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RECENZJE/REVIEWS

Chambon A. (2009). *What Can Art Do for Social Work?* "Canadian Social Work Review", 26, 2: 217–231.

Reviewed by Ana Filipa Rodrigues

This article explores the relevance of art in social work as well as the various cultural connections and practices between these two fields. The author begins the article by explaining that she wrote two versions of it, but in different languages: one in English and the other in French. The two versions, although on the same theme, show different points of view, which complement each other. All this leads the author to challenge the readers to travel through the two texts.

Adrienne Chambon shows how the conversation about the relationship between art and social work has grown and become a subject of interest in recent years. There is an increase in the legitimacy of art research in the social sciences. Among other things, this is illustrated by the *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, edited by Gary Knowles and Ardra Cole. The article under review brings to the discussion a different point of view on this theme, showing "the practice of social work as art, that is, as an alternative to a scientific perspective or at least a direction that moderates the technological impetus of administratively led practices and research" (p. 218).

The text is well-organized, following a logical sequence that begins by referring to the various links joining art and social work. First, social work is described as a cultural practice and then we are given examples of artists and selected artworks which illustrate the influence of art in society. Here we can see the various ways in which social work incorporates art into its practices. The most obvious is art therapy, as a conduit for individual and group transformation. In a community, art practices are ways to mobilize marginal groups to citizenship and to foster activism.

The author explains how she tried to get out of the social sciences in which she was embedded since beginning social work. Resorting to cultural studies, she began to examine the practices of art and works of professional artists. The author makes clear that the line of research she is seeking is not about social work as artistic practice or art

practices in social work. Hence, the author poses the following question "what can the practice of art do for social work?"

Chambon shows how social work can be conceptualized as a set of cultural practices that are social, political, and related to the economy, as well as to personal life. Social work intervenes in the culture of society in any field. Furthermore, one of its main functions is mediation, and artistic practices happen to be mediation activities. To confirm this, the author shows evidence of the implications of art in society. Art transforms the implicit into the explicit. A layered reality forms, being another way of talking about the social world, a strategy to build knowledge that is valued in the social sciences.

The article also notes the differences between social workers and artists claiming that the latter do not aim to provide guidelines as an outcome of their activities. We can see that the purpose of the artists is different: to engage the viewer in making sense of complexity. To pursue this search, and considering that it would help to reflect upon social realities, Chambon chose works by two visual artists, Stan Douglas and Jamelie Hassan. Both artists deal with power relations, the unseen presence, and unheard voices. The author begins by commenting on the artistic works of Stan Douglas, tracing the artist's path.

One of the works discussed by the article's author is a work of documentation and reconstruction in which the artist offers a multileveled view of social dynamics with the past infusing the present. Douglas gathered historical photographs of a site, conducted interviews, and recreated the scene of the 1971 Gastown Riot in downtown Vancouver (led by the city's youth to protest drug laws and increasing drug raids). Social work, too, is based on careful documentation, often from various sources, to formulate assessments of personal and social circumstances. Beyond this work, Douglas showed several photographs based upon historical imagery.

The second artist whose work Chambon analyses in the article is Jamelie Hassan. We can learn from the article that Hassan spent four months as an artist residing in Eldon House, the old, nineteenth century Victorian home of a wealthy family in London, Ontario, which has been turned in to a museum. Hassan's work attempts to address cultural displacement and *metissage*. An example of this intervention in the cultural imaginary is "Trespassers and captives," the result of her residency. In this project, the artist rethought the house in light of her own standpoint about the history of colonial relations.

Regarding Hassan, we can see all the changes that she made in the house – from the addition of large blue glass beads to capture the light to the watercolors adorning the walls painted by the artist. Her oeuvre reflects upon the complicated nature of family history and official stories. She uses stratagems that are appealing through their beauty, but, simultaneously, position us in a contradictory situation: those who observe the space feel as though a participant in it.

Lastly, the author argues that both artists carefully document events, situations, social relations, and institutional practices. They are concerned in their artistic endeavors with understanding how historical sets of power relations are perpetuated or renewed in the public space. The works and interventions of the artworks provoke public reactions.

In the case of Jamelie Hassan, the installation visitors take strong positions in favor or against. In the case of Stan Douglas, organizations are mobilized to work or oppose their interventions.

