experience in interviews. Visual representations, in combination with other approaches that additionally elicit a narrative/story, has the possibility to help children and youth convey aspects of their lived experiences in myriad ways (Leitch, 2008). Clinically these tools have been used to better understand children’s knowledge and experiences and at times are used as adjunct to diagnostic assessment tools.

Finally, various researchers and practitioners have made use of live performance. In Image theatre, participants use their bodies as a visual language to convey their lived experience (Boal, 1979; Linds & Vettrano, 2008). For example, one technique involves an individual telling a story as others silently use their bodies to visually represent a significant moment in the story. As D’Amico et al., (2016) note, the image or “tableau” can then be handled in different ways for example, of fast-forwarding to the future or rewinding to events in the past, enabling a ‘manipulation’ of time and space. Boal (as cited in Jackson, 1992, p.174) adds that images created through participation “offer a screen onto which a group can project a variety of ideas and interpretations,” inviting both the individual and the collective to problem-solve. In groups with varying levels of verbal or linguistic ability, Image theatre minimizes the difference and becomes a common visual language. The “image-making provided the youth with a way to both create

distance from and illuminate the ethos of violence in which they are steeped” (Kuftinec, 2011, p. 114). This allows for enabling an exploration of possibilities for change from, and through, the embodied image and “activating the youths’ imagination of a world without violence and how to get there” (D’Amico et al., 2016, p. 536).

TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR THE USE OF THE ARTS IN FAMILY PRACTICES IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

In this section we draw together what we see as a promising convergence of two bodies of literature, previous work on the arts in social work practice and previous work on the arts in work with war affected youth and their families. By bringing them together in one section, we propose an arts framework in family practice in social work education. (see Figure 1)

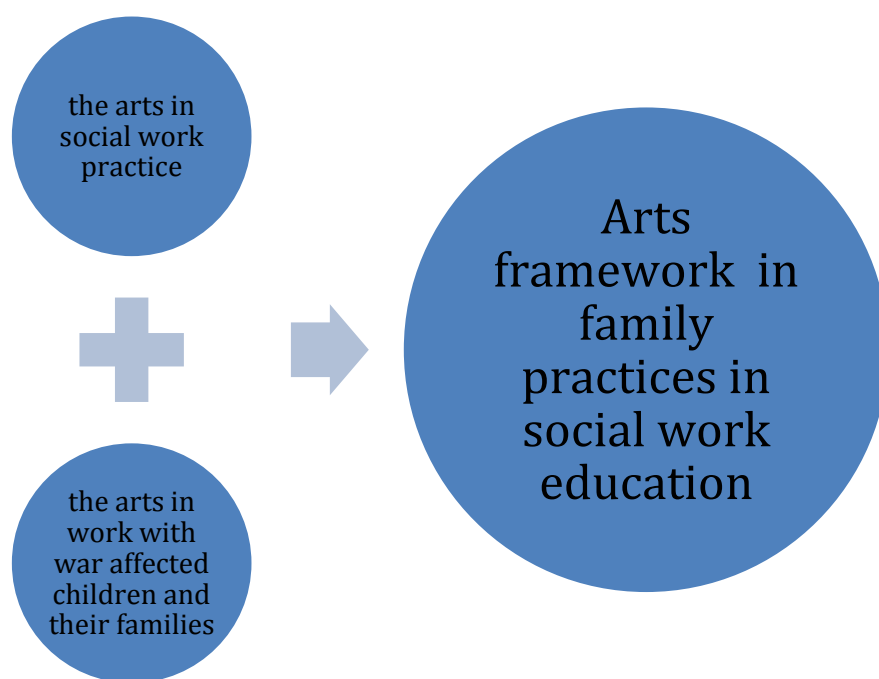


Figure 1 Arts framework

Social Work and the Arts: History and Context

Social work as a discipline and a profession has historically engaged with art. As far back as the settlement house movement in the late 1800s, social work has incorporated the arts in community action by forming partnerships with artists in addressing social issues and human challenges (Moxley & Feen, 2016). Yet the 20th Century saw a powerful movement away from artistic endeavors, toward scientific methods, standardized efficacy, and ethical reliability (Cohen Konrad, 2017). Mary Richmond’s pioneering of the scientific method in social casework and the

emphasis on social diagnosis dominated the profession for decades. This approach retained preeminence until the 1960s when the reemergence of protest movements reawakened social work's desire to recapture its identity as an empowerment movement (Cohen Konrad, 2017).

