Lessons Learned from Three Projects Linking Social Work, the Arts, and Humanities

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The aims of this paper are to illustrate how social workers can collaborate with designers and artists in addressing social issues facing communities and to identify the implications of such collaboration for social work education. The authors examine three projects linking social work, the arts, and humanities [Arts in Recovery (AIR), the Leaving Homelessness Intervention Research Project (LHIRP), and Interdisciplinary Research on Environmental Design (IRED)] for the lessons they offer social work education. They pay particular attention to the art exhibit and its catalog as products that educate the public on various social issues, as well as the exhibit visitation experience that parallels key components of traditional group work and community development. Implications for social work include teaching interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating the arts into social work methods, emphasizing the importance of participatory action research, and creating settings that promote community engagement. The authors then draw implications for how the arts and humanities can influence or otherwise shape the paradigm of social work education and instruction in the areas of policy, human behavior, practice methods, and research.

Keywords: Arts; Humanities; Social Action; Exhibit; Social Installation; Museum

Introduction

As a profession, social work is mindful of the importance of educating people about the issues their communities face, and the arts broadly interpreted lend themselves to the realization of this end (Denzin, 2003). The arts and humanities offer people an avenue for appreciating the world around them, and specific aspects of that world, either from the perspective of artists themselves, or from the perspective of viewers

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who oftentimes employ their own interpretative frames to make sense of the art they observe (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994). That the arts can offer vehicles for gaining insight into social issues, and how people experience them, make both the arts and humanities especially important to social work given the profession's commitment to taking action through partnership with people who experience first-hand the causes and consequences of social issues.

In her research on how the arts influence professional development, Austen (2010) emphasizes the importance of qualitative intelligence for creative performance in professional action. Austen asserts that qualitative approaches to thinking, judgment, and action are independent of scientific approaches. Indeed, she asserts that a powerful approach to professional development involves blending the 'art and science' of professional action so that professionals can take creative action in uncertain situations. Such a blending, or integration, enables professionals to engage with considerable confidence those problems she labels as enigmatic. With enigmatic problems solutions are unclear and uncertain, and they require practitioners to engage those situations in creative and original ways, an observation Eisner reinforces when he considers the importance of the arts in education (Eisner, 2004).

Social workers are likely to face numerous enigmatic problems in their efforts to address the needs of individuals, groups, and communities. Exposure of social work students to the arts and humanities can help them develop cognitively, emotionally, and culturally so they are comfortable with situations in which creativity serves as a problem-solving asset. The use of the arts and humanities in actual practice situations can help social workers open up creative avenues for collaboration with other professionals, particularly those who consider themselves artists or humanists, and with recipients who find artistic expression a way of addressing the causes and consequences of the social issues they face in their daily lives. Involving students directly in the production of their own artistic projects can help them process emotionally the issues they must address in their practice, helping them document the hardships the people they serve face, and addressing their own emotions concerning such helping in difficult situations.

It is the purpose of this paper to anticipate engagement of the social work profession in the arts and humanities, particularly in the emergence of the community arts exhibit as a means of capturing diverse ways of learning about social issues affecting local communities. Within this paper the authors frame the importance of the arts, offer examples of linking social work and the arts and humanities, and consider how the arts and humanities can inform if not shape social work education.

The Power of the Arts and Humanities in Social Action: A Frame of Reference

The Power of Art

In the arts, humanities, and museum studies, a shift is occurring (Falk and Dierking, 2000). There is movement from a paradigm in which art was once commissioned by the most powerful in society to a paradigm in which art is public and democratic both in its

production and in its consumption (Gablik, 2004; Hyde, 2007). This shift means that art venues, particularly museums, galleries, and studios, serve as a powerful source of alternative education in a community complementing formal education with more informal avenues of knowledge acquisition. Access to the arts is evolving in more democratic ways, with those institutions responsible for the preservation of culture becoming more mindful of their public purpose in awareness building, instillation of insight, and delivery of diverse forms of education. Those aims are typically distinctive of successful community-based art education (London, 1994). Involving people from diverse backgrounds, including those who experience substantial disadvantage within a given society, in the process of making art is emerging as a central aim of institutions once open only to elites but closed to the very people who could harness the arts as a form of community, group, and personal expression. Today the power of the arts resides in its capacity to foster human expression, document human experience, and legitimize the perspectives of those who are otherwise marginalized; and it can make an appreciable positive difference in improving the quality of community life (Cleveland, 2005).

