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Using the Visual Arts to Support the Development of Young Refugee Children: A Puppet-Making Workshop

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USING THE VISUAL ARTS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG

REFUGEE CHILDREN: A PUPPET-MAKING WORKSHOP

by

GHENWA EL SOUKI

Under the Direction of Melanie Davenport, PhD

ABSTRACT

The growth of developing young children is highly determined by the kinds of experiences they encounter in their social and cultural environment early on in their lives, and arts exposure in early childhood plays a crucial role in this process. Many children do not have access to such learning experiences – particularly in the case of young refugees who would spend the first few years of life in environments they are not familiar with. The visual arts can act as a tool that brings refugee children closer to meaningful and nurturing experiences that can facilitate their integration within the new host community. This thesis examined the role of the visual arts in the development of young refugee children, and various resources were explored to develop a process-based puppetry workshop designed to be implemented with preschool-aged refugees, aimed at supporting their growth with specific regards to the cognitive, communication, and social-emotional domains.

INDEX WORDS: Visual arts, Puppetry, Storytelling, Refugee children, Child development

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DEDICATION

To my baby girl, Milia, who has joined me on this journey every step of the way and made it all the more challenging and worthwhile, may your life be full of creativity and inspiration. To my favorite person and the love of my life – my husband, Salim – I could not have done it without your constant motivation in all that I do, thank you for your unconditional love and support. To mom and dad, all that I am today is because of you – thank you for (literally) everything! To Nizar and Ghida, so grateful to have been blessed with such an amazing brother and sister – I love you all beyond words.

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1   INTRODUCTION

"The ability to experience the full range of qualities that constitute the empirical environment is directly related to the functions of our sensory system … But of course the activation of our sensory system also depends upon our being in an environment that possesses the qualities to which our senses are responsive." (Eisner, 2002, p. 20). All our interactions with the world around us come in the form of responses to our perceptions of it; how we perceive, interpret, and respond to the world, the ideas and feelings we project and express, hence become the product of our cognitive processes and our social-emotional interactions with our environment. These processes are influenced by various factors including the people with whom we interact, the available resources around us that allow for certain experiences, and the sociocultural aspects shaping our surroundings (Vygotsky, 1987). This is particularly true the development of young children whose growth is highly determined by the kinds of experiences they encounter in their social and cultural environment. One such environment that has a main influence on young children's development is the school setting. The interactions, experiences, and content material that young children are exposed to at schools and in the classrooms has a major role in shaping their intellectual, social-emotional, and physical development; and these can start as early as preschool years. Subject areas making up school curricula aim to provide children with a well-rounded educational experience that is supposed to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed for future success in life. The visual arts is one of those subjects.

1.1   Child Development in Art

Extensive research in the fields of art education, learning psychology, and child development propose various views about the significance of the arts in education, and the impact that the learning of arts has on developing young children. As young children pass

through the different stages of development they acquire and master various skills at each level in each developmental domain (Squires & Bricker, 2009; Voress & Pearson, 2013). Similarly, children pass through different stages of development in art, and in turn, the arts contribute to the growth and mastery of various skills along the way. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1970) examine the developmental characteristics in children that take place at each stage cognitively, physically, and socially/emotionally in regards to the emerging artistic skills at each point; they consider art to be a means of expression for young children that not only becomes their language of thought, but also facilitates adults' understanding of children's growth both from a developmental point of view, as well as aesthetically and creatively. Consequently, researchers propose that, "The arts constitute a tool to explore pre-verbal functioning, both to gauge psychological well-being and to interact with the inner world through the playful and spontaneous possibilities for self-expression that the arts can enable" (Atkinson & Robson, 2012, p. 1349).

Others also advocate the idea that the arts can provide means for development of skills across various domains, especially in terms of supporting social-emotional growth by increasing motivation and interpersonal skills (Brown, 2013; Brown & Sax, 2013; National Endowment for the Arts, 2015), encouraging communication (Chang & Cress, 2014; Duh, 2016), and promoting cognitive development in children (Baker, 2013; Efland, 2002; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1970). "The arts provide children with experience, meaning, and development of thought. In particular, they create meaningful links with concepts being taught through active learning activities" (Baker, 2013, p. 2). However, what about young children who do not have access to such learning activities; would their home environment compensate for these experiences that others are exposed to in a constructive educational setting? Even more so, the population of refugee children who would spend those first few years of life in environments they are not familiar with,

and where they might even lack the social and communication skills required to functionally integrate into the society they are contained within, yet are separated from – how can they be brought closer to meaningful and nurturing experiences, particularly through the visual arts?

1.2   The Visual Arts and Refugee Children

Countless conditions and circumstances may account for children's lack of meaningful learning experiences in early childhood, one of such reasons being displacement – particularly in the case of refugee children of displaced families who are forced to leave their country and often find themselves in places where they lack the emotional, linguistic, and most often economic resources they need to facilitate their integration into a new community. These circumstances place young children at a greater risk of developmental delays. Research has shown that the arts can be of great importance to the growth and support of young refugee children (Cumming & Visser, 2009; Rousseau, Drapeau, & Lacroix, 2005; Wellman & Bey, 2015), particularly in regard to their cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional development. Furthermore, the art process can also serve as a means of dealing with young children's post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety resulting from violence and trauma (Ugurlu, Akca, & Acarturk, 2016). Seeing that young refugee children may miss out on many educational opportunities early on in life, the arts can offer various means by which these children may engage in developmentally appropriate experiences that promote their learning and bridge the gap between their living environment and the school setting. Moreover, the arts not only offer a space for learning and development, but also "provide a means by which children are able to express or process negative emotions … [as well as] facilitate improvement in emotional understanding and regulation" (Brown & Sax, 2013, p.338).

1.3   Purpose of the Research

My background as a designer in visual communication and my interest in early childhood development has led me into investigating the role that the visual arts play in early childhood. However, a couple of distinct experiences directed me towards focusing on young refugee children in particular. A few years ago, I had the chance to work with young children from an orphanage back in my home country [Lebanon] through an art workshop organized by a local non-profit organization. The workshop engaged these young children in drawing and painting activities through which the children expressed their emotions, narrated their stories, or projected their imaginations visually on paper. The paintings and drawings were often accompanied by children's oral narratives when prompted to elaborate on their artworks; this created a space that provided them with the opportunity to imagine, express, and share freely in a socially safe and interactive environment.

Another more recent experience that I had was here in the United States, through my volunteer work at a school in Atlanta that serves students from grades three through twelve with limited or interrupted formal education – primarily non-English speaking students or English language learners. At this school, I had the opportunity to work with Arabic-speaking refugee children by helping with teaching them English. The students' ages ranged from 15 to 18 years old, and all had little-to-no knowledge of the written and spoken English language. While I was able to communicate with them in Arabic, using visual aids along with the verbal supported students' understanding of the English language, in regards to both the receptive and expressive language. This included recognizing and decoding the letter forms in reading, vocabulary acquisition (receptive), and verbal communication in the form of narration (expressive).

These experiences encouraged me to explore the role that visual communication through visual arts exposure can have on young refugee children, specifically with the Arabic-speaking population in mind for this thesis. Furthermore, considering the lack of literature in Arabic on the topic of art education with young refugees – and with my bilingual background in both Arabic and English – I hope to contribute Arabic language resources on the subject matter by eventually translating this research.

The literature I explored around the topic gives an overview of the theories around child development, particularly in the visual arts, and the way that the arts can shape young children's growth in the various developmental domains. In this research I looked at the role of the visual arts in the cognitive, communication, and social-emotional development of young children, and examined the impact that art exposure and experiences can have on refugee children from displaced families. These concepts were investigated through the review of literature I made on the topic, and from there I designed a guidebook (Appendix) that helps develop a workshop that aims to engage young refugees in art experiences – specifically puppet-making – designed to stimulate cognitive processes and promote communication and social interactions through creativity, exploration, and storytelling.

The workshop was designed based on developmentally appropriate practices and experiential learning through the visual arts for young preschool-aged children ranging between three and five years of age. An experiential learning approach to the art making process gives way for the learner to construct knowledge, skill, and value from direct experience (Wurdinger, 2005). Another inspiration behind this project was guided by the Reggio Emilia approach to learning (Hong, Shaffer, & Han, 2017; Santìn & Torruella, 2017), an approach that places the

learner at the center of the learning experience, with goal-oriented methods that identifies the problem and formulates possible learning outcomes anticipated from the experience.