Yet in the contemporary context, social workers are increasingly challenged to work within the realities of burgeoning caseloads, managerial checklists, intense bureaucracies, and reduced quality time with clients. Many scholars and practitioners have warned against the dangers of this neo-liberalistic approach seeping into all realms of social work, rendering it a mechanical, heavily regulated, and assembly line series of practices. Craig (2007) argues that social workers have become experts in using a "scientific" and "neutral" voice. And yet, science alone may be inadequate for conveying the nuances and complexities of the human situation. Many scholars and practitioners assert that the focus on managerialism and mechanistic practices have resulted in the repression of social work as a creative endeavor (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018) and to a "debasement of the craft" (Fabricant, 1985). In a context of increasing practitioner stress, and ethical challenges, von Wermer has called for the protection of the "social work imagination" (as cited in Burney Nissen, 2017, p. 21) and there continues to be debates and conflicts as to what social work "is" and "is not" (Burney Nissen, 2017). In this sense, art, storytelling and narrative approaches may become forms of resistance to the scientific voice, and a more accurate and nuanced window into the lived experience of social workers. As Burney Nissen (2017) asserts: "we must deny the belief that knowledge and truth are only available through linear and increasingly neoliberalized social work methods and spaces" (p. 6). Given these realities, there have been recent calls for social workers to return to their artistic roots.

Sinding, Warren and Patton (2014) identify three main metaphors that describe the effectiveness and importance of art in social work practice and education. In the first metaphor, the authors suggest that art enables social work clients to "get stuff out." Here, art becomes an avenue to enable the expression and exteriorization of difficult feelings and thoughts, allowing troubles to be released. At the same time, art not only enables feelings to "get out", but also that art "gets in" – actively able to reach meaningful and emotional depths not readily accessible otherwise. In the second metaphor, Sinding et al. (2014) argue that art helps clients to 'inhabit other worlds'. Moving well beyond the cognitive, art is sensory, activates emotion, and enables clients to safely and imaginatively enter or come closer to 'walking in another's shoes' and others' lived experiences. Finally, they suggest that art 'breaks habits' of seeing and knowing. Art interrupts patterns of seeing and knowing defined by stereotypes and prejudice – turning our attention to these habits and creating possibilities for new ways of knowing and relating.

Art may be increasingly valuable on macro, mezzo and micro levels. Grassau (2009) has suggested that the arts have particular value in uncovering "relational and structural aspects of oppression" (p. 249) in community social work so critical to social values and practice. The use of the arts in group work can enable participants to create highly supportive intentional communities, which can strengthen group cohesion, develop group identity and foster social action among people who experience stigma, marginalization and/or exclusion (Green & Denov, in press). Through collaborative and interdisciplinary projects and coalitions, social workers and artists may partner in a broad forms of social action to bring about change at the micro, mezzo and macro levels (Moxley & Feen, 2016). On a more micro, practitioner level, art also has the capacity to increase reflexivity. Reflexive practice adopts a critical stance, compelling the practitioner to reflect on the ways in which power relations and social location embody and shape our interactions with clients. Moreover, because the arts are primarily a communicative medium, they can enhance communication between social workers and clients (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018). Moxley and Feen

(2016) suggest that the arts can strengthen praxis advancing the integration of theory and practice when “those involved in social work practice move from artful conceptions or images of social issues to the design and testing of helping strategies” (p. 1691).

The neurobiological basis of art must also be considered. The arts are said to induce prompt perceptual processing, information gathering, and metabolic arousal that mobilize the organism for coping reactions (Hass & Sela-Amit, 2018). On a deep neurological level, art is a personal interpretation of a social context that connects to problem solving and resilience (Sarid & Huss, 2010).

Within the realm of research, using art can provide powerful and highly accessible mechanisms for research dissemination (McNiff, 2008). More easily distributed, accessed, and consumed than traditional academic publications, these mediums can have a widespread, immediate and powerful impact (Evans & Foster, 2009). Also, methods that put production in the hands of service users can project a credibility and authenticity that more polished works of art cannot achieve, provoking social action and potential social transformation (McNiff, 2008).