The Arts as an Alternative Form of Community Education

The 'arts as education' or 'free choice learning' movement (Falk, 2002) offers alternative venues for education, whether informal or formal ones. Freeing oneself from an authority that prescribes certain interpretations can be liberating, and connecting with multiple forms of art produced by artists who do not reflect establishment views (e.g. outsider or naïve art) can liberate even further. Increasingly, artists are stimulating community development (Jones, 1988; Timm-Bottos, 2006; Kennedy, 2009; McDowell, 2011), art teachers are using art making to teach social justice and activism (Campana, 2011), and educators are incorporating art-based service learning to build community connections, provide service, and enhance academic learning (Lowe, 2001; Krensky and Lowe Steffen, 2008). The use of art as a tool for healing is well-known to art therapists (Kaplan, 2007), and while many social workers appreciate the healing power of the arts, the inclusion of artistic methods in social work does not likely hold a central role within the profession although this linkage was well-established by Jane Addams at Hull House (Stankiewicz, 1989). Fortunately, the confluence of the arts, humanities, and the helping professions is resulting in new ways of expressing primary experience with social issues, and in disseminating this invigorating way of knowing (Washington and Moxley, 2008).

The Community Arts Exhibit as Dissemination Strategy

What the authors refer to as the community social action exhibit lends itself to such education (Moxley *et al.*, 2008). This strategy helps groups of people and whole communities frame the issues they find important, particularly those that threaten or compromise their quality of environment, and quality of life, and in communicating the causes and consequences of those issues (Knutson *et al.*, 2011). The community exhibit offers groups and communities an interpretative capacity that could otherwise go

unheard or unappreciated by those in power (Moxley *et al.*, 2012a). The exhibit serves as a means of empowerment by using multiple avenues of artistic expression, emphasizing the so-called indigenous perspective concerning community life, and amplifying aspects of social issues that others may not have direct contact with. Whether its content incorporates first-person experience, systematic evaluation, or basic or applied research, the community arts exhibit serves as a medium for transmitting critical information or knowledge about serious social conditions and issues.

The social action exhibit serves as one crucible in which first-person experience comes alive for visitors in rich, encompassing, and evocative ways. The ensuing insight can potentially move people to action, helping them come to see themselves as part of a greater solution, or even enacting their own actions to bring about meaningful change (Moxley *et al.*, 2008). The idea of witnessing here is critical and lends itself to how social work can appreciate the role of the arts in moral development. Exposing exhibit visitors to images of homelessness in a local community, for example, can result in raising fundamental questions about privilege, justice, and opportunities, or their absence for certain groups within a community.

The exhibit as a community intervention, in particular, lends itself to innovation in social work education, particularly through group work and community development. Here social action can produce relevant arts and humanities content that, in turn, can further develop an exhibit with the potential to educate community members about particular social issues. Aligned with the exhibit is the visitation experience that expands the participant base of a given project by increasing the number of people who come in contact with the content that primary participants produce to document their lived experience. It is within the exhibit that visitors experience—typically through holistic exposure (using multiple forms of representation within the context of a multi-sensory experience)—artistic images of social issues that their creators communicate in evocative ways.

Complementing the exhibit is the catalog, which can serve as a pivotal compendium for amplifying not only a visitor's understanding of the social issue that serves as the subject of an exhibit but helps others who were unable to experience the exhibit to engage exhibit content. As a dissemination product the catalog (whether print or electronic) can incorporate multiple forms of media, document the specific aspects of the exhibit, communicate findings about the evaluation of the exhibit, and incorporate social research that a community project produces about an issue (Fulmer *et al.*, 2006; IRED, 2011). Those who do not find traditional research sources engaging may find that the catalog, when done well, communicates such knowledge in a fresh, graphic, novel, and creative manner (Moxley *et al.*, 2012a).

Overview of Three Projects in Social Work in the Arts and Humanities

The three projects the authors offer in this section reflect their continuing interest in integrating social work and art in its multiple forms, and in the incorporation of the humanities into participatory research leading to social betterment.

