ARTS IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION
DO WE REALLY NEED IT?

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ART AS SUBJECTIVE SOCIALLY DECONTEXTUALIZED EXPERIENCE-ART THERAPY

In terms of social work practice, then from the extensive art therapy literature, we have much evidence that the arts are particularly effective in working with the psychological, and psycho-social problems social workers face

-External stressors, (trauma, loss, stigma)
-Internal stressors (physical and psychiatric illness, developmental disabilities etc)

(Alfred, 2001; Arrington, 2001; Cary & Rubin, 2006; Case & Daly, 1999; Doktor, 1994; Evans & Dubowski, 2001; Kalmanovich, 2005; Liebman, 1994; Linesch 1999; Malchiodi, 1997; 1999; 2007; Meecumbs, 2002; Meijer, Miller, 2000; Moschini, 2005; Murphy, 2001; Degan, 2006; Gil, 2006; Magniant, 2001; Rogers, 2007; Safran, 2002; Spring, 2001; Stephny, 2001; Wadeson, 2000; White, 2007; Zammit, 2001).

(Allen, 1995; Betinsky, 1995; Case & Daley, 1995; Doctor, 1994; Henley, 2003; Jones, 2005; Moon, 2002; 2008; Rappaprot, 2008; Rogers, 2003; Rubins, 2003; Wadeson, 2000)
ART AS "POLITICAL 'OBJECTIVE' KNOWLEDGE"

Visual anthropology

Fine art

Community art

= art expresses values of a community

= art stands alone, disconnected from it’s make

= art is a political act of making personal pain, apparent to others

Art has always been the way to 'show up' the ugliness and power systems of society and the pain this creates: For example, in Goyas picture of an execution, we have a documentary portrayal of the execution, but by choosing to paint it and by the way it was painted, by the ‘form’ then we experience the inhumanity of execution.

The artist has always been concerned with suffering, and it’s social sources, and he can become a type of conscience or social compass for society – enabling us to feel empathy for the "other"

the arts reignite the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of a society
טור של מאות פליטים עושה דרכו לגבול סלובניה.

צילום: רויטרס

פליט סורי נושא את בתו על ידיו, לממקוניב דרך מיוון.

ציום: רויטרס

תחת גשם שוטף, מהגרים מתתחזים בפני חוסות הביטחון שיאפשרו להם לצעות את הנבולה מנויים למכאני,↘דרים ל notícia א')
the arts compositionally embody the person – in context

The central tension of all arts is its ability to capture the phenomenology of social reality and from this to integrate the relationship between the individual and society (Huss, 2017).

This connection is embedded in the inherent compositional language of the arts

A) figure-background

B) overall gestalt and division of space

C) Ability to excavate narrative and culturally contextualized meaning through the tension between form and content and use of symbols
The arts conceptualize the person-in context, or the connection between psychology and social theory. Through the aesthetic focus on the relationship between figure and background, be this actor and stage, dancer and space, tune and background music or figure and background. The arts can thus capture the phenomenology of clients experience of their social reality and integrate the relationship between the individual and society (Huss, 2017).

Perceptual theory points to the evolutionary need to quickly differentiate between figure and background so as to effectively assess dangerous situations such as a tiger against a background of the jungle (Barrett, 2005). Thus, the relationship between figure and background is the way that we make sense of experience.

(see above)
2) COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS: THE TENSION BETWEEN FORM AND CONTENT AND SYMBOLS AS ENABLING A SPEECH ACT FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS

All art forms involve an intense dialogue between form and content. That is “how” shall I express the content I want. This “how”, helps define the “what” as understood by the drawer, and not by an external system or power holder or expert. On this level arts give voice to marginalized experience. (ie collective or individual compositions, bleeding- biological- joined- large or small heart)

Drawing an image (or all art form) involves an intense dialogue between form and content that helps to more exactly define and redefine the content level as understood by the drawer, and not by an external system or power holder or expert.

To exemplify, drawing a heart, for example, can show how someone experiences love: A bleeding heart, a heart with the name of a love, a heart within the self, or a biological diagram of a heart-, or two joined hearts, or not having a heart, are all different compositional depictions of the heart symbol that define the experience of love in different ways.

The use of symbols and metaphors enables to express culturally taboo or power-infused contexts in a safe way for those without power.
3) ARTS AS CAPTURING A COMPLEX GESTALT IN SPATIAL TERMS

Analyzing the visual image as a spatial depiction of recourses in social reality reveals who has access to what types of spaces. For example- while countries can define their wars in ideological terms, maps show spaces colonized. PTSD is lack of safe spaces (external reality).