Calls for the use of the Arts in Social Work curriculum

Within an increasingly austere, market-driven and individually focused social context, the way that social work education has prepared students has altered considerably, and many have argued that changes to the educational process and mission of universities have undermined the creativity and autonomy of the academy (Leonard, Hafford-Letchfield & Couchman, 2018). The search for novel and innovative approaches has led to an increasing interest in the arts as a vehicle for social change, often borrowing methods from the arts to enrich social work pedagogy. Eadie and Lymbery (2007) have suggested that social work education needs to balance the technical aspects of professional education with more creative aspects, which will enable future social workers to creatively and thoughtfully adapt to a changing world. Leonard et al. (2016) and Chambon (2009) assert that introducing the arts in social work pedagogy offers opportunities for students and practitioners to foster different learning styles and varied ways of knowing and understanding in varied contexts. Schubert and Gray (2015) note that different interpretations through the arts could help enhance diagnostic, analytic and action capabilities of social work in collaboration with service users in new ways of practicing. Huss and Sela-Amit (2018) argue that the arts can provide a space for social work students, as well as for service users, to excavate their own emotions and understanding of their work. This, in turn, can disrupt automatic thinking in a critically reflective space - a key goal of social work education and supervision. Kirkendall and Krishen (2014) have similarly asserted the need for creativity in the classroom, inviting students to “define creativity, suggest methods to infuse it in the classroom, and apply it as practitioners” (p. 341). However, when exploring art and creativity in the classroom, Kirkendall and Krishen found that while students were committed and willing to engage creatively, time restrictions, traditional classroom arrangements, and prescribed classroom assignments and formats inhibited more creative forms of learning and engagement.

Children, Families, War and the Arts

Arts-based approaches with war-affected children and families – whether photography, video-making, music, drama, or visual arts – have been found to promote participant activism, engagement and empowerment (Mitchell, 2011). Furthermore, arts-based approaches have psychological benefits, as they provide a means for communicating with the nonverbal mind, and a way to safely access traumatic memory, making them an ideal vehicle for helping with traumatic recovery (Gantt & Tinnin, 2009). Betancourt, Meyers-Ohki, Charrow and Tol (2013) undertook a systematic review of intervention with children affected by war. The researchers found that the essential elements of immediate and midterm interventions when there has been mass trauma include “a sense of safety, calming, a sense of self-and-community efficacy, connectedness, and hope” (p. 70). The authors found the following strong evidence:

secure and consistent caregiving relationships are critical in order for children to weather the extreme stressors of war and conflict. As a result, a number of psychosocial interventions are oriented toward the family, with the aim of strengthening parent-child relationships and connection (p. 80).

In this section we draw attention to two arts-based interventions with war-affected children that seem particularly relevant to families and family practice. We do not offer this as an exhaustive systematic review, but rather as an ‘aperçu’ on examples of different arts based practices in working with war affected children, youth, families and communities in multiple contexts, either in areas affected by war or on refugees.

Arts-based Intervention with Refugee Children in a Canadian Context

Yohani (2008) conducted an arts based project in a Canadian city where arts-based tools were used as a tool of data gathering and a set of activities to enhance and develop hope among refugee children and their families. The study focused on fourteen refugee children from 8-18 who had spent time in a third country before coming to Canada. Building on key ideas on the nature of hope, the project used photographs, a hope quilt, and the development of stories where children shared their work with others and, through this, enabled adults to carry out child-focused discussions. Hope was explored through collage, drawing, painting and photography. “These arts-based approaches were particularly relevant since hope is associated with creative processes (Lynch, 1965) and these activities are considered developmentally appropriate for eliciting information in children of this age” (Van Manen, 1994, p. 315). Children’s photographs depicted images taken in their homes, schools and classrooms, after-school care programs, parks, and neighborhoods. A ‘hope quilt’ depicted the stories of the children providing them with another medium for the children to explore their experiences of hope and allowed children to move beyond their current contexts and reflect on past experiences and future goals” (Yohani, p. 312). The children then shared the hope quilt in a small exhibit.

Yohani (2008) underlines that at the time of publication of her article, little had been documented on how refugee children adapt to their new countries. She underlines that “a better understanding of children’s successes and failures holds the potential to contribute to both theory and practice on this subject” (p. 310). Using Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theory of human development (i.e., bioecological theory), she developed appropriate arts-based activities to help the researcher understand the realities of children’s lives in the new country. In bioecological theory the term ecology refers to the range of situations people are involved in, from their roles, the

challenges they encounter and what happens thus “a key component of this theory is its attention to person, process, context, and time” (Yohani, 2008, p. 311). Interactions between people and their environment are strongly influenced by individual or personal factors such as emotions, be it anger or happiness. Hope may be one of these emotions. It is often embedded in personal experiences and life contexts, it is nurtured in reciprocal relationships, and involves action and personal appraisal of actions. Yohani points out “these aspects of hope bear relevance in work with at-risk refugee children, specifically with interventions aimed at engendering hope in children by strengthening connections to themselves and to people within their milieu” (p. 311).