The project focused on two main criteria, the first pertained to *accessibility of resources*: the activities I designed took into consideration that materials needed for the projects are easily available and/or acquired with little or no cost; and the teaching resource itself is freely available through diverse digital and physical channels such as educational online platforms and non-profit organizations. The second criteria targeted *age-appropriate developmental skills*: that addresses all areas of children's development through integrated approaches to learning, with particular focus on cognitive, communication, and social-emotional growth through the visual arts.

1.4   Definition of Key Terms

Refugee children: refer to children, or children of families, who have been forced to flee their country due to violence, conflict, or fear of persecution (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). The term "displaced" is used at some instances herein, where *displaced* children (or families) in this case refer to the *refugees* who have crossed an international country border and are at risk or have been victims in their country of origin; they are not to be confused with *internally displaced persons* who are forced to flee their homes for various reasons but stay within their own country borders (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010).

Age-appropriate skills: refer to the milestone skills that children should be able to perform between three and five years of age (Squires & Bricker, 2009; Voress & Pearson, 2013), taking into account that each child is unique and may – or may not yet – be able to perform certain tasks at the given age.

Developmentally appropriate practice: in reference to art education, refers to integrating the visual arts in a curriculum that meets the needs of children with an attention to children's general and individual needs, interests, and development (Colbert, 1995).

Experiential learning: based on David Kolb's "Experiential Learning Theory," which emphasizes the fundamental role that experience plays in the learning process (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 1999).

The following will expand on the workshop and discuss how the theories and practices herein can be implemented in puppet-making activities with young refugee children aimed at encouraging their cognitive skills, communication, and social-emotional expression. This is based on the literature covered around the topic and the exploration of different resources on using process-based arts with young children.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the impact that the visual arts can have on young displaced children, we first need to have an understanding of the different theories of child development in art (Efland, 2002; Gardner, 2006; Kindler & Darras, 1997; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1970); the role that the learning and making of art plays in child development cognitively (Eisner, 2002; Thompson 1995), linguistically (Chang & Cress, 2014; Duh, 2016), and socially-emotionally (Brown, 2013; Brown & Sax, 2013; National Endowment for the Arts, 2015; Upitis, 2011); in addition to the role the visual arts play with refugee children in particular (Cumming & Visser, 2009; Rousseau, Singh, Lacroix, Bagilishya, & Measham, 2004; Rousseau et al., 2005; Ugurlu et al., 2016; Wellman & Bey, 2015). The literature reviewed below looked at the process of storytelling through the visual arts (Agosto, 2013; Parsons, 2016) using puppetry as a medium of expression (Butler, Guterman, & Rudes, 2009; Dyson, 2018; Irwin, 2018). This approach was inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to learning (Hong et al., 2017; Santìn & Torruella, 2017) based on developmentally appropriate practices (Colbert, 1995; Freedman, 1997; Griebling, 2011; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009) and the experiential learning process (Kolb et al., 1999; Wurdinger, 2005) in art making that guided the development of the guidebook.

2.1   Theories on Child Development in Art

Many theories and views have been set forth in attempts to explain child development in art. While some of those theories shared a universal view of artistic development, others attributed factors that influence artistic development in young children – particularly the social and cultural influences from the child's environment.

2.1.1   *The universal view*

Piaget's theory of cognitive development proposed that children progress through distinct stages that shape their developmental process, and that knowledge acquisition is the result of empirical interactions with one's environment through the senses. Piaget views the child as an active learner with an innate ability to interact with and explore the surrounding environment and acquire knowledge as a result of these experiences – what is referred to as discovery learning – claiming that "the principles that govern cognitive development are the same as those of biological development" (Efland, 2002, p. 24). In this regards, children of the same age are expected to meet certain skills and criteria at each stage in their development, which may may also include their artistic skills.

Lowenfeld and Brittain (1970) also look at child development in art as a stage by stage process, outlined in their stages theory of artistic development. According to Lowenfeld and Brittain (1970) "Art for the child is something quite different. For a child art is primarily a means of expression. … A child is a dynamic being; art becomes for him a language of thought." (p. 6). The process of learning, and the creative experience, takes shape through the interactive relationship between the child's internal senses, and the external social or educational context that the child is surrounded by. Through the senses, children can become active makers of their culture rather than passive viewers of it; and children need to be involved in these experiences in order to grow on every level. Art in particular can contribute to developing their sense of self-identification and self-expression, which in turn allows children to identify with others, as well as enables them to view themselves as an important ingredient in the experience. The stages theory of artistic development offers an in-depth understanding of the developmental stages in art that children go through from early childhood through adolescence, examining the

characteristics of the visual expressions children make at each stage, as well as the cognitive processes that accompany them. Like the Piagetian theory, the artistic stages theory also places a particular emphasis on visual expression as a product of the senses and overlooks the social and cultural influences on children's artistic development.

2.1.2   *Sociocultural influence*

The social and cultural context through which learning takes place has an immediate effect on child development and learning. According to Vygotsky (1987), the establishment of higher-order cognitive functions in children begins in children's social interactions with the adults in their surroundings, where adults can scaffold learning in a way that pushes children to think critically and promotes deductive reasoning beyond the limitations of their independent knowledge. This is known as the *zone of proximal development*, and it is where learning takes place most effectively; this where children learn new skills through *mediated* learning as adults engage children in socially interactive learning experiences. Mediation comes as one of the foundations to a meaningful teaching-learning experience, where social and cultural tools (interactions, signs, symbols, etc.) in the child's surroundings bridge learning experiences and influence their cognitive development.

Following the sociocultural theory, Kindler and Darras (1997) indicate the problems with the approach of the stage theories to artistic development. According to the authors, the "stage theories of artistic development are characterized by linearity, which does not account for the diversity of work produced within particular stage boundaries" (Kindler & Darras, 1997, p. 18). Furthermore, the emphasis on the psychological determinants of artistic development disregard the influence of the cultural and social context on development. The authors propose a model to artistic development that takes into account the versatility of the definition of art, which includes

the sociocultural theoretical foundations that assumes artistic development to be shaped by the interactive social environment in which learning takes place, as set forth by the Vygotskian theory (Kindler & Darras, 1997).

2.1.3   *Multiple intelligences*

Howard Gardner (2006) developed the theory of multiple intelligences, which proposes that intelligence is not accurately measured by the traditional notion of standardized testing, but people rather have nine different intelligences: visual-spatial; verbal-linguistic; logical-mathematical; musical-rhythmic; bodily-kinesthetic; interpersonal; intrapersonal; naturalistic; and existential intelligence. Gardner's theory is not meant to confine learners to one model of intelligence, but proposes that learners may use different modalities, or a combination of intelligences in processing different types of information and solving problems. Similarly, art encourages children to use and implement different intellectual and physical modalities in the creative process. The learning and making of art uses different approaches to find creative solutions to ideas and problems, which as a result incorporates several, if not all, the bodily senses while engaged in artistic activities.

2.2   Visual Arts and Cognitive Functions

The visual arts call children's attention to particular qualities of their surroundings and help them learn how to experience the unique features of the world they inhabit. Accordingly, perception through the senses involves thinking, and visual representations created of the world hence become a response to properties extracted from nature rather than copies of it. Kindler and Darras (1997) identify another foundation of their model of artistic development, which is the semiotic foundation that sees all art as a communication potential conveyed through the use of icons, symbols, and signs.

Eisner (2002) also examines the complex processes that take place between perception, interpretation, and creation, and believes that the arts have a role in transforming consciousness starting from the very process of experiencing the environment. Therefore, the process of representation begins with an idea and transforms the contents of consciousness into a concrete depiction of that idea mediated through some form, and according to Eisner (2002) "the selection of a form of representation is a choice having profound consequences for our mental life" (p. 8). Consequently, the arts (a) elicit various cognitive functions that help us learn to notice the world, (b) provide permission to engage the imagination as a means of exploring new possibilities, (c) invite the development of a disposition to tolerate ambiguity, to explore what is uncertain, and to exercise judgment free from prescriptive rules and procedures, (d) act as vehicles through which inscriptions of complex ideas occur, and (e) explore our personal ideas, values, and emotions.

Thompson (1995) gives various examples of how the arts can promote critical thinking, spatial reasoning, and problem-solving skills. These include art criticism, art appreciation, art history and its connections to world history and events, two-dimensional drawing of perspectives and proportions, and three-dimensional modeling with clay – to name a few – all involve complex cognitive processes dealing with perception, interpretation and internalization of concepts, and creation of new ideas and emotions represented through visual imagery and symbolic forms.

