

anzjat

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF ARTS THERAPY

Editorial team

Editors Sheridan Linnell and Catherine Camden-Pratt
Journal Coordinator and Editorial Assistant Jill Segedin
Copy Editors Constance Ellwood and Belinda Nemeč
Proofreaders Rigel Sorzano and Belinda Nemeč
Research Sub-committee Chair Kirsten Meyer

International advisors

Andrea Gilroy, Ronald P.M.H. Lay, Jordan Potash

Peer review panel

Jan Allen, Annette Coulter, Karen Daniel, Jo Davies, Claire Edwards, Cornelia Elbrecht, Bettina Evans, Patricia Fenner, Esther Fitzpatrick, Fiona Gardner, Andrea Gilroy, Deborah Green, Jennie Halliday, Rainbow Ho, Jo Kelly, Adrian Lania, San Leenstra, Amanda Levey, Annetta Mallon, Shaun McNiff, Kirsten Meyer, Julia Meyerowitz-Katz, Nikki O'Connor, Jean Parkinson, Radhika Santhanam-Martin, Mariana Torkington, Carla van Laar, Jill Westwood, Sue Wildman, Daniel Wong.

The editorial team wishes to thank those members of the Peer Review Panel and others who generously contributed their time and expertise to the peer review of this edition of *ANZJAT*.

Published by Australian and New Zealand Arts Therapy Association
ABN 63 072 954 388
PO Box 303 Glebe, NSW 2037, Australia
www.anzata.org

© Australian and New Zealand Journal of Arts Therapy, 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the publisher. The publisher makes no representation or warranty that the information contained in articles is accurate, nor accepts liability or responsibility for any action arising out of information contained in this journal.

ISSN: 1833-9948

Design and production Jill Segedin

Printing McCollams, Auckland, New Zealand and Documents On Call, Melbourne, Australia

What's blood got to do with it? A queer exploration of the genogram and its application in art therapy

Asha Zappa

Abstract

This article explores the use of the genogram in art therapy training and practice, and the ways in which it replicates oppressive, hierarchical social structures. The contexts in which the genogram was created and the ways it is used in art therapy and other therapeutic professions are analysed and critiqued using queer theory as a lens. Given the ways in which the genogram reinforces kyriarchical structures of oppression, this article examines the ethics of using the genogram in art therapy, and suggests possible alternatives.

Keywords

Art therapy, queer theory, genogram, gender, family, assessment.

Introduction: Blood, ties, and potentiality

The genogram is a family tree which uses standardised symbols to represent individuals and relationships. It is used by some art therapists (see Horovitz, 2014), but it is not un-problematic. In this article, I use queer theory to explore the ways in which the genogram reproduces structures of oppression within the therapeutic relationship. I query how art therapists can use the genogram whilst remaining aware of, and disrupting, these structures as culturally sensitive art therapists, particularly referencing critiques from other professions and areas of specialty. I intersperse the discussion with anecdotes from my own experiences as a trainee art therapist in order to show how this seemingly innocuous practice re/produces oppressive experiences.

The genogram: A story of creating (his)stories

A genogram, as defined by Horovitz (2014), is a visual mapping of a client's family tree, typically showing three generations using

a series of standardised symbols. These symbols enable genograms to be 'read' by various clinicians, whilst providing potentially extensive detail of the client's family. This detail can serve to illustrate intergenerational patterns, family or household structure, and family dynamics (Taylor, Clement, & Ledet, 2013). The genogram has numerous applications within mental health, such as in case-notes and service referrals, and provides a common language for various service providers to communicate with each other.

Horovitz (2014) recommends art therapist trainees learn the genogram as a part of their training, preferably by doing their own. Although Horovitz (2014) refers specifically to art therapist training in the United States of America, art therapists in other countries have also been exposed to the tool. For example, an autobiographical genogram is the basis of a compulsory assignment in the first year of the Western Sydney University Master of Art Therapy programme.

When tasked with creating my own genogram as part of my training, I balked. It was discomfiting to reduce my experiences, and