The researcher also involved adult program staff and parents to look at what emerged for the children in terms of hope. Beginning with discussions of the dark side of hope, parents transformed their focus to hope itself. Interestingly, once findings regarding children’s perceptions were shared, both parents and cultural brokers began to change their discussion to reflect more hopeful language. “One parent expressed surprise at viewing her daughter’s work and talked about working hard to make her daughter feel proud of who she was. She had watched her child struggle at school and now that she was starting to do well, it pleased the mother to see that her daughter had begun to envision herself in the future”. (p. 312). The ecological framework, which included adult perspectives, helped contextualize hope in children’s adjustment in the new country and demonstrated that hope radiated from children to adults.

The Arts in Performance: Healing Intergenerational Trauma as a Result of War and its Aftermath

The arts in performance can be a helpful approach to dealing with war and its aftermath. Erzar (2017) worked with three generations of Slovenians in an art therapy project, which was organized by a civil society organization to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Second World War and postwar violence in that country. “The purpose of the event was to help former wartime children (now adults), victims of war and postwar violence, and their families to begin the process of mourning” (Erzar, 2017, p. 41). The researcher/therapists felt there were intergenerational effects of trauma that prevented families from recovering from the emotions and dysfunction that has resulted. In order to address these intergenerational aspects, the event involved the 1st generation who experienced the original trauma as those who invited participants, the 2nd generation organized the event and the 3rd generation (i.e. the grandchildren of the 1st generation) as performers. The researchers found that each generation were touched in unique ways.

The researchers drew on the work of Kahane-Nissenbaum (2011) who studies the effects and consequences of trauma on three generations of the same family. For the first generation, stopping the trauma was a priority. “The major achievement of the war generation is thus to allow themselves to feel the fear and accept mistrust as part of their lives, while letting their children live without fear and mistrust” (p. 43). The task for the second generation was less about securing survival, but more about dealing with the trauma emotionally:

If they are helped with the understanding that their parents survived the trauma (which is why they rarely enjoyed a relaxed childhood), the second-generation children are able to redirect attention from the past to their present relationships and the emotional side of life (p. 43)

For the third generation, “their task is to know themselves better, turn to the world, and dream about the creation of a new one” (p. 43). Importantly for arts based research and therapy, this

generation has a feeling for creativity and creating new worlds. However, if their parents could not redirect their fears to the potential of their children, their potential would not be fulfilled: “Despite the fact that they face no external threats and have no existential problems, these young people lack creativity and curiosity and have great difficulty getting in touch with the emotional side of their lives” (p. 43).

The “Flowers of Compassion” project aimed to open a space for mourning and reconciliation mainly through sensitive and emotionally accomplished artistic performances (music, theater, and exhibitions). Erzar (2017) reports on one part of this event, a concert held in 2015 that was devoted to the three generations, especially those who had not found where their grandparents who had been killed in the post-war reprisals were buried. The concert was conceived as a place to process the effects associated with injustice and resentment. The choice of music created the atmosphere, beginning with the Faure Requiem, which introduced themes of loss and grief, followed by the premiere of a Slovenian War Requiem, which offered hope for the future. The concert also included Slovenian poetry and paintings by a Slovenian artist who had lost three adolescent brothers during the war. This artist had survived the war’s emotional effects by creating emotional safety by drawing and painting as a child then.