2.2.1 *Language development*

Social interactions play a major role in early language and cognitive development in young children, where the process of language acquisition occurs through the language inputs children are exposed to during social interactions with adults or events in their environment. Zauche, Thul, Darcy Mahoney, and Stapel-Wax (2016) discuss the significance of these social

interactions as an essential component to language nutrition, and the role of the adult in promoting language development during the first three years of a child's life. The arts offer such a space for children where they can engage in socially interactive activities whether with other children their age or with the adults in their environment, such as teachers or caregivers, which in turn encourages their expressive language and communication skills. Chang and Cress (2014) explore how the visual arts can promote language development in young children, and provide opportunities for dialogue between adults and children about their drawings. Young children use the visual arts as a means of communicating meaning about their own feelings and thoughts of the world around them, therefore, conversations about the visual arts can facilitate oral language development in young children, with children's drawings serving as topics of the adult-child reciprocated dialogues.

Another form of engagement with the visual arts and its benefits on early language development is examined in Duh's (2016) study on art appreciation and the developing communication skills in preschool-aged children. The study demonstrated how preschool children's descriptive responses to works of art promoted communication and facilitated their ability to link the visuals they saw to the vocabulary they knew. In the art appreciation process, young children learn to describe not just what they see in the works of art but also how to look at the world around them as a whole; and with the appropriate adult guidance, they thoughtfully learn how to shift "from articulating what they feel, to developing the appropriate vocabulary for describing these feelings" (Duh, 2016, p. 74).

Seeing that the majority of refugee children are either English language learners, or are unfamiliar with the English language altogether, interactions and conversations through visual art experiences can support these young children's language acquisition and communication skills.

2.2.2   Social-emotional development

Young children who have lived through rough circumstances, as with the case of refugee children from displaced families, are placed at a greater risk for developmental delays. According to Tough (2016) studies have shown that:

Harsh or unstable environments can create biological changes in the growing brains and bodies of infants and children. Those changes impair the development of an important set of mental capacities that help children regulate their thoughts and feelings, and that impairment makes it difficult later on for them to process information and manage emotions in ways that allow them to succeed at school. (p. 4)

The social-emotional domain is another developmental domain that the visual arts support in early childhood. Research shows that arts-integration in preschool years can foster social-emotional competence in young children by promoting emotional experiences and facilitating learning (Brown & Sax, 2013). According to Brown and Sax (2013) the arts offer children from diverse backgrounds a space to share their lived realities, this process may contribute to improvement in understanding and regulating emotions and "provide a means by which children are able to express or process negative emotions" (p. 338). Upitis (2011) looks at the role of art education in the development of the whole child and the benefits that early experiences with the arts can have on young children's social skills. The art learning and making process includes metacognitive skills such as "paying attention, using feedback effectively, problem-solving in a curricular context, taking risks, co-operating, and setting goals" (Upitis, 2011, p. 20), all of which support the development of self-regulatory skills, promotes co-operative behavior, develops a sense of connection with others, and contribute to improvements in self-esteem.

Other literature on the social and emotional benefits of the arts in early childhood is reviewed by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (2015), a gap-analysis focusing on over a decade of research pertaining to the social-emotional outcomes of arts participation. The report highlights the positive association between arts participation and the different domains of child development, including social skills development, as well as emotional development and regulation. This ties back to the processes involved in experiencing the arts, which include openness to new ideas, making connections with other people, places, and concepts, and prompting views from multiple perspectives. In addition to these, arts integration in early childhood also promotes pro-social behaviors such as helping, sharing, cooperation, and empathy (NEA, 2015), as well as "reductions in internalizing behaviors (i.e., shyness, inhibitions) and externalizing behaviors (aggression)" (Greene & Sawilowsky, 2018, p. 216).

2.3   Visual Arts with Refugee Children

While the visual arts have shown to have a positive impact on the lives of young developing children in general, they also play an important role in the population of refugee children in particular. The circumstances and conditions that refugee children pass through leave many negative repercussions in their present and future lives (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998; Joshi & Fayyad, 2015). The following literature looked at some issues that face young refugees, and the role that the visual arts can have on their early developmental stages and well-being.

2.3.1   *Issues facing refugee children*

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018) define a refugee as:

someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or

violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion,

nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they

cannot return home or are afraid to do so.

The impact of these harsh circumstances render extremely complicated implications for young vulnerable children who still lack the physical and psychological maturity to process such challenges (Joshi & Fayyad, 2015). More so, these circumstances are often accompanied by a combination of any – or all – of the social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and community factors that further contribute to the complex psychological effects that displacement can have on young children and their families. International and local aid from the hosting communities commonly provide food, shelter, clothing, and medical services; but the emotional and psychological needs of refugee children are often overlooked, which can lead to serious long-term consequences if left unmet (Joshi & Fayyad, 2015).

Ajdukovic and Ajdukovic (1998) elaborate on the negative impact that war-related stress can have on the psychological well-being of refugee children, among other effects on their early development. The stressors from their lived experiences can significantly impede children's emotional and psychosocial development, which in turn impacts their outlook towards their future life as a whole. Homes are not the only thing that these young children lose, they are also deprived of their family, relatives and friends, "familiar environment, routine of an educational setting, social network, and usual patterns of family life among others" (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998, p. 187); additionally, they experience distortion of community balance, increased prejudice toward other social groups, and issues of integration into the new hosting environment.

2.3.2   *Refugee children and education*

Another main issue that refugee children face is access to education, and effective integration in a new educational system when these children actually do attend school. According to Ajdukovic and Ajdukovic (1998) even when refugee children are eventually

enrolled in schools, most of them face many challenges in adapting to a new educational environment. This may be due to various reasons, including having poor conditions for learning, psychological difficulties, language barriers, and isolation and exclusion, all of which impact children's chance for an effective educational experience (Ager & Strang, 2008; Ingram, 2016). Nonetheless, schools remain the optimal place where refugee children may have a chance at meaningful connections with people in the local host community, and opportunities for building relationships important for integration. Delaney (2016) looks into the role that the learning of languages in a classroom setting can play in helping young refugees cope with their new conditions. The author states that having a class to go to can offer children with a safe place to share their stories, for "language is the medium we use to express ourselves (…) [and] a language class gives you the opportunity to tell your story" whether through using visual means such as puppets and drama, or other indirect means that allow children to share their stories and emotions without feeling as vulnerable.

Following the issues discussed above, the visual arts can act as a medium that provides young refugees with the space to express themselves, while facilitating their learning experiences, encouraging their language acquisition, and supporting their social-emotional development among other benefits. The section that follows will look at the literature around using art with refugee children and the positive outcomes that arts participation can have on their early development and emotional well-being.

2.3.3   *Using the visual arts with refugee children*

Considering the distressing conditions that young refugee children pass through very early on in their lives, and the missed developmental opportunities that may occur as a result, art experiences can serve as a means of dealing with post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety

resulting from violence and trauma (Ugurlu, Akca, & Acarturk, 2016). According to Cumming and Visser (2009), refugee children often leave their homes having experienced a series of traumatic events, and arrive in the host country feeling isolated and distressed. Moreover, it may take young refugees a good couple of years before they are able to master the expressive language of the new host country, and the visual arts can serve as an important means of expression that helps them communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, in addition to enabling successful social interactions with others and promoting a sense of self-confidence and individuality (Cumming & Visser, 2009). Wellman and Bey (2015) illustrate the challenges of displacement and transitioning that refugee children face and state that:

> The visual arts can provide refugee students with constructive platforms for developing the confidence and life skills needed to acclimate both in and out of school. The art room has proven to be an especially effective place for immigrant and refugee students to exhibit an awareness of their new environment... and to confront disturbing issues and use problem-solving techniques through art making processes. (p. 36)

Ishaq (2016) also narrates her experience with young refugees in Yemen during a four-day art workshop where children were engaged in drawing and painting activities. The workshop offered the children with a safe space to share their stories and express their feelings freely and at their own pace. Most drawings exhibited images of fear, pain, and anxiety as a result of the traumatizing war experiences, even though the children refrained from explicitly sharing these painful experiences verbally. As the workshop progressed over the following days, the children became more interactively engaged not only in the art activities, but also in play and social interactions with the other children – despite the differences in the children's socioeconomic backgrounds that normally would not allow them the chance to engage in activities together

(Ishaq, 2016). The art workshop gave them a space to express themselves, share their stories, socialize with others, and connect to their inner feelings and the world around them.