Arts in Recovery (AiR)

AiR is an ongoing applied research project undertaken by the first author who is tracking the use of the arts in health promotion and involving people who cope with the causes and consequences of serious social issues. Founded in 2008, the project is completing its second cycle of web-based research exploring the integration of the arts with health and social services, and social action. Using a web-based search process, the project is identifying promising approaches to this integration across: (a) multiple regions of the United States; (b) multiple art forms; and (c) multiple domains of social issues (e.g. homelessness, HIV/AIDS). The project's focus on recovery is based on the premise of the research: that the arts play a crucial role in helping people who have experienced trauma frame their lived experience, foster self-expression, and engage in productive catharsis, thereby rebuilding the self. The arts can help people communicate pain, damage, and injustices that they have experienced, fostering understanding by others, particularly those who are in decision-making roles, and engaging in self-advocacy (Washington and Moxley, 2008).

    To date, the project has identified 210 promising examples of the arts in recovery, which have the following qualities in common: (a) participants engage in the production or co-production of art for the sake of understanding, finding meaning, and communicating societal response to them as members of a marginalized group; (b) grassroots artistic efforts emerge within a specific community facing numerous challenges; (c) participants craft recovery messages that are prominent in their artistic representation; (d) participants make their own decisions about the form of art they will learn and use to communicate their own recovery experience; and (e) participants emerge as artists who determine the value and quality of their work rather than placing this judgment in the hands of experts or critics. Those entities that blend social services and the arts likely possess an interdisciplinary staff to facilitate the emergence of participants as artists through supportive group work, develop intentional community, provide resources for making art, and offer social services and/or healthcare with a healing focus.

Leaving Homelessness Intervention Research Project (LHIRP)

LHIRP, founded in 2000 and ending in 2010, focused on designing, testing, and investigating promising practices to help older minority women in a Midwestern (USA) city get and stay out of homelessness (Moxley and Washington, 2012, in press). The project incorporated numerous strategies from the arts, humanities, and social action, at both individual and group levels, to support participants in their recovery from the multiple traumas of homelessness, and to instill self-efficacy to facilitate emergence from homelessness (Washington and Moxley, 2008; Feen-Calligan *et al.*, 2009a; Washington *et al.*, 2009b). Some 530 participants were involved in LHIRP in at least one form of research and recovery activity. Their involvement in healing activities and in advocacy to leave homelessness resulted in numerous products including photographic and photovoice images (Feen-Calligan *et al.*, 2009b), collage (Moxley *et al.*, 2008), poetry

(Moxley *et al.*, 2011b), narratives (Moxley *et al.*, 2012b), scrapbooks and portfolios (Washington and Moxley, 2009), and quilting (Moxley *et al.*, 2011c).

Eight women, each of whom represented a different pathway into homelessness at midlife, formed a subproject entitled 'Telling My Story' (TMS) that employed methods from the arts, humanities, and social action to organize an exhibit through which the women could tell their stories of tipping into, moving through, and emerging from homelessness. The exhibit was comprised of eight 28″ × 112″ digital giclee (high quality) collage prints (one print for each woman's story) mounted in 6′ high semi-circular free standing frames, allowing viewers to walk into and become part of each woman's 'portrait' of homelessness (Washington and Moxley, 2008). Figure 1 (entitled 'Sallie's Portrait') is an image of one of these portraitures and the image captured by Figure 2 (entitled 'Discussing Sallie's Portrait') demonstrates its scale. The resulting digital collages consist of photographs of the women and their environments, photographs taken by the women, original drawings, and poetry, all produced during the 'Telling My Story' LHIRP subproject.

For the pilot exhibit, which occurred in the spring of 2006, each woman served as the docent of her digital giclee portrait and educated visitors not only about her own personal story of homelessness but about the dynamics of homelessness among older African American women as a specific social issue rapidly growing in the United States. Then, through a community forum in which each woman formally spoke about, read original poetry, or sang about her experiences, the participants continued to educate

Figure 1   Sallie's Portrait.

Figure 2 Discussing Sallie's Portrait.

visitors about homelessness in the African American community (Moxley *et al.*, 2008). The exhibit catalog (Fulmer *et al.*, 2006) captured the stories of each of the eight women who transcended homelessness through the virtues they amplified in their own portraitures.