Resolving the intergenerational transmission of fear, distrust, and violence requires a deep and lengthy process that starts with the reduction of anger and resentment, and continues with the acknowledgment and empathic acceptance of pain (Shoshan, 1989). Artistic experience can add to this process by dismantling defensive reactions and revealing the layers of soft emotions beneath anger and resentment. Feelings of sadness, relief, and vulnerability are opened up through music, theater, film, literature, and painting, allowing individuals to get in touch with their inner pain and experience compassion (Erzar, 2017, p. 44). The responses of each generation indicated an effect. For the first generation, they “mentioned two fundamental emotions: sadness, expressed with tears and crying, and respect or dignity” (p. 46). For the second generation, they went “deeper into feelings of shame and abandonment.... saying, their “childhood feelings related to the injustice suffered by his parents were not unique and were perfectly understandable” (p. 46). For the third generation, there was “cognitive acknowledgement of the war and postwar traumas, and emotional confusion regarding what is expected of responsible grandchildren. Young people see the stories of their grandparents as linked to a distant past they would like to see incorporated into the reality of their present lives” (p. 47). By inviting three generations of one family, the artistic event showed what was possible to heal intergenerational trauma as a result of war.

To return to our ‘beginning at the beginning’ question posed in the Introduction, how can the work described in the previous section inform social work practice with war affected children and their families and what are the implications for social work education? Mazza (2009) wrote an introduction to an issue of the *Journal of Family Social Work*, which called for the use of creative and artistic work in family social work. He points out that it is a matter of ethics for the family social worker to be able to recognize a family’s unique history, strengths, and context (Mazza, 2009). Grassau (2009) also has called for increased use of visual images in social work given that some experiences are “below words” (p. 253). Indeed, given the tragedy of war and genocide, words and narrative alone often cannot adequately capture the realities and complexity of conflict-related experiences. As such, researchers focused on the fallout of war and genocide are increasingly turning to the arts to enable multiple forms of participant expression, as well as for the therapeutic, restorative and empowering qualities of arts-based techniques (Denov, Doucet & Kamara, 2012). And yet, while art has been deemed a powerful tool when working with war-

affected children and youth, its use with families has been explored far less. This is clearly an area of importance that begs further attention and research. As Mazza (2009) observes:

Healing, growth, and awareness can be developed through the appreciation or creation of artistic works. Although the arts in family practice are particularly well suited for narrative therapy, it should be noted that poetic elements (e.g., use of metaphor, reframing, behavioral enactment, sculpting, music, genograms, scripts, and family drawings) have been incorporated in all theoretical models of family therapy” (2009, p. x)

In the next section, then, we offer a set of pedagogical features of arts based work in professional practice that align well with well-established approaches to working with war affected children and their families.

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH WAR AFFECTED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES: SOME PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES OF ARTS BASED APPROACHES

An arts based pedagogical orientation links well to creative and participatory strategies that have been tested out in a variety of professional contexts where empathy and social change are key (Mitchell, Weber & Pithouse, 2009; Pithouse, Mitchell & Moletane, 2009). While these (see Figure 2) are pedagogical features that could cut across an entire curriculum or program in a School of Social Work or a Faculty of Education, they could also be features that are more apparent in one or several courses or practicum experiences focusing on family practice.



Figure 2 Pedagogical Features

Pedagogical Features of Arts-based Practices

Reflexivity. Our framework begins with reflexivity. As is highlighted across a variety of fields of professional practice, instilling the importance of reflective processes in students is essential to securing ethical and safe social work practice in future work with vulnerable populations over the course of a career (Samson, 2015). To take one example, research suggests that interacting with authority figures after lengthy immigration processes is often a source of trauma for resettled refugees (George, 2012). New social work students may not have developed the reflexivity to realize that they themselves represent a profession that can be experienced as an instrument of social control by those they serve and not the practice of promoting social justice as the student coming into social work often believes. As the many films portraying professionals such as teachers coming into community practice with, for example, inner city youth as we see in *Dangerous Minds*, highlight this dichotomy with a particular astuteness allowing students to ‘see ourselves as others see us’ and consider how they themselves will navigate the formation of their professional identity (Clarke, Lovelock & McNay, 2016). The ‘perspective-taking’ process in holistic humanities educational activities closely resembles the linkages between individuals, family, community, environmental and multicultural influences (Moxley & Feen, 2016). By breaking habitual ways of seeing and knowing there is more cognitive and affective space to see and know in more deeply perceptive ways and serve clients more effectively.