Other art workshops with refugee children were carried out by Rousseau and colleagues (2005, 2004), where creative expression activities were used with children "to help them to construct meaning, to structure identity, and to work through their losses and reestablish social ties" as well as "provide an interesting way of working preventively in a noninvasive manner with children from many different cultures and backgrounds" (Rousseau et al., 2004, p. 235). Furthermore, the designed art activities served as a means by which young refugees can engage in meaningful experiences that would somehow allow them to bridge the gap between their culture of origin and the new host community. The workshops also showed that creative expression can result in improved self-esteem, uninhibited expression of emotions, and facilitate the process of resolving inner conflict in refugee children (Rousseau et al., 2005); with particular focus on the positive outcomes of the process of telling stories through visual expression (Rousseau et al., 2004). The several art activities described in the workshops took into consideration the pairing of "a non-verbal means of expression appropriate to the developmental level of the children with a means for verbal expression" (Rousseau et al., 2004, p. 237), and had one factor in common: the sharing of personal stories.

2.3.4   *Storytelling through the visual arts*

Drawing on the examples above, one particular activity that almost always accompanies young children's experiences with the arts is storytelling – whether visually through children's drawings, or orally when children talk about and describe what is going on in their artworks. Storytelling through children's art may also have significant benefits on their social-emotional development, language acquisition, as well as their learning efficacy in general. Agosto (2013)

explores the subject matter in a study where children listened to oral storytelling, and were asked

to respond visually through a drawing, which they in turn explained in an oral narrative

themselves. According to the author, the process by which children construct and share stories

supports children's learning as well as two types of social-emotional benefits, the first one

pertaining to self-exploration, and which involves personal connection and personal expression;

the second relates to interpersonal skills such as relationship building (Agosto, 2013).

Additionally, a wide range of other skills is also involved in the process of listening to and

participating in storytelling, which comprise of the use of imagination in creating mental and

visual images, developing communication skills, promoting critical thinking, nurturing creative

abilities, strengthening sequencing skills, and building self-confidence.

Parsons (2016) looks at the role of storytelling in the lives of refugee children, where

"[displaced] children tell stories of home, of survival, exile and journeys to safety, stories of loss

and separation and arrival in a place so far from home" (p. 19). According to the author, telling

stories within a classroom community promotes courage and inspiration, fosters connections, and

engages children's interest. The visual arts can provide a space for young refugees to share their

personal stories within a safe and receptive environment, a process which can help them

overcome their distress and find a sense of agency in their lives. Moreover, storytelling allows

children to connect to their inner self and to others in a way that not only develops their "sense of

personal identity but also a sense of shared humanity and empathy" (Parsons, 2016, p. 21).

2.3.5   *Using puppetry with refugee children*

One way to elicit storytelling through the visual arts is by using puppets. Puppetry is a

versatile medium that can be adapted to children of different ages (Irwin, 2018) and engages

young children in fun play that helps them identify and externalize their problems (Butler et al.,

2009). According to Butler and colleagues (2009), puppets are an effective tool that allows children to use their imagination in order to objectify and communicate negative experiences; by using and talking through puppets, children are able to distance themselves from the problem and find alternative methods by which they can externalize their feelings – in other words, the puppet "[gives] voice to the problem" (p. 230).

Irwin (2018) explains how preschool-aged children can be easily engaged in puppet stories, and usually include lots imagination due to young children's uncertainty about what is and is not real. As a result, using imagination and playing out thoughts and feelings through puppets comes more naturally to younger children; and in the case of young refugees, puppetry becomes an ideal medium for them to share their stories and express their pains, fears, and experiences. Children are not the only ones to benefit from puppet making and play, but this process also gives adults an insight into children's ideas and emotions and facilitates conversations between children and adults, as well as amongst other children (Dyson, 2018). Accordingly, "when children tell stories, insights can be gained into the child's frustrations and inner conflicts and how you can support them" (Dyson, 2018, p. 143).

2.4 Developmentally Appropriate Practices

When planning and implementing instructional practices, one must take into consideration that the content material meets the needs of children based on their developmental levels and unique differences. Colbert (1995) elaborates on the importance of integrating the visual arts in a developmentally appropriate curriculum that is implemented in a comfortable and playful setting with an attention to children's general and individual needs, interests, and development, emphasizing learning as an interactive process by providing choices among a variety of activities and materials, and time to explore through active engagement.

Learning activities and materials should be concrete and relevant to the lives of young children, with social and cultural considerations that, in this case, account for the needs of refugee children in particular. Accordingly, Freedman (1997) believes that artistic development is truly fostered through instruction that considers the relationship between social life and learning, and takes into account the influence of society and culture on children's art and development – be it the social conditions that has shaped the early years of young children who have lived through distress and trauma in their country of origin, or the conditions that followed in their subsequent displacement into a new culture altogether. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009) outlines three areas of knowledge to consider when working with children:

(1) What is known about child development and learning—referring to knowledge of age-related characteristics that permits general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children's learning and development.

(2) What is known about each child as an individual—referring to what practitioners learn about each child that has implications for how best to adapt and be responsive to that individual variation.

(3) What is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live—referring to the values, expectations, and behavioral and linguistic conventions that shape children's lives at home and in their communities that practitioners must strive to understand in order to ensure that learning experiences in the program or school are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child and family. (pp. 9-10)

Alternatively, Griebling (2011) points out four developmental needs that aim at fostering children's self-confidence and self-worth within their environment. These include *mastery*, or

children's need for competency in everyday skills; *belonging*, pertaining to children's desire to be part of a social group or community; *generosity*, which is children's need to give back or contribute to this community which contains them; and *independence*, which refers to "the need for a sense of autonomy and control over aspects of their lives. This includes independence not only over their external life, but also their internal life—independence in thought and the ability to manage emotions" (Griebling, 2011, p. 7). The various processes involved in the making and learning of the arts allow young children to meet these developmental needs by providing them with opportunities to explore new materials and means of expression (mastery); socializing with other children in play and making personal connections with others (belonging); creating pieces of art that children can share with their peers and community (generosity); and open access to materials and the use of the visual arts as a language of expression gives children autonomy in their choices and approaches to solving problems (independence). All of these developmental processes that take place in creating art are made possible when children are given the space to learn through experience.

2.5   Experiential Learning Through Art-Making

According to the *experiential learning theory*, learning is defined as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb et al., 1999, p. 2). Several key components shape the learning experience in ways that make the acquisition of skill and knowledge effective and meaningful.

> Inquiry is initiated with a problem that perplexes the student and is followed by observing the variables associated with the problem, developing a plan, testing this plan against reality to discover a solution, and reflecting on the results to determine whether there are other or better solutions to the problem. (Wurdinger, 2005, p. 8)

A first step by which this approach to learning can be implemented is by reversing the traditional method of instruction through information assimilation, and instead, start the learning process by presenting children with questions and problems. As a result, children will approach learning with critical questions and thoughts of possible solutions through experiences that are relevant to them, as opposed to rote learning that may further distance them from subject matters.

Another reason that makes experiential learning effective is freedom. Wurdinger (2005) emphasizes the importance of guided freedom in empowering students to take control of their learning, explore their own interests, identify problems that are relevant to them, search for solutions, and discover functional knowledge for future learning. As such, students can approach topics from a problematic point of view, formulating questions around them, exploring solutions that are relevant to their own experiences and interests, and engage in the art-making process critically and creatively. This process would typically follow a set of criteria and objectives to guide students towards the anticipated learning outcomes, yet still allow a room for freedom and exploration in their choices and modes of implementation through art-making.

2.6   The Reggio Emilia Approach to Learning

Following the principles outlining developmentally appropriate practices and experiential learning, the Reggio Emilia approach aims at designing a learning environment tailored towards children's observed and anticipated interactions with this environment based on their needs and interests. This approach to learning promotes social and cognitive development in young children and their potential to making relationships, building autonomy, and engaging in creative expression and active learning (Hong et al., 2017). Having an "understanding about how to facilitate children's thinking and create an environment that lends itself to research, problem solving, and group interactions" based on children's unique interests is a key component in a

Reggio Emilia inspired learning experience (Hong et al., 2017, p. 636). Similarly, Santìn and

Torruella (2017) elaborate on the importance of the Reggio Emilia approach in helping children

in communicating their ideas through different means of representation, with art being one major

language in this process that allows children to observe and rearticulate their daily experiences,

ideas and feelings through creative visual expression.

   Guided by the above literature, the following chapter outlines the methods I used in the

design of the puppet-making workshop for young refugees, followed by a discussion that

expands on the activities and processes included in the workshop guidebook.

3   METHODOLOGY

Drawing on the above literature and the developmental benefits that the learning and making of the arts can have on young children in general, I examined the following question: How can art experiences through puppet-making be tailored towards the population of young refugee children in ways that support their cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills?