Interdisciplinary Research on Environmental Design (IRED)

Founded in 2008, IRED addresses the relationship of environment to positive aging in a relatively small city located in a southeastern region of the United States that serves as the main campus of a state-supported research university. Shaped by an interdisciplinary team involving social work, social sciences, architecture, and interior design, in its first cycle of action research IRED focused on documenting environmental supports and impediments from the perspective of older adults (Boeck *et al.*, 2010). The project's principal aim is to advance competent environmental design that supports the positive functioning, well-being, and quality of life of individuals aging across the lifespan, with a specific focus on advancing the well-being of older people through innovations in environmental support (Moxley *et al.*, 2011a).

In March 2011, IRED completed its first cycle of action research ending in the trial use of a prototypic community exhibit designed to disseminate to community members research products illuminating environmental supports for positive aging, aspects of environment and design posing challenges to aged individuals, and factors causing environmental inequities for older individuals facing either serious health issues or disabling conditions (Bishop *et al.*, 2012). The first prototypic exhibit involving photography, photovoice, paintings, found objects, poetry, and essays, and environmental mapping incorporated the theme of advancing environmental design for positive aging (Moxley *et al.*, 2012a). Entitled *Designs for Maturity, Possibilities and Realities for Positive Aging*, and held in a community arts forum accessible to the general public, on opening night the exhibit attracted some 200 visitors. Subsequent showings of the exhibit involved small focus groups whose members were influential in environmental design (IRED, 2011).

The IRED prototype borrowed ideas from the design and implementation of the LHIRP exhibit—it melded research products, like photovoice projects, with artists' representations of the aging process in all of its scope, and included performance art (e.g. poetry reading) in which an artist amplified aspects of her own aging, ones, however, that possessed universal implications for most visitors (Boeck *et al.*, 2011). An exhibit catalog complemented the exhibit and informed visitors about environmental design within the city as a critical aspect of quality of life.

Ethical Considerations

The three projects the co-authors identify raise issues concerning the control, authorship, representation, and perspective the participants experience in such projects. For LHIRP and IRED, the principal investigators received affirmation of the projects from institutional review boards at their respective universities, although those boards did not fully address some of the ethical implications of the participants' work. It is possible for investigators to dictate the parameters of self-expression and stipulate what constitutes acceptable content or personal expression in works of art; and, it is possible for investigators to assume control of the products, rationalizing this action as part of the process of inquiry in which those products become artifacts of the research under the control of the investigators.

Several safeguards were put in place to address such potential ethical violations not addressed by the IRBs. First, the artist-participants controlled their own products and were able to stipulate how they would be used. Second, the artist-participants worked closely with the investigators, fulfilling roles as co-investigators, and were actively engaged in planning public presentations as a group as well as individually in planning the presentation of their own work in public forums. Third, participants made decisions about how they wished to represent their own experience whether this was about aging in place, in the case of IRED, or about their homeless experience in the case of LHIRP. The investigators did not dictate themes, issues, or aspects of the experience they considered appropriate or meaningful. Such decisions resided with the participants themselves. Many of the projects identified within AiR cannot be considered clinical art

therapy; however, they are therapeutic in the sense that they empower people who otherwise hold marginalized status as fully enfranchised artists who exercise both creative and commercial control over their work, including aspects of authorship, representation, form, and technique. What demarcates AiR projects, IRED, and LHIRP is the ethical commitment such entities make to advancing the identity and autonomy of people who tell their stories through the arts as a vehicle of creative narrative.

Lessons Learned from the Arts and Humanities

Valuing Interdisciplinary Action and Multiple Methods Within Local Contexts

When melding social action with the arts and humanities it is not surprising that social work facilitates collaboration between professions necessary to address complex healthcare and social issues. Over its decade long lifespan LHIRP brought together representatives from social work, nursing science, counseling, and expressive arts to capture the story of homelessness among older African American women whose homeless experiences occurred in an urban context. For those women, appreciating their stories in the form of narrative and image were found to be useful not only in representing their experiences but also in helping them move their lives forward in ways they found satisfying.

Among the interdisciplinary art-based interventions used in the 'Telling My Story' subproject were opportunities for the women to photograph aspects of their environments that would either keep them homeless or inspire their emergence. Small-group discussion of those images was instrumental in helping women make changes in their lives, and is an example of how art making can help people break through disequilibrium or resistance and actively engage change they value personally (Kapitan, 2010). Figure 3 (entitled 'Helpful Church') and Figure 4 (entitled 'Community Kitchen') are images of two places photographers identified as helpful and supportive—personalizing them as individuals coping with challenging if not life-threatening situations. Both were faith-based places. Figure 5 (entitled 'Oppressive Place') signified for one participant the dehumanizing response to homelessness well-institutionalized within the community. It was a shelter in which the facility, routines, and absence of support and nurturance simply made homelessness unbearable.

