

# ADVANCES IN ART THERAPY



**EDITED BY**  
**HARRIET WADESON,**  
**JEAN DURKIN AND**  
**DORINE PERACH**

Wiley Series on Personality Processes,  
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# Advances in Art Therapy

*Edited by*

HARRIET WADESON

JEAN DURKIN

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## *Series Preface*

This series of books is addressed to behavioral scientists interested in the nature of human personality. Its scope should prove pertinent to personality theorists and researchers as well as to clinicians concerned with applying an understanding of personality processes to the amelioration of emotional difficulties in living. To this end, the series provides a scholarly integration of theoretical formulations, empirical data, and practical recommendations.

Six major aspects of studying and learning about human personality can be designated: personality theory, personality structure and dynamics, personality development, personality assessment, personality change, and personality adjustment. In exploring these aspects of personality, the books in the series discuss a number of distinct but related subject areas: the nature and implications of various theories of personality; personality characteristics that account for consistencies and variations in human behavior; the emergence of personality processes in children and adolescents; the use of interviewing and testing procedures to evaluate individual differences in personality; efforts to modify personality styles through psychotherapy, counseling, behavior therapy, and other methods of influence; and patterns of abnormal personality functioning that impair individual competence.

IRVING B. WEINER

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## *Preface*

Art therapy is truly an interdisciplinary profession, encompassing as it does the realms of art, psychology, and therapy. Often it enters the fields of education and social services as well. Each one of these areas is complex and varied. Therefore, it is to be expected that art therapy is a richly diverse field. As such, the profession continues to grow and develop, reaching new populations and challenging art therapists to create new ways of utilizing art for human understanding, treatment, and growth.

It is that challenge this book hopes to address. At the heart of art therapy is creativity, the encouragement to create imagery for healing and growth. By the nature of their work, therefore, art therapists are creative people. But beyond the creativity in work with individual clients and groups, art therapists are creative in evolving their profession. It is this latter creativity that is the subject of this book.

As a young profession, art therapy has evolved considerably since it was established only a few decades ago. As a distinct profession art therapy was developed by Margaret Naumburg and Edith Kramer in New York. It began to achieve wider recognition through their publications in the 1950s. Although there are many and ancient precursors to their work (reaching all the way back to prehistoric cave paintings), these two pioneers, more than any others, created the *discipline* of art therapy. Their work was firmly rooted in psychoanalytic theory, with Naumburg placing emphasis on the free-associative process of that approach and Kramer focusing on another psychoanalytic constituent, sublimation, as it may be achieved through art making. Both women continued to publish as art therapy attracted others to its ranks during the next several decades.

In its early period of rapid growth in the 1960s and 1970s, much of the material published by new art therapists was descriptive in nature, illustrating how art therapy “works.” As the profession proliferated, it expanded beyond the psychoanalytic tradition and treatment settings in which Naumburg and Kramer worked. Art therapists were being hired by geriatric centers, by substance abuse programs, by rehabilitation facilities. New challenges were addressed. Art therapists began to see their work in a much broader perspective. From its beginnings as a treatment modality for the mentally ill or emotionally disturbed, art therapy began to be transformed into a more diverse profession whose foundations are buttressed by many disciplines and whose applications extend into many settings.

*Advances in Art Therapy* has several foci. The first, “New Populations” (Part I), describes work with populations that have been described very little or not at all in the art therapy literature heretofore. The expansion of art therapy beyond its earlier applications in psychiatric treatment settings and schools for the emotionally disturbed or mentally handicapped has broadened the profession significantly. In many ways, art therapy’s advances into new areas of work have paralleled the broader recognitions of groups in need of human services, such as refugees, battered women, incest victims, bereaved children, and others. Each of the identified populations described in this section has its own special needs. As a result, it has been necessary for art therapists to become knowledgeable in special areas (such as brain injury, Alzheimer’s disease, incarceration) and to develop innovative ways of designing art therapy to address the particular problems of these new populations.

A related area of concern is “New Methods” (Part 2). As art therapists have ventured into new settings, they have encountered new problems to be addressed through art therapy. These have stimulated the development of new ways of working. Additionally, the creative possibilities inherent in the work itself have challenged art therapists to be innovative in developing new ways of facilitating the enabling power of art to further human growth. In doing so, some art therapists have utilized that important constituent of creativity, synthesis. Several of the chapters of this section describe the development of a new process formed from merging art therapy with another mode of expression, such as computer animation, photography, or psychodrama. In other instances old methods are used in new ways or for new purposes. The refinement of the art-therapeutic process is one of the richest realms of art therapy, spurring the profession toward its greatest creative potential.

Finally, as the profession broadens through work with new populations and the development of new methods, so must “Art Therapy Training” (Part 3) evolve to prepare the art therapist to understand the field’s expanding frontiers. The chapters of this section, unlike the others in the book, however, address not particular client populations or methods of working, but rather the professional personhood of the art therapist. Embodied in all the chapters of this book by its many and varied authors is the manifestation of the art therapist’s essential creative and reflective resources. The final section of the book presents training developments that encourage the sort of responsibility that will further the field’s evolution.

HARRIET WADESON

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## PART 1

# New Populations

HARRIET WADESON

Although the profession of art therapy is both small and young, it is extraordinarily broad. From its early roots in the traditional psychiatric settings of hospitals, clinics, and schools for the emotionally disturbed, it has branched out into rehabilitation, custodial, medical, educational, and other human services. Art therapy has also entered the arena of personal growth workshops, where enhanced living, rather than treatment, is the goal. In this section of the book, we are provided with examples of still broader horizons in art therapy.