3.1   Procedures

Methods took into account developmentally appropriate practices for refugee children between three and five years of age, factoring in the psychological and cultural backgrounds – including considerations for the distress and trauma that these children might carry with them, and how the resource might be able to provide them with a space to express and connect with their emotions in a creative and safe environment. The resource is in the form of a workshop that centers on the process of storytelling through puppet making. Refugee children who have passed through traumatic events may have a hard time expressing their pain, and most often they may even lack the language and communication skills needed to verbalize their emotions. The designed activities aim to encourage children to express their thoughts and share their stories visually as well as verbally through puppet-making while engaging them in meaningful learning experiences and constructive social interactions.

3.1.1   Age-appropriateness

The resource considers the developmental skills that children three to five years of age are able to perform (Squires & Bricker, 2009; Voress & Pearson, 2013), keeping in mind that each child is unique in his/her abilities, and the skills he/she may, or may not yet, have acquired at that stage may vary. Nonetheless, the milestones outlined in these references served as general guidelines when designing the activities and highlight the developmental skills that the activities

target and support – mainly addressing cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills. The following gives an overview of some of the skills that typically developing children should begin to master (at the different stages) between three and five years of age:

Cognitive: children will start recognizing the function of objects; retelling stories from picture books; engaging in pretend play; drawing people with more recognizable parts; differentiating between real and make-believe; and becoming capable of anticipating what will happen next.

Communication: children will be able to answer questions about a story they were told; use regular past tense form; demonstrate emotions by using facial expressions and body language; generate more complex sentences; have an improved understanding of time concepts; give more than two descriptive words that characterize an object; and participate in group discussions.

Social-Emotional: children will start sharing toys with others; participate in group games and activities; volunteer for tasks and show pride in accomplishment; talk about their feelings; offer to help others; and have the appropriate responses to social situations.

Other guidelines that underlie the designed workshop are derived from the Reggio Emilia approach, which views young children as active and inquisitive learners who are curious about the world surrounding them and have the potential to learn from their surroundings through interactive experiences (Stoudt, 2018) – an approach where developmentally appropriate practices and experiential learning lie at its heart. Children are capable of using a variety of symbolic and graphic modes as a visual language to represent their ideas; the Reggio Emilia approach advocates this means of communication with discovery learning, through hands-on experience, by exposing children to "a wide variety of educational opportunities that encourage self-expression, communication, logical thinking, and problem-solving" (Stoudt, 2018). In order to design the appropriate learning environment, it is important to understand the educational,

psychological, and sociological influences shaping young refugee children's lives; and take into account four main factors defined by this approach: *children's interest*, *relevance of projects*, *using multiple forms of representation*, and *encouraging collaboration* (Stoudt, 2018). These methods allow children to have a better understanding of – and more meaningful connections with – the concepts being explored, in addition to promoting problem-solving skills, communication, and interpersonal skills through active learning.

3.1.2   Feasibility

Another main criterion is accessibility to, and affordability of, materials. The activities are designed in a manner that can be implemented using found/recycled materials and other basic tools with very little-to-no cost. These may include recycled paper, cardboard, plastic bags, containers, fabric, yarn, rags, and scraps, etc.; and require basic age-appropriate tools like child-safe scissors; tape or glue; and some crayons or markers. Apart from the physical material, the resource clearly outlines other processes that take part in the activities; in the case of using storytelling through puppetry, these include using verbal prompts and questions to encourage children to engage in oral descriptions and narrations. The actual art-making process is based on free exploration and experimentation with materials and processes, as opposed to a step-by-step instruction; yet adult guidance is imperative to set objectives, and scaffold children's learning for more meaningful experiences. The aim is for the activities to be easily implemented with refugee children beyond the workshop, such as with the adults or caregivers in their natural environment, educators, volunteers, or non-profit organizations that might be interested in using the resource in interventions or workshops of their own.

3.2   Implementation

The following gives an overview of the resources that I looked at as references and directions in guiding the design of the resource, as well as the format and plan for implementation. The resources include process art experiences and how they can support preschoolers (Bongiorno, 2014; Cherry, n.d.; Columbus Museum of Art, 2018); using the arts with young children (Isbell & Raines, 2007; Kindler, 2010; Koster, 2012); and art lessons and resources for preschool aged children (Kinder Art, 2018; PreKinders, 2018).

3.2.1   Format

The resource is in the form of a digital Portable Document Format (PDF) guidebook outlining the project/activities that will take place in the workshop. The resource is aimed at educators, volunteers, and persons from non-profit organizations, who might implement these activities through their own developmental interventions and workshops with refugee children and their families. The content of the booklet includes a brief introduction outlining the criteria by which the resource is guided, such as specifying the targeted developmental domains, age-appropriateness, learning methods and objectives, and accessibility. The core content of the booklet describes in detail the activities that will be implemented in the workshop, including the processes that will take place at each stage, the materials and resources needed for each activity, and the prompts that will guide the learning process. The resource includes sample images of the processes in the form of infographic illustrations. The actual booklet was executed digitally using a combination of design software such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and Adobe InDesign. The final format, however, was exported as a [reduced file size] PDF document that makes it compatible with different devices and platforms, and easily accessible for downloading and/or printing.

3.3   Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Guided by the literature review and the resources explored in the former sections, the activities were designed with the following objectives in mind:

- Engaging children in developmentally appropriate activities relevant to their interests

- Taking into consideration the sociocultural backgrounds as well as the experiences that refugee children have passed through

- Targeting children's cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills through creative and interactive learning experiences

- Adopting multiples modes of representation through experimenting with materials, making art, narrating stories, listening to those of others, making connections, and having a better understanding of one's inner self and the surrounding

- Providing children with a fun and safe space where they are able to participate in meaningful experiences while having the opportunity to express their ideas, emotions, fears, and hopes – and most importantly, tell their stories through art

3.3.1   Implications

Following this research and the design of the resource, future steps could include three aspects: execution of the project, dissemination, and translation into other languages. In terms of execution, the first step will be finding local host communities or organizations through which the workshop might be implemented with refugee children. This will be to examine whether this approach will yield to the anticipated learning experience, and in fact present itself as a developmentally engaging workshop for young refugee children. In addition to observing children's interaction with the subject matter, the art-making process, the resulting visual and behavioral outcomes, and the discussions that will follow, which will guide in the assessment of

the resource and how the process might be further improved, or otherwise modified, for an optimal learning experience.

The second aspect will deal with the dissemination of the resource. The plan is for the resource to be freely distributed through different channels in the aim of it reaching other people (educators, volunteers, or non-profit organizations) that would be interested in using it in different interventions or workshops with displaced children. These channels will include both physical and digital media, such as online platforms through which the resource might be downloaded in the form of a printable PDF booklet, which will outline the procedures needed to recreate or readapt the project.

The third implication will pertain to the universality of the resource. As mentioned earlier in the purpose of the research, one of the motives that interested me in taking on this topic is the lack of literature in Arabic around using the visual arts with refugee children of displaced families. As a future initiative, I hope to translate this research into the Arabic language as a contribution to the body of Arabic-speaking people – and more so, into other languages in the intent of reaching out to an even broader community of people.

4   THE WORKSHOP

This section discusses the structure of the workshop that is presented in the form of a guidebook (Appendix) outlining the main ideas and criteria needed to understand and implement the puppet-making activities with refugee children. The guidebook includes a general background about using the visual arts with young refugees, the choice behind using puppetry as a medium of expression, the activities designed for the workshop, and supporting references and resources.

4.1   Guidebook Structure

The workshop guidebook is meant to serve as a complete reference for making puppets with young refugee children. The aim is not to provide step-by-step instructions on merely executing an art project, but rather to offer its users a brief background about (a) the issues facing refugee children, (b) the benefits of using the visual arts with young refugees, and (c) how art activities can be tailored towards and adapted to this particular population. In this case the workshop is puppet-making, but these principles can also extend to other art mediums (drawing, painting, clay modeling, etc.), all of which can promote creativity, storytelling, and freedom of expression, and support the same developmental skills in young refugee children. Accordingly, the guidebook is outlined in the following manner:

About the guidebook: outlines the purpose of the workshop, the principles by which the design of the activities was guided, the target audience towards which the workshop is directed, and further supporting resources.

Visual arts with refugee children: gives an overview of the issues facing refugee children, the significance of using the visual arts in supporting the development of young refugees, and the target skills that the activities in the workshop are designed to promote, with particular regards to the cognitive, communication, and social-emotional domains.

Why puppet-making: highlights the benefits of using puppetry as a medium of expression with refugee children, and the storytelling process it elicits, which can help children externalize their problems while engaging in positive quality experiences. Additionally, this section describes the learning outcomes anticipated from the designed activities.