Space, between people shows who has no space, who is most central, who is closest smallest or furthest away, as experienced by the creator of the image (internal reality of systemic relationships). In music, then space of different musical images and sounds) PTSD as lack of safe space
ARTS AS INTEGRATING CONTEXT INTO SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE
HUNGER
“My drawing gives me a feeling of my life: I am standing, thank God, and I am like the tree because I am trying to be strong and connected to the ground although my branches feel the wind...”
SPACES BETWEEN PEOPLE
ART AS EMPOWERMENT AND AS SOLUTIONS: ENVISAGING NEW SOLUTIONS
ARTS AS INTEGRATING THE SUBJECTIVE INTO SOCIAL CONTEXT AND HUMANIZING IT
“LOCAL HERO’S” IN IMPOVERISHED AREAS ON SIGNPOSTS IN TOWN
MAKING A TRADITIONAL BENCH FOR THE ELDERS IN IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORHOOD
ART AS INTEGRATING MICRO AND MACRO PRACTICE
1) IS ART A RELEVANT “PILLAR” FOR SERVICE USERS?

They have real problems, and don’t have time to start ‘expressing themselves’

Expressive art is yet another western imposition?
In Sri Lanka, in a project on community rehabilitation, the villagers and community workers could decide what to do with a small donation that we had received. They did not want art therapy- or psychological intervention, (which is very stigmatizing in their culture). They were very clear that they wanted to use the arts to re-build and paint and decorate their temple, which serves as a type of community center. They also wanted crafts materials to enable the girls to make dowries and be able to get married, and they wanted dance and sports materials to keep the youth busy (Huss, 2012, 2015).

While the villagers did not use abstract concepts, such as community ‘resilience’ or ‘rehabilitation’, the concrete things requested are associated with ways to rehabilitate and strengthen their village, through pride in a sports team, and through reigniting community life, organized around a spiritual and community center and a set of rituals.

To return to the claim that art is not important for service users, we see above, that the villagers perceive of the arts not as irrelevant or as a way to turn Maslow's triangle upside – down: They self-define arts- as a way to strengthen the resilience of the community. This, in turn, becomes a recourse to enable coping with the more basic problems: This was very clear to them.
Arts as Co-production of knowledge
ARTS AS CULTURALLY CONTEXTUALIZING SOCIAL WORK

Bedouin (and most traditional cultures) are defined as collectivist, which means that the actions of the individual reflect upon the family as a whole, and the actions of the family unit, in turn, have a significant impact on how an individual family member is viewed. Suad (1997).

This aesthetic is evident in the embroidered cushion above, in which the design conveys the 'healing' or uplifting importance of balance, measure, and spacing. The aesthetic contains elements of repetition, rotation, and reflection, in the context of harmony, of parts fitting into a whole, reflecting the overall conception of culture. (Vogel, 1992; Irving, 1997; Allen, 1988).

The intellectual challenge of puzzles and riddles, and the respect for order, hierarchy, and harmony, found in Arabic culture, are reflected within the above embroidered cushion, which embodies a world view, that when lacking, becomes the ‘problem’.
In social work, art can be projective, or product oriented, but it can also be focused on, as stated above, phenomenological, that is, understanding how the creator experiences his psychological and social reality. The artist-client is the expert on his own art. The art can create a product, or can serve as a trigger for a narrative that has no meaning outside of the context of the narrative (such as the group).
ART MAKING AND EXPLAINING PROCESS

1

ART MAKING

MAPPING INTO SPACE

SYMBOLIZING

SUBJECTIVE EXP:
1) ART AS CLARIFYING CONCEPTS
2) ART AS PROJECTING EMOTIONS INTO NEUTRAL SPACE
3) ART AS SUBVERSIVE COMMUNICATION
2

ART EXPLAINING

ELABORATION ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC LOCALITY

RE-FRAMING OF EXPERIENCE ACCORDING TO GROUP

CONSTRUCTED EXP:
Can social workers who have not received training in art, utilize the arts on a professional level? Do they not need to study arts history, etc?

Indeed, social work is already an integrative profession that struggles with the split between social and psychological, micro and macro stands. Do we really want to complicate social work even by adding an additional humanities epistemology?.