Overall, this is a very well-organized article that shows how art plays an active role in our culture and in society. The focus of the article is to show the relevance of art in society, as well as to show some similarities between social work and artistic practices. The artwork described in the article appears to share certain characteristics in common with social work. Social work, too, depends upon deliberate investigation and collects documentation. Looking at these aspects, this text can clarify and shed a brighter light on a theme of which people are less aware.

Banks S., Cai T., de Jonge E., Shears J., Shum M., Sobočan A.M., Strom K., Truell R., Úriz M.J., Weinberg M. (2020). *Practising Ethically during COVID-19: Social Work Challenges and Responses*. "International Social Work", 63 (5): 569–583.

Reviewed by: Anna Szargiej

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been a shock to the whole world and has forced all of us to adapt to the "new normal," which involves radical changes in people's lifestyles and a need for practicing social distancing. As these radical measures seem important for saving human lives and trying to control the spread of the virus, it is a fact that they have led many countries of the world to experience an economic crisis and have had a massive impact on our mental health. An insufficient health system, massive unemployment, and poverty are only a few aspects with which almost every country will have to deal in the next months, years or even decades. Some professions are needed and appreciated more than ever during this time, and health care workers are especially sacrificing themselves to fight the virus. As a profession that deals a lot with crises and problems, social work always needs to adapt to new challenges. Since the pandemic is a global challenge that introduces more problematic situations, social work is therefore expected to be in its center.

In the article under review, Sarah Banks and co-authors introduce us to an issue which very directly impacts every social worker these days, namely, ethical practice during COVID-19. The article reports the findings of an international qualitative study, undertaken by a group of social work academics in partnership with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in May 2020. This article is the summary of a lengthier research report which was published by the IFSW (Banks et al. 2020, *Ethical Challenges for Social Workers during COVID-19: A Global Perspective*). The researchers collected 607 responses from social workers from 54 different countries through online and local surveys and some additional interviews. The study method involved a survey with

two open questions in which the participants were asked to describe: 1) some ethical challenges they are experiencing or had experienced during the pandemic; and 2) one particular situation that was ethically challenging for them in their work. The results paint a picture of a few of the main challenges that all social workers from the different countries have experienced – with similarities as well as differences due to individual pandemical regulations in a few countries.

The first three parts of the article introduce the reader to the specificity of ethical issues during these challenging times, the study's aim, and the methodology used to gain global insight of what practicing ethically looks like for social workers during COVID-19. Subsequently, the authors present six key themes, which they identified through their analysis of responses.

The most common challenge that was revealed was to maintain trustful and empathic relationships with the clients while respecting the social distancing requirements. Keeping in contact via phone or the internet was not satisfying for many social workers, who felt unable to evaluate the real conditions of their clients. Another often mentioned challenge was the difficulty in prioritizing different needs of the clients fairly – deciding to whom to dedicate time and to whom to distribute material resources. Other commonly expressed ethical challenges included how to responsibly decide the means by which to provide services; to weigh the needs of the clients against the social worker's own health risks; to decide whether to break governmental rules or to apply professional discretion in situations where policies seemed inappropriate; and to handle their own emotions, stress, and exhaustion under difficult circumstances. Some of the respondents used the questions in the study to also consider what lessons should have been learned for social work during the pandemic and what has to be improved for the future.

For each of these six key themes the authors provide one quote of a participant that stresses the meaning of the ethical challenge described. Each theme vividly illustrates the very committed profession that is social work. Specifically, in the first ethical challenges described, we see the important role which close relationships and regular contact have for practicing social work and how much responsibility has to be borne in caring for others.

The next part of the article explains regional similarities and differences regarding ethical concerns. The researchers received important insight on how distinctive the various circumstances for social work are at this time, depending upon cultural impact, the social welfare system or even access to technology in the specific country. In some regions, social workers were asked to help in basic public health roles and to, for example, help in COVID-19 testing or contact-tracing. This meant that some social workers could not fulfill their fundamental tasks while in other places they did have the opportunity to focus on their vocation. Despite variations in social work during the pandemic, the study revealed that most participants asked themselves very similar ethical questions in considering how to make the right choices in their work.