Situating Oneself in Relationality. Critical reflection also is linking to situating oneself, something that can be enhanced by the arts (Eisner, 2008; Giles & Pockett, 2013). Arts-based explorations can help to illuminate a student’s relationship to privilege, race, oppression and their own as well as others lived experiences of vulnerability within social work practice (Leonard, et al., 2018; Trevelyan, Crath & Chambon, 2012). The simple act of expanding client histories with relevant visual arts, literature, cinema among other art forms could powerfully transform common educational case studies into instruments that reveal the multilayered nature of client experience within its sociocultural context. Placing the arts at the center of conversations about war, race, class, injustice etc. creates a learning environment that is capable of rising to the occasion difficult pedagogical material represents while remaining often engaging and enjoyable. Exploring narratives from the clients’ perspectives, multicultural literature, and other forms of cultural production precipitated by social realities offers a reasonable balance between these two vital objectives. Greek social work schools have successfully created art-based modules to assist students’ deeper understanding and ability to ethically assess various facets of the European refugee crisis (Papouli, 2017). Such efforts have been mirrored in the United States by photographic exhibitions showcasing the dignity and “dailyness” of the lives of asylum-seekers as a way to visually deconstruct popular racist discourses by engaging empathy (Sinding et al., 2014).

Observation. Arts-based methodologies produce a richly emotive and embodied data set for practitioners to draw insight from, clarify clinical decision-making processes and ultimately better serve their clients. One technique noted for its broad appeal and accessibility is photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1999; Mitchell, 2011). This method allows for opportunity to engage the aesthetic impulse without impeding barriers of literacy, self-assessed artistic skill, language or culture barring the way. Photovoice has proven an excellent method both in assisting intercultural social work classrooms in exploring their personal and professional values in a more engaging, experiential and reflexive way than prevailing teaching methods (Bromfield & Capous-Desyllas, 2017). There is a direct translation of its utility in the classroom to its utility in community social work. In one such instance a photovoice project at the undergraduate social work level became a

community photovoice project due to its broad accessibility and appeal (Bonnycastle & Bonnycastle, 2015). The photographs and photographers' explanation of them can help elucidate interactions between individuals' physical health, psychology, family systems, the community, sociocultural context and political economy's influence with depth and intimacy (George 2012; Murray, Lampinen & Kelley-Soderholm, 2006)

Ethical Practice. Arguably ethics and ethical practice in relation to war-affected children are most directly studied and appreciated through participatory arts based methods that involve the production of artistic creations such as photos, cellfilms and drawings. As highlighted by Akesson et al. (2014), issues such as voice, ownership, and interpretation become particularly critical. However, learning how and why such issues are so significant could take a 'starting with ourselves' (Van Manen, 1994) approach in social work education through learning by doing. How, for example, do we feel when working in group and one's individual voice and even one's individual contributions take second place to the group voice? How might we understand the tensions between individual response and collectivity?

Taking action. Finally, we consider the ways that training in innovative arts based methodologies in the social work classroom will contribute to a new generation of arts-based practitioners engaged in taking action. Using a 'learning by doing approach' students can delve in to the process of working with the arts within their learning communities in order to focus on discovery and becoming as opposed to outcome and expectation (Crociani-Windland, 2017). The case of social work students producing anti-oppression "zines" is one such compelling example (Desyllas & Sinclair 2014).

CONCLUSION

"... is it perhaps vital now more than ever to use the arts to disrupt status quo in social work education, research, and practice?" Cohen Konrad (2017, p. 4).

Clearly, as in all realms, art cannot be considered a panacea in an increasingly complex and changing global context. Huss and Sela-Amit (2018, p. 1) introduce an important question – can social workers really afford to include the arts in a context of limited client-time, and when these clients are facing real-world problems, such as accessing basic needs such as food and shelter? Moreover, the power relations that exist between social workers and clients do not disappear or transcend methodological challenges and problems. As in all social work interventions, there is a danger that art can become a tool of oppression within power-infused interactions between social workers and clients. In addition, social work's use of art occurs within a specific cultural and socio-geographic context. All creations need to be defined by its creator and should not be a fine art disconnected from its creator. In this sense, when embracing the arts, social work students and practitioners needs to be aware of social work Western roots, paradigms, and ways of seeing, ensuring the unique cultural, social and contextual meaning and significance of the art is expressed by clients and not social work students and practitioners. The suitability of art as a method and interaction with clients must be carefully assessed, particularly in relation to context and culture. At the same time, and in closing, our answer to Cohen Konrad's question posed above remains overwhelmingly in the affirmative. As the burgeoning body of work with war affected youth and their families highlights, it is critical 'now more than ever' to find methods and tools in

professional practice that recognize both the healing potential and their potential to deepen an understanding of the issues. A good time to begin is at the beginning.

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