Would it not be better to collaborate with art therapists and community artists, who really understand art?
ART AS HUMANIZING SOCIAL WORKERS-AS AGAINST MECHANISTIC SOCIAL WORK. FIGURE BACKGROUND, SPATIAL GESTALT, SYMBOLS, CONTENT – FORM)
FLEXIBLE DECISION MAKING
IMAGINING NEW ORGANIZATIONS OF FIGURE-BACKGROUND AND OF SPACE
USING ART FOR SELF-REGULATION
Theme 5:
Constant work communication on cell-phones during the war
Theme 6:
Work family conflicts
ART AS ENABLING TO EXCAVATE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL REALITY = CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS
The most prevalent stressor was lack of all types of support, financial, supervisory, and emotional from the service and from management in the workplace. Managers Administration-repetition Large client loads- flooding Multiple tasks- difficulty knowing what to do first \(\text{(each image represents a theme)}\)
I try to remember the client, but it's so hard to reach him because the service puts up so many barriers, it's like trying to get through a wall. Background as wall, service user as encapsulated (repeated motive of can’t reach client).
THE PAPER WORK IS ENDLESS, AND BORING, IT DOESN’T LET US DEAL WITH THE RED LINES, THE URGENT CASES (ONLY BACKGROUND, NO FIGURE)
STRESSORS: EXPERIENCE OF OVERLOAD AND REPETITION

"THIS IS HOW I FEEL! (NO "BACKGROUND")"
I feel like a spiral going out of control, so many elements to take care of, endlessly (huge background, but the background is internalized as her psychological reaction).
I feel the amount of demands I have from my jobs like a huge black cloud over me, and people wanting endless things from me, telephones, forms, everyone is telling me what to do and everything is time limited (she doesn’t blame the system but defines it as a “black cloud”).
THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO FIRST (TRANSLATES STRESS INTO LACK OF EFFICACY RATHER THAN BLAMING THE SYSTEM)
STRESS REACTIONS: I am constantly split between different things I have to do (TAKES INWARDS NO BACKGROUND)
I feel so alone in my service, although I am surrounded by noises (Self turned black)
I feel like “nothing” as if I cannot move or do anything worthwhile for the client. I have no arms or legs (no background, the stress is taken inwards).
SOMETIMES I SEE MYSELF AS A TYPE OF HERO, A SAVIOR-, EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON ME
I AM A TYPE OF INDIANA JONES ...(NO REAL BACKGROUND EMANATING FROM SELF)
I feel I am talking and talking, but I can’t reach her, I don’t have any supervision to help (space between self and background – background innaccessible)
“I FEEL SO SMALL AND INEFFECTIVE NEXT TO MY SERVICE USER, I CAN’T MAKE THE LIGHT OF UNDERSTANDING TURN ON-IN MY HEAD, HE IS LIKE A HUGE SCARY ROBOT TO ME”
3; CAN ART PRODUCE EVIDENCE? OR IS IT JUST A DISTRACTION?

Finally, the last pitfall I described above was the issue of evidence. How can art be used to create the evidence base needed for social work? How can it prove the effectiveness of social work intervention? The answer to this question emerges from the above examples, which show that the evidence we are looking for is by definition dependent upon the ways that we define and understand the role of art in social work.

For example, while CBT will want concrete evidence of shifts in behavior to determine that the therapy is effective (Cooper 2008), arts can provide visual record of shifts, or provide a trigger for verbal records of such shifts. Dynamic theories assume stages where the client is regressed in terms of behavior, but understands these regressions as part of the overall process and so is not interested in linear measures of progress, but rather in capturing processes and moments of change. Arts can help capture these moments. Similarly, systemic theory may use art to show the evolving gestalt of systems. We have seen in the tree example above, that a dynamic theory versus a social critical theory will evaluate the same image in different ways, and so the theoretical orientation is vital. A neuro-biological theory may measure brain and hormonal functions while doing art, to assess its ability to reduce stress. Evidence comes in many forms, such as observing, interviewing, surveys, experiments, using self-exploration or auto-ethnography, as in a research diary, and other methods. For example, in the above Sri Lanka example, the evidence is based on parameters of community intervention and on the outcomes of this intervention, and is not connected to a projective analysis of art.

Visual components can- like all data- be analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively

To exemplify, in the following arts-based tool published in Ploss-1 (Sandack, Huss et al 2015) we utilized a broad computational paradigm (CP) for capturing, and then for empirically elucidating and analyzing, complex dynamic behavioral processes in the expressive arts, and for applying it in real-world experimentation. The computer can measure all processes of art making (such as breaks, erosions, intensity of texture, movement across the page, etc.) in very exact ways. Our findings showed significant differences in the ways that men and women depicted stress and coping, as in the table below.

Show table of differences
ART AS ENABLING MULTIPLE TYPES OF EVIDENCE TO CO-EXIST
ARTS AS CO PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE
SUMMARY: CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ‘ARTS’ PILLAR FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Art enables social workers to

Integrate micro and macro levels of service users and their own experience

To create a complex interactive gestalt of the case

To think creatively about the case and to re-frame and problem solve

To understand the visual culture and resilience and meaning of service users

To initiate self-care on level of reflection and self regulation

To create a broad hermeneutic space to understand service users

-To humanize social work SO WE DO NEED THE HUMANITIES