Finally, the authors describe the conclusions of their research. We read about the concept of "ethical logistics" (p. 576) used in making social work decisions during

COVID-19. It is always a challenge for social workers to take into account the many emotional and material resources associated with each individual case, yet nowadays the ethical processes are more complex and require much more effort and strategical planning. For many people this means additional work, as well as mental and physical stress. The pandemic further exposed existing social inequalities and revealed the groups of people more likely to be affected by these circumstances. In fact, groups with whom social workers had been previously working were the most vulnerable and negatively impacted in this crisis. While the pandemic is a health and economic crisis, it is also one of social justice that discriminates against the weakest among us even more.

These consequences clearly demonstrate that social work has to adapt, rethink, and reconstruct its practice. In a majority of countries, there is a great need for more investment in social services. It is important to focus on strengthening community networks and to get more involved in policy planning, to be able to enlighten others about the best possible strategies for real-life situations. Besides the indisputably essential role of healthcare workers in this pandemic, it is crucial to acknowledge that social work is also a key profession in the fight against the consequences of the virus and to highlight the competencies of social workers. Nevertheless, COVID-19 has exposed many weaknesses of social work practices. Considering that there might be permanent changes regarding certain work circumstances and developments in technology in this field, it is necessary for professional social work practice to be better prepared for the future.

I fully recommend this article because it illustrates how close social work needs to be with the people in society during difficult times, and it perfectly describes the current common global challenges for this profession. The study shows clearly that the pandemic and its corresponding, new regulations have turned the practice of social work upside down. While asking ethical questions and responsible decision-making were always a major part of social work, right now these aspects seem even more stressful. The many different hygiene and safety requirements challenge social workers to sometimes balance their own health risks against their clients' needs and demands. This shows us that solely distance-working from a home office cannot be an option, even if social work may need to adapt somewhat. The article once more reminds the reader that social work is a profession that is closest to society when problems are to be faced. Social workers are often the first ones to see the real conditions of the people and to speak up about what needs to be done to help everyone. Social workers also serve as "advocates" for those discriminated against and excluded from general society.

For now, the end of the pandemic does not appear near, and only time will show how many people will really need the assistance of social workers in the future. Despite growing economic problems and difficult access to the overwhelmed health system, we will all likely recognize the huge impact of social distancing on our mental health. The need for committed social workers will be greater than before the pandemic, and that is why it is extremely important to value this profession more. Practicing social work ethically during COVID-19 is a huge challenge, but who else can undertake it, if not the profession that deals with challenges every day.

Van Leeuwen B. (2017). *To the Edge of the Urban Landscape: Homelessness and the Politics of Care*. "Political Theory", 46 (4): 586–610. DOI: 10.1177/0090591716682290.

Reviewed by: Brygida Piech

For the majority of society, homelessness is a very distant and incomprehensible concept which happens only in pathological environments with which we have no close contact. However, the truth is completely different. Homelessness is a ubiquitous problem that all social groups face. The phenomenon of homelessness, like many other negative social phenomena (e.g., drug abuse, crime, etc.) has existed for a long time. Loss of a home is a deprivation of security and of the ability to satisfy one's needs, including the need for self-development. I think that, in the most general sense, homelessness means the situation of a person who has neither a home nor a place of permanent residence which would guarantee him or her a sense of security; such an individual is lacking shelter from adverse weather conditions and unable to meet basic needs at a level recognized in a given society as sufficient. Homelessness is also a moral challenge with which people from even the most socially, economically, and industrially developed states must cope. Among other things, homeless people have the same right to inhabit public space as people who have their own home.

The author of the article under review states that there should be some kind of homeless shelter in every city. "Otherness" should be allowed, because we never know what has caused a person to live "on the street." Among other scholars, Andrew F. Smith believes that the moral duty of every human being is to accept homeless people and their lifestyle. All of us should be helping whenever this phenomenon develops.

An interesting issue for me in the article is the "differential" approach to this question. Namely, it focuses on showing that it is difficult to accept the "otherness" of the homeless. Even if people would respect them as members of society, it would be difficult to approve of some activities, such as urinating in public, searching for food in garbage, and the like. Being homeless often means being caught in public, even in the most intimate situations. Despite the fact that shelters for the homeless are offered in most cities, many of them avoid such places because of the rules that prevail there (primarily the rule against alcohol consumption). It is only under extreme conditions (most often during winter) that the homeless ask for help in a night shelter.