Activities: includes (a) a list of materials, which suggests the kind of resources that can be used in the activities, however, the materials are not limited to this list, keeping in mind the use of resources that are affordable and easily accessible, in addition to being age-appropriate and safe for the target age-group; (b) three puppet-making projects (cardboard tube puppet, two-dimensional puppet, and paper bag puppet), illustrated steps of the execution process, and adaptation of material and implementation; (c) examples of prompts and questions that can be used to facilitate the storytelling activity following the puppet-making; and (d) documentation and some of the limitations to the workshop in terms of material availability and language barrier, and how adaptations may be implemented otherwise.

References: includes a list of references on the theoretical and practical research behind the workshop, and a list of resources on using puppets with young children as well as resources on art projects in general with preschool-aged children.

Regarding the guidebook format, the content was executed digitally using a combination of design software including Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and Adobe InDesign. These were used for both the infographic illustrations and image/text layout throughout the pages. The final format of the guidebook was exported as a [reduced file size] PDF document to make it easily accessible and compatible across different devices and platforms, and small enough as a file-size for users to download and/or print affordably in black and white.

4.2   The Workshop Activities

The guidebook includes three main puppet-making activities that can be implemented with young refugee children. Each activity is explained in detail in terms of materials needed, illustrated steps of execution, variability of implementation, and adaptation of materials in case of very limited availability of resources. A single activity can be presented in the workshop, or a combination of two; the choice of activity/activities depends on the availability of resources, as well as children's preferences and skill levels that might determine the representation they wish to work with. Accordingly, even when presenting one of these activities, it is preferred to give the children the option of a simpler adaptation to accommodate for their individual differences. Adults can also assist children in executing the more challenging steps either personally, or by pairing the younger children in the group with older children who may help explain and demonstrate some steps.

The activities here present different kind of puppets and are not limited to specific characters to keep the options open. Nonetheless, since the possibilities of representation are numerous and may vary considerably, during the workshops adults can give children a theme to work by and that can help keep their thoughts and options more focused within the parameters of that specific theme. For example, adults may specify the type of puppet (e.g. animal puppets, monster puppets, imaginary friends, etc.) or the theme can be presented in the form of sharing a story at the beginning (e.g. the puppet came on a trip from outer space, the puppet is going on an adventure in the jungle, etc.), consequently children can imagine characters that would fit within these stories and which will also guide the theme of the storytelling activity afterwards.

Schaefer and Drewes (2018) identify six main types of puppets: (1) hand puppets, (2) marionettes, (3) shadow puppets, (4) muppets, (5) dummies, and (6) finger puppets. Considering

the given age group this guidebook is designed for – and the level of technical and conceptual complexities involved in each of the puppet types mentioned above – hand puppets were chosen as the main type of puppets to work with in this resource. The reason behind this mainly pertains to hand puppet-making being both age-appropriate in terms of preschoolers' cognitive and motor skills needed for execution, as well as being easily implemented in terms of materials and techniques needed. Schaefer and Drewes (2018) describe hand puppets as "lightweight, comfortable, highly portable, relatively inexpensive, and easy to operate by people from early childhood to old age" in addition to them being "the simplest, most versatile, and most popular type of puppet" (p. 7).

4.2.1   Activity 1: Cardboard tube puppet

The first activity is a cardboard tube puppet that can be made using either the center tube of a toilet/kitchen paper roll as a base, or can otherwise be substituted with a paper cup if the former materials are not available. The form and size of the cardboard tube or paper cup makes it practical for young children to work with and manipulate as they can easily hold it by hand or steadily place it upright on a surface as they are working. This type of three-dimensional puppet allows the children to think about all the aspects and details of their character where they would be working all around the cardboard tube or paper cup and looking at their puppet from more than one perspective.

4.2.2   Activity 2: Two-dimensional puppet

Activity two is a two-dimensional puppet that can be implemented in two ways: either by using pieces of cardboard that can be put together to form the body of the puppet, or by using a paper plate where the single round form makes up the puppet's body. In both cases, this kind of puppet can be very imaginative and creative as children work with unrealistic (geometric) forms

to make up their character. Furthermore, this specific type of puppet makes it very feasible to implement with minimal availability of resources as children can play around with the forms simply by experimenting with and shaping the cardboard pieces as they imagine it to make up the body, and the puppet's elements and features can be drawn on using a single marker or crayon if other scraps and materials are not available.

4.2.3   Activity 3: Paper bag puppet

The third activity is a paper bag puppet that allows children to place their hands in the bag to manipulate and control their puppet. Children will have the bag's surface as the base/body, which they can color, paint, draw, and/or collage on. Extra elements can also be easily added to this puppet – as per the example illustrated in the guidebook – where children can cut out other forms to add ears and arms per say, and other details. With the paper bag puppet, children have both the front and the back to work with allowing them to think about how they can carry the design to the back side of the bag and imagine what the back of their puppet might look like. This type of puppet can be very fun and amusing for children as they will be able to make the puppet seem like it is actually moving its mouth when talking as they open and close their fingers together inside the bag's fold. This activity can also be implemented using a sock, in this case it is better to use white school glue on the fabric base to secure the elements and other materials added onto the puppet.

4.3   The Puppet-Making Process

While each activity may have execution steps specific to the type, form, and material of that puppet, the general steps outlined herein are common between all three activities. The steps particular to each puppet are presented in details in the guidebook (Appendix).

With all three puppets, children can start with coloring the base (or body) of their puppet with markers (or paint if available), they may also collage pieces of colored paper or tape on it to customize the background. Afterwards, adults can prompt children to think about the main features of their puppets; these can be made using a variety of materials such as buttons for eyes, yarn for hair, ribbons or pipe cleaners for arms and legs, etc. But in the case where variety of materials is very limited, all features and additions can be drawn either directly on the body or on separate paper, then cut out and pasted on the puppet. While at this point some children may not have yet identified what/who they are planning to represent through their puppet, adults can encourage imagination and critical thinking in the process by asking questions or sharing stories that prompt children to think about what features they can add to make their puppet more personalized to a specific theme.

In the case of the cardboard tube (or paper cup) puppet and the two-dimensional or (paper plate) puppet, children can use a popsicle stick or paper straw at the end and tape it on the inside of the tube, or the backside of the flat puppet, to make a handle with which they can hold and control the puppet when playing with it afterwards. For the paper bag (or hand-in-sock) puppet, children will have to open the bag from the bottom and place their hands all the way in to control the mouth movement of their puppet.

Following the puppet-making activity, the workshop is concluded with a storytelling activity where children will share their puppets with the group and tell their stories through pretend play or a puppet show. The details of this activity is outlined below.

4.4   Prompting Play and Storytelling

Storytelling through puppetry is the highlight of this workshop. For these activities to be most effective, adults should encourage both verbal and nonverbal means of expression in the

art-making process and free play activity that follows. Adults can scaffold learning by guiding children through the art-making process, but also by giving prompts and asking questions that motivates the children to talk about their puppets and share their ideas and stories.

This step is an important part of the process not only for each individual child to express his/her ideas and emotions, but also for the children to listen to each other's stories and feel like they belong to bigger group. In addition, storytelling allows adults to understand what the children are thinking and feeling in order to provide further engagement and support as needed. It is important to note, however, that the role of the adult in this case is not as an art therapist, these questions are merely meant to encourage free expression and conversation amongst the children in ways that promote their communication and support their social-emotional skills, as well as engage the children in fun and creative experiences within a positive and safe environment. Should the art bring about negative or traumatic experiences, it is advised to seek professional support from therapists, counselors, or social workers who are specialized to deal with these situations should they arise.

Taking into consideration the children's social and cultural backgrounds, examples of prompts and questions that may be asked in the process can include:

- What is the puppet's name, why does it have [a specific feature/choice of representation]?

- Where did the [puppet's name] come from? Where does it live?

- Adults can share a personal or fictional short story about a character who had been on a journey, then ask children to share the story of their puppet and the journey it has been on.

- Who is/are the [puppet's name] best friend/s?

- What is the favorite thing that the [puppet's name] likes to do? Adults can also share personal stories to give the children examples and encourage responsiveness in return.

- Adults can also encourage two or more puppets to talk to each other, as each other questions, share stories, or collaboratively perform a little activity/show.

In many cases, adults may not even need to prompt children to communicate. Puppet play is fun, and young children will usually be excited to play with their puppets and make up stories and scenarios in pretend play either on their own or with one another. Hence, since the play aspect comes naturally to young children, they will most likely initiate conversations amongst themselves throughout the process without much hesitation. The art-making process itself will also encourage verbal expression where the children may describe what they are doing, ask for materials, observe works of other children and show their own work to others.