For IRED, the arts helped participants capture their experience with environmental design and it was common for participants to invoke auto-enthnography as a means to tell their stories about how environment, design, and daily life interact (Bishop *et al.*, 2012). Multiple disciplines come to play here so that the dialogue and collaboration among representatives from architecture, interior design, and the social sciences inform social work (Boeck *et al.*, 2011).

While each of the three projects has its own focus, they share a common aim of linking interdisciplinarity to action in local environments using multiple methods. They do not deal with abstract notions of social issues or problems. The arts and humanities place very real faces on what researchers could easily portray in quantitative terms as an abstract phenomenon, and they help illuminate how people
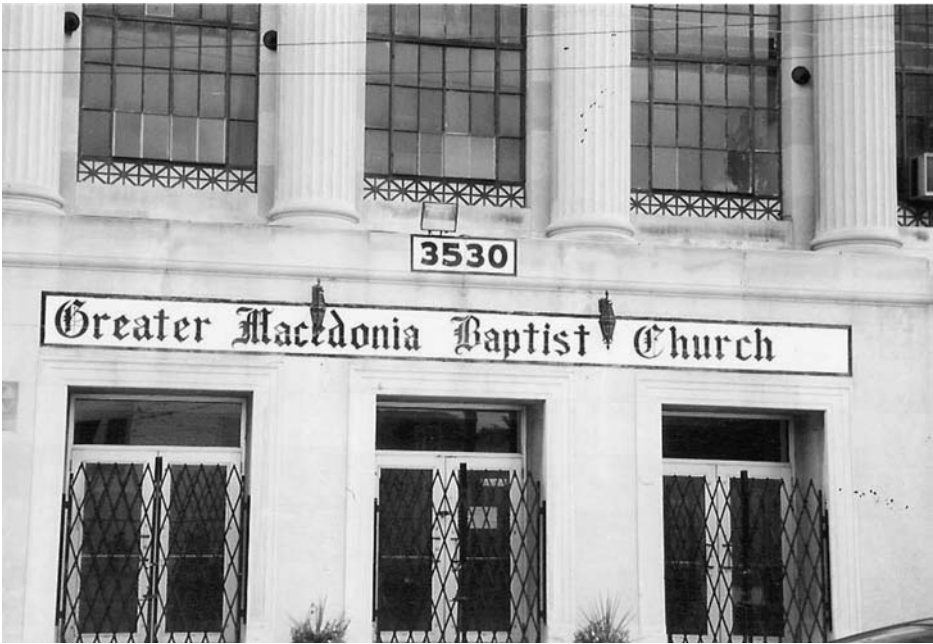
Figure 3   Helpful Church.

Figure 4   Community Kitchen.

Figure 5   Oppressive Place.

address social issues in their daily lives (Hyde, 1998). Here issues come alive and they are personalized through the actual media the participants use to document, illuminate, and frame experience. The methods themselves empower people who otherwise could be relegated to passive roles of recipients. While the interdisciplinary experts may know their fields or domains, participants can invest heavily in the action they take to document what they experience first-hand in local and real-life settings. This transformation from recipient to active knowledge creator is at the heart of the arts and humanities, particularly when participatory action research incorporates such methods—telling one's story directly and emphatically punctuated by personal experience, whether positive or negative, elevates the status of recipient and can empower their perspective (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994; Austen, 2010).

Using Methods from the Arts and Humanities as Helping Strategies

Early findings from AiR demonstrate the viability of art-based interventions in reaching people, groups, and communities whose circumstances may stymie creativity. Methods from the arts and humanities can serve as primary forms of social support, productive engagement, critical thinking, and personal expression of pain and desires. A person undertaking projects in the arts singularly or in conjunction with others can facilitate action at multiple systems levels. An effort, for example to help a group engage in quilting, can bolster motivation, legitimize perspective, and realize creativity in

innovative ways producing tangible benefits for participants like enhanced cognitive problem-solving (Moxley *et al.*, 2011c). Figure 6 (entitled 'Recovery Quilt') incorporates an image of a group work project in which the TMS participants collaborated to tell their stories through the preparation of a three-hour quilt in which each participant crafted a patch to capture a theme of her homelessness and/or her transition out of

Figure 6   Recovery Quilt.

homelessness. The preparation of the quilt was a cathartic experience for the women, and the quilt as a whole stood as a symbol of their courage in the face of adversity.

