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PULA, CROATIA

Co-Creating Safe Moments: Engaging Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Parents in Their Child's Art Therapy Processes – Returning to Basic Humility and Reflectiveness

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Many displaced families have faced traumatic experiences before, during, and after migration. This can impact children's ability to adjust, including their sense of safety and trust in their new (evolving and ever-changing) communities. In art therapy, structural, language, and cultural barriers challenge practitioners' communication with parents. As a result, parents' needs and opinions may be overlooked, making it harder to engage them in their child's art therapy process. However, many practitioners recognize that involving parents is crucial for positive change in the child's life. Including displaced parents' perspectives on their children's adjustment and healing is vital for developing culturally humble art therapy tailored to each family's needs.

This study used a phased, multi-sample, mixed-methods approach to examine how art therapists engage refugee and asylum-seeking parents in host countries in the Global North, and how these parents perceive these efforts. Following the Medical Research Council's guidelines (Shahsavari et al., 2020), the study focused on the views of creative arts therapists and Syrian, Sudanese, Afghan, and Ukrainian refugee parents to refine practice elements for targeted interventions. Data were collected through focus groups, interviews, surveys, and parent-child art workshops, mainly using qualitative thematic analysis with some quantitative data. Results show language and cultural barriers significantly hinder parental engagement. Providing consistent, high-quality modality-specific supervision and trained interpreters is essential for creative arts therapists to engage refugee parents effectively. Therapists experiencing shared trauma with the populations they serve need specialized support mechanisms. On the path to engaging parents, a humble approach that



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includes repeated creative attempts to seize moments of connection is essential and must be revisited and reflected upon repeatedly.

Reference

Shahsavari, H., Matourypour, P., Ghiyasvandian, S., & Nejad, M.G. (2020). **Medical Research Council framework for development and evaluation of complex interventions: A comprehensive guidance.** *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 9(1), 88.

Biography

Nehama Grenimann Bauch is a PhD researcher at Brunel University London, studying art psychotherapy with refugee and asylum-seeking children and their parents. She holds an MA in Art Therapy from the University of Haifa, Israel, and a BFA from the Academy of Fine Arts, Florence. With over seven years of experience in Berlin working with at-risk children, migrant and refugee populations, and parents, she's also active in art and healing projects like the Ellen Frank Illumination Arts Foundation's Cities of Peace Illuminated. Currently, she provides MHPSS consultancy for NGOs and lectures at the Metáfora School of Art Therapy in Barcelona.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Grenimann Bauch, N. (October 8th, 2025). Paper Presentation: **Like in a frozen pause: Parent-child joint paintings by Ukrainian refugee mothers and their children.**

'Children's Ego-Documents as Sources for Historical Research' – a conference by *the Center for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin*. Berlin, Germany

Hackett, S., Havsteen-Franklin, D., Haeijen, S, Grenimann Bauch, N., Wouters, H., Power, N. (September 12th, 2024). Panel Presentation: **Navigating Complexity in Art Psychotherapy Intervention Development: Where are we now and where do we need to go?** *The Seventeenth European Arts Therapies (ECArTE) Conference: Singing about the dark times – Creation and Resistance in the arts therapies*, Artevelde University of Applied Sciences, Ghent, Belgium.



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Grenimann Bauch, N. (2022). **Art Therapy with Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children and their Parents: Preliminary Findings of a Thorough Literature Review.** In C. Pracana & M. Wang (Eds.), *Psychological Applications and Trends 2022* (pp. 245-249). In Science Press. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.36315/2022inpact058>