4.5   Documentation

Observation and documentation is an integral part of this workshop and its effectiveness. Noting how the children interacted with the materials and activities being presented to them helps adults understand what what most engaged the children. Furthermore, documentation of the applied activities becomes a sort of data collection of the repeated workshops that can provide useful information on what were the most effective aspects of the workshop and what learning outcomes were common or recurrent from one application to another. This highlights which steps of the activities were most successful and which could require further refinement and/or adaptation in the future.

Such documentation can be in the form of note-taking and sample photos of the artworks and processes. However, having an official consent from parents, guardians, or other respective responsible personnel is crucial before recording or sharing any information about a child, in addition to respecting every child's privacy and anonymity in the case of recording and/or sharing any data.

4.6   Workshop Limitations

The primary limitations to the activities designed in this workshop may include availability

of materials and language barrier.

4.6.1   Availability of materials

Despite having designed this workshop with accessibility to free and affordable materials

as a main criterion; I recognize that in some cases, there might be a lack in the amount or

diversity of found objects to be used in these activities. Nonetheless, it is possible to go through

all the processes outlined in the workshop and target the same learning outcomes with very few

resources. Even in the case where scraps and versatility of found objects are not attainable, these

activities can be implemented simply by having three things: a base to work with (e.g. any found

cardboard), a single marker, and adhesive tape. Children can still visualize their ideas by folding

or ripping out shapes from the cardboard, putting them together to form a body, and drawing the

elements on them to personalize their puppet character. This not only encourages further

creativity by showing the possibilities that can be made even with the least resources available,

but also motivates the parents to engage their children in similar positive and nurturing

experiences on their own no matter the limitations.

4.6.2   Language barrier

There is a high chance that many young refugee children (and their families) are English

language learners, or are not familiar with the English language altogether. It would be helpful to

ask for volunteers who speak the children's native language for assistance in the implementation

of the workshop; or for the English-speaking adults to have a list of commonly used words in the

native language as a reference to support the demonstrations and guidance. However, even in the

absence of such support, this workshop can still render effective and beneficial outcomes for the

young refugees' language development. Adults can model examples and behavior for the children, and the art-making process will encourage conversations amongst the children themselves who might share a common language and would therefore be able to communicate and understand each other. Furthermore, the interactive processes involved in these activities will also encourage children to connect and reciprocate communication with the adults, which even in the absence of a common language, communication is still supported and promoted using visual aids and minimal verbal expression. This will still elicit the desired learning outcome despite the language gap between the children and the adults. Moreover, considering that the age group of this workshop include three to five-year-olds, older children may be paired with the younger ones, or English language learners may be paired with non-English speakers, in order to help them in the process by translating and explaining the steps in their own language and/or assisting in the execution of some of the more challenging steps.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis examined the question of how the visual arts, in this case through puppet-making, can contribute quality experiences to the life of young refugee children in terms of promoting their cognitive, communication, and social-emotional development. The research findings not only supported this concept, but also showed how the visual arts can provide children with a safe space to constructively express their feelings and ideas in ways that encourage creativity and meaningful learning in the process. These findings were also supported by an informal trial I carried out with a three-year-old using the methods and approaches detailed herein, the puppet-making process and outcomes are shared in the 'reflections' section below. This informal trial and the resources I reviewed on the topic, along with my personal background experience, guided the development and design of the guidebook for developing a puppet-making workshop with young refugees, which specifically targets young children's cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills through puppetry. The methods outlined in this thesis set the parameters by which the guidebook was developed, and the discussion section elaborated on the processes involved at every stage of implementation. However, moving forward, there remain a few points to take into consideration with regards to (a) the anticipated outcomes, (b) adaptations across different age groups and languages, and (c) research limitations and future implications.

5.1 Anticipated Outcomes

When presented with a variety of materials, children will usually be excited to experiment and play with them and will therefore initiate the art-making and storytelling process quite easily. However, adults can guide these processes and model steps along the way to support the understanding and learning of children. Adults can also share their own stories and show the children sample puppets and how they are made, keeping in mind to present them with a variety

of options and to encourage freedom in choice of material and representation. Still children may have different approaches to the art-making process. Some children may start by adding the main features to their puppet and then coloring in the background and adding different elements, while other might start more vaguely and then personalize their puppet with the main features. Similarly, children may choose what character they want to represent from the very beginning and start talking about it and describing it as they create their puppet accordingly, while others may start creating their puppet with no prior intentions and then name or identify what/who their puppet is afterwards during the storytelling activity.

Whatever the approach that children choose to implement, it is important for adults to encourage creativity and critical thinking along the way. Asking questions, modeling behaviors, and prompting children to pay attention to details and consider various possibilities in the art-making process can promote effective learning and meaningful experiences. The same applies to the storytelling activity, where children will be excited to play with their puppet through pretend stories and scenarios. Taking into consideration children's sociocultural backgrounds, adults can play along with the children's cues and ask them to elaborate more on their character and story, making children feel safe to share within the group and encouraging freedom of expression – all of which support the targeted cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills.

5.2   Adaptations Across Age Groups and Languages

This thesis and workshop were developed with the population of preschool-aged, Arabic-speaking refugees in mind, however, the guidebook itself is not specific to a certain population of refugee children. This workshop can be adapted for refugee children of older ages and across different ethnic backgrounds.

In terms of age adaptation, puppetry is a medium that engages children of all ages (Irwin, 2018), the same activities can be adapted in skill level and complexity to target middle school-aged children and young adolescents. Using the same resources and criteria, children of different ages can experiment with these materials to create their works of art and share their own stories visually and verbally. Nonetheless, the approach to the puppet-making and storytelling activities will have to be tailored towards the developmental levels of each respective age group with regards to their cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional skills.

With respect to language adaptation, the guidebook is general in that regard and does not target a specific group of language speakers. The guidebook itself can be translated into other languages and used with different populations of refugee children depending on who is using the guidebook and/or where the workshop is being implemented geographically. The same methods and approaches can still be applied in this case, but adapted into different languages to target various populations of people as needed, as well as taking into consideration the sociocultural differences and backgrounds of each group.

5.3   Limitations and Future Implications

One of the limitations to this resource pertains to the children's experience with the art-making and storytelling activities. This resource aims at providing young refugee children with a fun and safe space to create and express freely, and engage in art-making activities in the hopes that it brings some positivity and quality experiences into their lives. However, in some cases the expressed art or stories may potentially bring about traumatic experiences and emotions, where further support might be needed. This workshop is not intended as an art therapy resource, nor does it substitute the need for professional support and resources in cases where children might be emotionally affected as a result of sharing their fears and pains through the art. It is advised

professional support is identified to address such situations should they arise; these may include social workers, specialized personnel from non-profit organizations, or school counselors if implemented in a school setting.

Another limitation to this research concerns the implementation of the workshop and the anticipated outcomes. In this thesis I studied the literature around the topic and designed the workshop accordingly in the format of a guidebook. However, considering the limited time I had to complete this work, I have not had the chance to actually implement this workshop with refugee children. Beyond the theoretical basis and personal experiences on which this guidebook was designed, it is pivotal that the next step focuses on disseminating and implementing the workshop to examine whether the methods will yield to the anticipated learning outcomes. This will start with making the guidebook available online for free in a downloadable and printable PDF format for any persons or organizations who wish to use this resource in their own developmental interventions with young refugees and share their experiences.

Another approach would be to find local host communities or organizations who might be willing to put this workshop to the test, and allow me take part in the implementation of the activities. This would give me the opportunity to have first hand data collection by observing children's interactions and learning experiences with the different activities throughout the process, which will guide in the assessment, refinement, and further adaptations of the workshop in the future. Further implications will also include translating this resource into the Arabic language as a contribution to the body of Arabic-speaking populations, and into other languages in the intent of reaching out to an even broader community of people in the future.

5.4   Reflections

I had the chance to implement the cardboard tube puppet activity with my three year-old relative in an informal trial. The child I worked with does not fit the demographic profile discussed herein, he is a typically developing bilingual child that understands and speaks both English and Arabic, and comes from a stable and enriching surrounding environment with significant exposure to various early developmental, educational, and creative experiences. Nonetheless, this trial allowed me to reflect on the implementation process with the target age-group both technically and conceptually, as well as the effects of using puppetry as a visual medium of expression with very young children in general. With regards to both these aspects, the trial resulted in positive outcomes that supported my research question that puppet-making promotes young children's cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills while contributing quality experiences to their life.