Several AiR case studies suggest that innovative methods in the arts and humanities can liberate the human spirit offering participants opportunities to transform themselves and engage in creativity as legitimate ends. This expression of emotion and capacity can facilitate healing, restore wholeness, and foster human agency, outcomes many social workers and other helping professionals see as vital (Feen-Calligan *et al.*, 2008).

Engagement of people in creative activity results in artifacts to better illuminate the toll serious social issues inflict on people and their communities (Moxley *et al.*, 2011c). Engaging in vernacular art, for example, may help older social activists to memorialize certain historic events, such as those taking place in the civil rights movement in the United States (Holmes, 1972) or the AIDS movement (Junge, 1999). The products themselves emerging from an advocacy process, like the AIDS quilt, those that memorialize individuals, and encode story and experience, may help local communities, whether place-based or intentional ones, store social knowledge that otherwise may be lost (Washington *et al.*, 2009a).

Both LHIRP and IRED demonstrate the usefulness of the community exhibit as a method of awareness building within a given community. Here social work methods pertaining to community development, community organizing, and group work can be invaluable in helping others bring together those products essential to the organization of an exhibit (Washington and Moxley, 2003). Social workers may find themselves serving in traditional roles, like resource developer, designer, and organizer of local social action exhibits. Still, social workers may discover new roles such as archivists, curators, docents, and arts advocates or administrators. Comfort in such relatively novel roles may be an outcome of interdisciplinary education in the arts and social action that social workers gain through their university education, service learning, practica, or informally through projects they undertake with their colleagues in the arts and humanities.

Incorporating Participatory Methods

By focusing on the interdisciplinarity of the arts and humanities the authors do not want to assign a dominant nor exclusive role to professionals, whether they are social workers or formally trained artists and humanists. For the authors, lessons learned from LHIRP indicate the centrality of all participants to the creative process, resulting in self-expression and illumination of little-understood aspects of complex social issues like homelessness. When people who may otherwise face marginality enact the roles of artists and humanists, audiences can come to appreciate them as engaged and productive commentators on social conditions (Moxley *et al.*, 2008). Positive role change can ensue to valorize artists and humanists as contributors of invaluable knowledge, and as innovators in ways of knowing.

For Dona—a formerly homeless participant in LHIRP—her service as the project's poet laureate helped others understand homelessness within a moral space. Her poetry would echo the moral outrage she embodied in her work as an advocate

(Moxley *et al.*, 2011b). In her poem *A Homeless Feeling*, Dona captures the sudden onset of homelessness:

> There was a flash,
> A blast,
> A clap of thunder,
> A great wind
> A spin
> Swirling me under,
> and there I was falling, screaming calling out for help,
> A small yelp
> into the universe.
> I was alone
> No phone
> No home,
> nothing to call my own,
> Just falling and calling out for help.
> Surely there must be a bottom.
> What if I should hit the bottom, and nobody could hear my cry?
> I'll perish, I'll die.
> Please God don't let me die at the bottom of nonexistence.
> I must climb up and let someone know I was here.

Here, Dona as poet is a witness contributing vital meaning to her own homeless experience that could echo the experience of the many minority women who face such tragedy in late life. The inclusion of the arts and humanities in social action requires helping professionals to reconsider what they mean by collaboration and interdisciplinarity, for Dona introduces a form of knowledge as well as expertise that challenge, if not undermine, such traditional conceptions of authority. Her voice, lyrics, and perspective converge to create a moral critique as she endeavors to move audiences closer to a realization of what homelessness must mean, a tradition consistent with activist poetry (Kaminsky, 1984; Schiff, 1995).