Despite the fact that homeless people do live in public places (e.g., parks, train stations, main streets, etc.) and formally have the same rights as the rest of society, they do not feel full members of that society. Often the stigma of an outcast hangs over them, alongside the conviction that they cannot participate in common social functions. In this case, the homeless person is not only deprived of a private sphere, but also effectively deprived of the public sphere.

According to the author of the article, over one third of all homeless people are in very bad health. Additionally, the fact that their mortality is almost four times higher

than in the general population is highly alarming. Indeed, homeless people often are alcohol and drug abusers which contributes to their predicament. Among young homeless people there is also a high rate of unplanned pregnancies, as well as a high risk of HIV infection. Such people are also more likely to commit suicide.

I would like to draw attention to the two versions of the liberal approach to homelessness which are noted in the article: minimalist and generous. Jeremy Waldron represents the minimalist liberal approach to the phenomenon. He claims that well-understood liberalism would reject the right of private ownership which limits the exercise of certain basic freedoms (e.g., sleeping, getting food, urinating, etc.). Understood this way, freedom implies that every citizen (including homeless people) can enjoy all rights. Waldron emphasizes that the exercise of freedom is always connected to space, and, therefore, the concept of property – which, in this case, limits space for the homeless – is unlawful. I agree with the author and think that countries need the concept of truly public space which will also meet the needs of the homeless.

One of the questions that we face as a society is a question about justice and social policy: are we ready to tolerate an economic system in which a large number of people are homeless? Unfortunately, the answer is often affirmative. This position can be interpreted as a kind of theory that speaks against political and legal protection for homeless people in many urban centers. This makes it difficult to engage in supportive actions on behalf of homeless people; sometimes there are not many ways by which to improve their quality of life. For example, the state should definitely reject the criminal approach and consider that people simply need space in which to perform necessary, bodily functions. In addition, we can easily improve the life of the homeless simply by providing public toilets. Respect for all people is compulsory and not conditional, but there are situations in which we must consider whether other forms of recognition should not be extended.

The second variant of the liberal approach concerns, among other things, the issue of owning a home, which means the right to exclude those who are not part of it: no person outside the immediate family is entitled to enter our home without our consent. In my opinion, privacy is essential to the development of an intact sense of self, to cultivate a sense of intimacy and identity. One's home provides a space in which basic relationships can develop and deepen.

A generous interpretation of liberalism leads to a different conclusion than the Waldron version. Namely, homeless people have the right to own a home and this should be emphasized instead of the right to live in public places. Yet citizens who, for various reasons, have become homeless often have needs related mainly to this fact. In addition, frequent abuse of psychoactive substances, mental health problems, trauma, and suicide attempts are just some problems that need to be addressed.

Moreover, homeless people often require a large amount of support in such areas as home skills, money management skills, and the formation of social networks with neighbors and other members of society. In this case, the house is an important resource, but, unfortunately, that alone is insufficient in many cases. In terms of a generous

approach, homeless people would live as if their living conditions were a free choice, a kind of lifestyle or the consequence of reckless behavior for which they agree to bear costs. Naturally, many people might ask why the state should provide the homeless with houses, social benefits, or healthcare. Thus, the ethics of caring for homeless people focuses on providing personalized care and assistance in the building and developing of various competencies related to independent functioning as a "legitimate" citizen of the community. Referring, for example, to Polish society, I think that we face difficulties in this regard, but campaigns and programs for the benefit of homeless people are already visible in some cities, such as Krakow. For example, there is "Soup in the Planty" (not far from the railway station) that distributes hot soup every Sunday.

To sum up, the article under review is worth recommending. It describes fairly transparent forms of assistance for the homeless alongside a political approach to this social problem. The author, Bart Van Leeuwen, included simple ways by which to help homeless persons but also encourages deeper reflection on this issue. It is my opinion that everyone should be sensitive to all other members of society – not passing by and ignoring the most needy. Small things, like buying tea or sharing a sandwich with a homeless individual, may seem like an insignificant gesture, but sometimes they can save a life. I also think that social workers have the "power" to teach society that it is worth helping the homeless and all those who are excluded.