It is noteworthy that the "New Populations" section of this book comprises over half its chapters. Art therapy's greatest movement appears to be horizontal at this time. We are still a young profession, sufficiently unformed to be able to adapt art therapy's essential potential for enhancing self-expression, understanding, and creativity to the varying needs of widely diverse populations who can benefit from its services. Some of the chapters in this section might also be grouped in the "New Methods" part of the book, as their authors have developed innovative methods of working to suit the needs of these new populations. They are placed here, however, because their thrust is a focus on the very special needs and circumstances of these groups, of which the art therapist must be especially aware and sensitive.

For example, art therapy is just beginning to reach the refugee populations of this country, populations that often face enormous difficulties. The book begins with Deborah Golub's moving account of her work with adolescent Cambodian refugees in her chapter "Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Art Psychotherapy: Cambodian Survivors of War Trauma." She pointedly alerts art therapists to the significant problems in attempting to apply a western clinical approach to peoples from other cultures and highlights the necessity for therapist values clarification and understanding of the client's culture. In addition to cultural differences between client and therapist, for this population there is the further difference that few American clinicians have experienced the extensive trauma that survivors of the Pol Pot regime have endured. Since there are often no words to convey the suffering, imagery

can serve as a useful aid to communication and integration of the experience. Golub's suggestions apply to work with victims of other severe traumas as well as to work with other refugees.

Shirley Thrasher, Evelyn Yee, and Sarah Zahnstecher also highlight the need for cross-cultural awareness in their chapter entitled "West Indian Children and Their Families: Art Therapy with New Immigrants." The cultural conditions of this population are different from those of the Cambodians, as are their problems. Although adjustment to a new culture is paramount for both, the family situations are quite different. The Cambodian adolescents with whom Golub worked are "unaccompanied minors" who are being integrated into American families, having lost their natural families and been taken in by foster parents of the host culture. West Indian families, on the other hand, often immigrate in a piecemeal way so that years may separate the migrations of family members to the United States. In both populations there may be severe family adjustment problems in addition to immigration problems. These first two chapters delineate the difficulties refugees face, difficulties that art therapy can help to alleviate. These authors show us how.

Separation in the family is an issue for bereaved children, another group of children who have recently been identified as a specific population in need of human services. As bereavement counseling is becoming recognized as an important service to those suffering a death in the family, particular attention is needed for the confusion, guilt, and fear children may bear when a parent or sibling dies. The editors have combined material submitted by Marge Heegaard, about special groups she established for bereaved children at an elementary school, with reports of the work with children by Grace C. Zambelli and Elizabeth Johns Clark at a hospice. This chapter, "Art Therapy for Bereaved Children," provides a discussion of the special needs and developmental issues facing children suffering a family death, followed by case illustrations from both the elementary school and hospice. Art therapy appears to aid in the integration of the loss, and, it is hoped, helps to prevent further emotional difficulties for individuals who have suffered the death of a family member in their childhood. Few programs such as those established by these authors have been described in the literature heretofore.

Family issues are also a focus for the troubled women for whom Mary Cairns and Rosemary Lagorio developed art therapy programs. As a mother of a young child herself, Cairns became interested in the plight of psychotic women with recurrent hospitalizations who were repeatedly separated from their children and had to relinquish their mothering responsibilities to others. The needs of this particular group have hardly been identified and have not been addressed in the art therapy literature at all heretofore. In her chapter, "A Mothers' Art Therapy Group in a Short-Term Psychiatric Setting," Cairns discusses how group art therapy was beneficial to these mothers in providing them support around their feelings about the circumstances of



their mothering. She found that a prominent issue for these women was their struggle with their own mothers.

In addition to work with victims of political violence (Cambodian), this section presents several chapters on work with victims of domestic violence. Although battered women have been identified as a segment of the population needing human services, to date there have been no reports in the literature of art therapy programs for this population. Rosemary Lagorio, in her chapter "Art Therapy for Battered Women," describes her work at a shelter where she designed innovative art therapy activities to help the women recognize the elements of the "fit" between themselves as victims and their abusers. Through the art they also became aware of their often unacknowledged anger. The end result was that the women left the shelter feeling more empowered and confident in directing their own lives.

Work with other victims of family abuse, in the chapter "The Arts in Therapy with Survivors of Incest," is described by Julie Serrano. Here, the author presents various techniques of art making, body work, and guided imagery through the stages of a group's growth in which its members moved from incest "victims" to "survivors." Dealing with their many feelings in this way, group members progressed from fragmentation toward integration.

Moving from victims of illegal perpetration to alleged offenders, the chapter by Elizabeth Strait Day and Gregory Thomas Onorato, "Making Art in a Jail Setting," provides us an inside view of incarceration, a perspective from which most of us are shielded. The authors describe the substantial challenges this setting imposes and the ways that both individual and group art therapy addressed these problems, often in spite of overwhelming odds.

Additional new populations that are responding to art therapy are individuals with severe medical conditions. Moving beyond their traditional positions on hospital psychiatric floors, art therapists have found that other medical patient populations can benefit significantly from art therapy. Particularly in realms of self-image, problem solving, and cognitive functioning, art therapy plays a major role.

Penny H. Baron's "Fighting Cancer with Images" and Mari Marks Fleming and Carol Thayer Cox's "Engaging the Somatic Patient in Healing Through Art" explore the exciting possibilities of influencing life changes through modifying imagery. Rather than simply understanding the art expression diagnostically as a reflection of the patient's life situation, these art therapists encourage their patients to modify their imagery in a healing or soothing way. Although art therapists have encouraged emotional change wrought by the art-making and reflection process, Baron and Fleming and Cox encourage modification of the art for the purpose of effecting positive physical as well as emotional change. It is exciting indeed to anticipate the possibilities suggested in these two chapters for further developments in which visualization and its concrete manifestations in art expression can profoundly shape the course of physical and emotional change.