Creating Settings for Collaborative Engaged Learning Within Community Contexts

In his seminal book on community psychology, Seymour Sarason (1972) posits a distinctive role for the helping professions in what he calls the creation of settings. For Sarason, creative settings facilitate human development, and for change agents the creation of settings embodies visions guiding their enactment. To introduce the arts and humanities as building blocks of such settings social work itself legitimizes something that is likely beyond its core expertise as a profession, but the expertise of social work may lie more in the creation of settings fostering human development and social betterment than it does in the direct production of art and representation of the human experience. Respecting what the arts and humanities can contribute means that social work is respecting alternative ways of knowing that make the aesthetic qualities of salience, evocation, and resonance principal outcomes of a creative setting.

The creation of exhibit settings harnesses cognitive and emotional learning in which images of the personal can make social issues salient within the minds of viewers, visitors,

audiences, and contributors. The evocative means that the image will provoke and cajole emotional reactions, whether positive or negative, in the viewer whose engagement brings them not only into an actual physical setting, but also into a prosthetic one in which visitors come to experience portrayals of a social issue they would otherwise not likely engage with in their daily lives. The setting itself may provoke social interaction and dialogue such that people from different social backgrounds engage each other so the person who is marginalized becomes the educator whose story a privileged person may want to understand in all of its detail and drama (Potash and Ho, 2011).

Affirming the Virtues of Participants

While the arts and humanities may offer a critique of social issues and how people may succumb to the causes and consequences of those issues, it also can portray people in a positive light invoking empowered archetypes of human functioning and self-agency. Pejorative archetypes dominate human services and social welfare, including those that communicate inaccurately the absence of economic or civic virtue, amplify disease and disfigurement, or assign evil agency or childlike irresponsibility to people who experience social ills. From both IRED and LHIRP, the authors have learned how various art forms (such as poetry and photography) can enable people to illuminate impasses in their environments as well as those factors enabling their transcendence. For the eight participants whose art and humanist expression of agency formed the 'Telling My Story' exhibit, their photography of spiritual iconography within marginalized areas of the city helped them identify those symbols supporting their cognitive and emotional command of the situations that could otherwise (literally and figuratively) kill their spirit (Moxley *et al.*, 2012b). Images of their sacred places within the city populated their photovoice projects and those images held central positions in their exhibit collages illustrative of how supportive features of environment facilitate survival. Figure 7 (entitled 'Icon of Hope') and Figure 8 (entitled 'Franciscan Iconography') are examples of those sacred places. It was within such places that TMS participants felt safe, welcomed, and valued in such ways that they themselves could come to affirm their own sacred qualities.

Implications of the Arts and Humanities for Social Work Education and Instruction

Recognizing the Need for Creativity in the Social Work Curriculum

The authors center AiR, LHIRP and IRED because they offer a number of implications for thinking about how the arts and humanities can influence the social work curriculum. Gardner (1991), Eisner (2004) and Austen (2010) implicate the importance of qualitative intelligence to creativity, particularly in producing creative responses to uncertain situations. At least in the United States, the Council on Social Work Education emphasizes a competency approach in which mastery of knowledge and skill dominates curriculum design. While this approach is necessary to achieve professional accountability, it does not, however, necessarily instill creativity and originality,

Figure 7 Icon of Hope.

Figure 8 Franciscan Iconography.

important qualities given the prevalence of enigmatic situations facing all professions today. As an alternative way of knowing—and documenting realities that people of diminished status face in their daily lives that may go unappreciated by professionals— the inclusion of the arts and humanities may further strengthen the cultural competencies of social work students. Austen (2010) makes a good case for the need to augment education in creativity across the professions, and social work is no exception here.

AiR indicates the emerging importance of the arts and humanities to address individual, group, and community development in very challenging contexts. At the minimum, social work students should appreciate the distinctive contributions the arts and humanities make to human development and social betterment, but the profession itself can go further than this. LHIRP and IRED illustrate how projects that embody the arts and humanities can form within social work when it builds partnerships with other disciplines (particularly those involved in the arts and design) and with those individuals and communities that experience first-hand the causes and consequences of serious social issues. Sponsorship of such projects by schools of social work, perhaps augmented by the addition of visiting faculty in the arts and humanities, can budge the current educational paradigm in social work (one that involves mastery) to also instill creativity and originality in students.

The Collaborative Project Studio in the Social Work Curriculum

Projects of the IRED and LHIRP type can find a home in the structuring of studios within the social work curriculum. As Schon (1986) describes the studio, such a learning context serves as a place in which learners conceive of, conceptualize, and plan creative responses. While the studio is a standard part of most design curricula in higher education, its adoption in social work would stand as a novelty. For Schon, it is the studio that situates learners in a context of solution finding through which they learn reflective capacities for addressing enigmatic situations.

Such project design and development studios are potentially collaborative and interdisciplinary settings but their aim is the teaching of creativity through practical applications and project development (Orr, 2006). Practicing social workers, people who directly experience social issues, community members, artists, and humanists can unite with social work faculty and students who collaborate within communities to develop an effective response to social issues. By using the arts and humanities as primary strategies for understanding the degradation in the lived experience those issues create for communities, groups and individuals can engage in action to address them. Creative action (particularly when it is undertaken in an actual community) is the hallmark of the studio. Innovative and potentially effective solutions may emerge within the interdisciplinary studio since it is within collaborative group life that breakthroughs often occur (Johnson, 2010).

Blending Domains of Instruction in Social Work Education

The project studio can potentially facilitate integration of the domains of instruction in social work education involving content on human behavior in the social

environment, policy, research, and practice methods. IRED and LHIRP both organize important content concerning human behavior in the social environment. Both address the role of environment in shaping human development across the lifespan, whether this involves positive aging or homelessness. The arts and humanities offer specific tools for documenting, illuminating, and appreciating lifespan development through portraiture, representation, and performance.

Policy content comes into play in influencing how social action flows from societal paradigms, values, and commitments, which can be documented through specific humanistic or artistic methods. Both projects (as well as AiR) incorporate distinctive multi-method strategies of research, and they offer a practical way of incorporating substantive methods of inquiry directly into a project. Students involved in AiR, IRED or LHIRP had to engage in participatory action research roles, using creative methods of inquiry in partnership with people whose lived experience amplified in personal ways those serious social issues decision-makers could ignore.

Within IRED and LHIRP, practice methods (particularly in group work and community development through collaborative and participatory approaches) are grounded in an emancipatory view of social action. The arts and humanities are framed as a form of social action in which group work and community building come into play as specific methods for understanding a given social issue (e.g. the barriers to positive aging as a focus of IRED) and as a way of taking action (e.g. community education, awareness building, advocacy, and program or organizational development).

Blending these domains of social work instruction may make the studio a seamless experience for students, but an interpretative and reflective adjunct to the studio can come in the form of lectures, discussion, small-group work, and presentations. Assignments can consist of experiential and personal reflection in essay form incorporating intensive writing opportunities, intervention design, practice evaluation, and documentation of project breakthroughs (using methods from the arts, such as photography, for example). Assessment within the studio can help facilitate the distillation of students' learning, and help them evaluate instructional outcomes, both intentional and unintentional ones. Such assessment can come in the form of the educational portfolio (Alvarez and Moxley, 2004) yet another approach consistent with professional development in the arts and humanities.

With such blending the project studio can stand as an integrative or capstone learning experience in the advanced year of undergraduate or graduate training. For social work programs such a capstone can also produce scholarly products for more advanced students in social work, such as those enrolled in the PhD.

Conclusion

To communicate how people experience their worlds in evocative ways with salience and resonance make forms of artistic representation and expression powerful media for documenting the endemic nature of social issues. These issues most affect negatively those people, groups, and communities whom the larger society typically favors least. To challenge the views of people who may not understand those dynamics, and to equip

them with new concepts, knowledge and insights about serious social issues serve as meaningful aims uniting social work, the arts, and the humanities when they together share a progressive world view. Empowerment is realized when social workers help people elevate their status as artists who tell their own stories of oppression, deprivation, and transcendence through media they find most meaningful.

When social work educators consider how the arts and humanities can advance the profession, and the preparation of a new generation of practitioners, the evocative nature of such knowledge can make a distinctive contribution to the professional curriculum. The arts and humanities can advance insight into social issues through innovations in narrative which social workers can actualize within settings like the community arts exhibit. The narrative base of social work practice energizes an emancipatory form of engagement with those groups and communities that experience considerable deprivation. Enhancing the social work curriculum with such narrative content, achieved through the infusion of the arts and humanities, can equip students with additional ways of understanding the dynamics of social oppression and with different ways of thinking about the human experience. Thus the arts and humanities can serve illuminatory, appreciative and synergistic ends in social work education and, as a result, the profession can help practitioners and students discover their creative voice.

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