Two main facets were involved in the activity: (1) the puppet-making process, and (2) the pretend play and storytelling that followed using the puppets. During the puppet-making activity, I observed the child's interest and enthusiasm as his puppet was gradually taking shape. He would talk about what he is doing and the features he plans to add to it, describing shapes and colors as well as how he wants to apply them. Another aspect to this first part of the activity pertained to the practicality and technicality of the materials, it showed that this type of puppet and the basic materials used can be easily manipulated by young children to visualize their ideas. It also showed some of the steps and techniques that render challenging for that age group, such as cutting out more complex forms, gluing smaller elements on a surface, as well as fully understanding or following instructions.

With regards to the puppet play and storytelling activity that followed, the outcomes supported the literature and anticipations discussed in this research. There were different intermittent periods of puppet play, where each time the child would assign a different character to his puppet; he would refer to it as either an extension of himself, or other familiar people in his environment. Two main themes dominated his stories and pretend play. The first was directly associated with and derived from the actual physical space he was in at the time, describing what the puppet is doing based on present events and the surrounding environment. The second, and more important, story he shared manifested a negative experience that had taken place in his preschool class some recent time ago. Through the puppet, in a light and playful manner, the young child was able to express an emotional experience that he might have not otherwise shared as easily or as openly.

These direct observations and interactions I experienced in this trial gave me valuable insight on both technical and conceptual considerations while developing the activities in the guidebook. In this research young refugee children were the target population, but this experience reflected the effectiveness of implementing these activities with any child who might have had a vulnerable experience of any sort. Moreover, it validated the positive outcomes of using puppetry as a visual medium with young children to promote certain developmental skills and free expression of feelings and ideas through fun play and creativity.

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APPENDIX: WORKSHOP GUIDEBOOK

A GUIDEBOOK TO PUPPET-MAKING WITH YOUNG REFUGEES

*developed and designed by **Ghenwa El Souki***
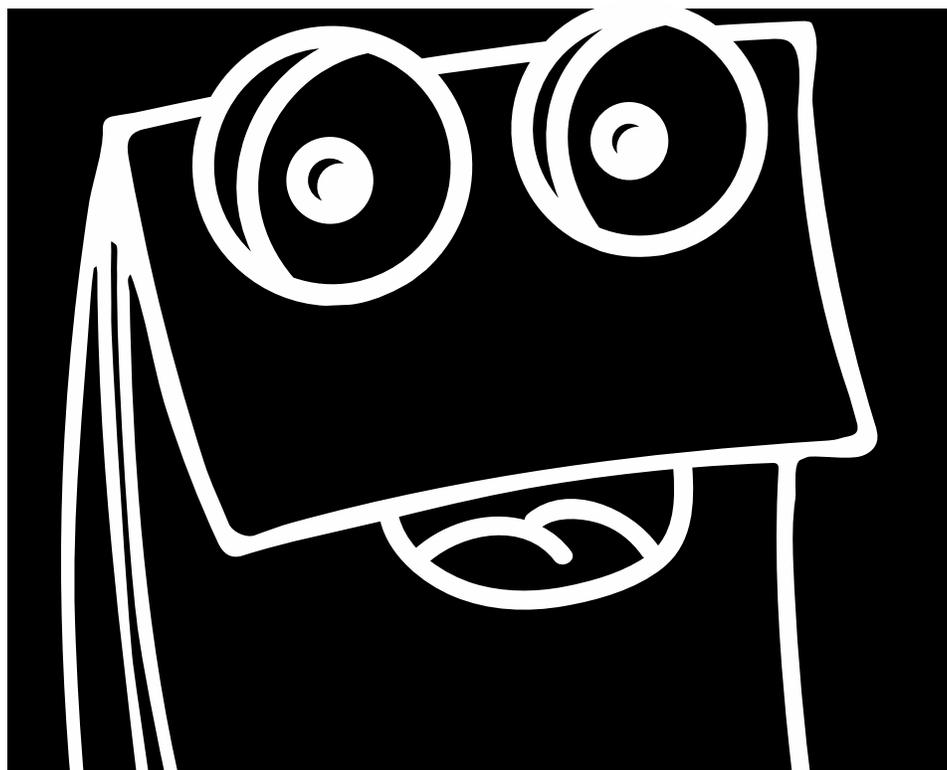
A Guidebook To Puppet-Making
With Young Refugees

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CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK

PURPOSE

The development of young children is highly determined by the kinds of experiences they encounter in their social and cultural environment early on in their lives, and arts exposure in early childhood plays a crucial role in this process. Many children do not have access to such learning experiences – particularly in the case of young refugees who might spend the first few years of life in unfamiliar environments. The visual arts can act as a tool that brings refugee children closer to meaningful and nurturing experiences, and facilitates their integration within the new host community.

This guidebook outlines a process-based puppetry workshop designed to be implemented with preschool-aged refugees. It is aimed at supporting their growth with specific regards to the cognitive, communicative, and social-emotional domains.

The methods outlined have taken into account developmentally appropriate practices for refugee children between three and five years of age, factoring in psychological and cultural backgrounds. These include considerations for the distress and trauma that refugee children might carry with them, and how the proposed projects might be able to provide them with a space to express and connect with their emotions in a creative and safe environment.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This resource is aimed at educators, volunteers, and others from non-profit organizations who might be interested in implementing these activities through their own developmental interventions and workshops with refugee children and their families.

The content of this guidebook includes a brief introduction outlining the criteria by which the activities are guided, including an overview of the targeted developmental domains, age-appropriateness, learning methods and objectives, and accessibility. The core content of this guidebook describes in detail the puppet-making activities, including the processes that will take place at each stage, the materials and resources needed for each activity, and the prompts that will guide the learning process.

SUPPORT RESOURCES

This resource aims at providing young refugee children with a fun and safe space to create and express freely, and engage in art-making activities in the hopes that it brings some positivity and quality experiences into their lives. This is not intended as an art therapy resource, nor does it substitute for professional support and resources in cases where the expressed art might potentially bring about traumatic experiences and emotions.

It is advisable that professional support is identified to help address such situations should they arise; these may include social workers or specialized personnel from non-profit organizations, or counselors if implemented in a school setting.

VISUAL ARTS
WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN

ISSUES FACING YOUNG REFUGEES

The circumstances and conditions that refugee children pass through leave many negative repercussions in their present and future lives. The impact of these harsh circumstances render extremely complicated implications for young vulnerable children who still lack the physical and psychological maturity to process such challenges. More so, these circumstances are often accompanied by a combination of any – or all – of the social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and community factors that further contribute to the complex psychological effects that displacement can have on young children and their families. International and local aid from the hosting communities commonly provide food, shelter, clothing, and medical services; but the emotional and psychological needs of refugee children are often overlooked, which can lead to serious long-term consequences if left unmet.

Homes are not the only thing that these young children lose, they are also deprived of their family, relatives and friends, "familiar environment, routine of an educational setting, social network, and usual patterns of family life among others;" additionally, they experience distortion of community balance, increased prejudice toward other social groups, and issues of integration into the new hosting environment. Another main issue is access to education, and effective integration in a new educational system. Even when refugee children are eventually enrolled in schools, most of them face many challenges in adapting to a new educational environment. This may be due to various factors, including having poor conditions for learning, psychological difficulties, language barriers, and isolation and exclusion, all of which impact children's chance for an effective educational experience.

ARTS IN SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT

Research in the fields of art education, learning psychology, and child development highlight the significance of art in education, and the impact that the learning of arts has on developing young children. The arts can be of particular importance to the growth and support of refugee children, especially in regard to their cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional development.

The art process can serve as a means of dealing with young children's post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety resulting from violence and trauma. Considering that young refugee children may miss out on many educational and developmental opportunities early on in life, the arts can offer various means by which these children may engage in developmentally appropriate experiences that promote their confidence and the skills needed to bridge the gap between their living environment and the new host community.

TARGET SKILLS

This resource considers the developmental skills that children three to five years of age are able to perform, keeping in mind that each child is unique in his/her abilities, and the skills he/she may, or may not yet have acquired at that stage may vary. The following serves as general guidelines to some of the skills that typically developing three to five-year-olds should begin to master (at the different stages) mainly in the cognitive, communication, and social-emotional domains:

Cognitive Development
Children will start recognizing the function of objects; retelling stories from picture books; engaging in pretend play; drawing people with more recognizable parts; differentiating between real and make-believe; and becoming capable of anticipating what will happen next.

Language Development
Children will be able to answer questions about a story they were told; use regular past tense form; demonstrate emotions by using facial expressions and body language; generate more complex sentences; have an improved understanding of time concepts; give more than two descriptive words that characterize an object; and participate in group discussions.

Social-Emotional Development
Children will start sharing toys with others; participate in group games and activities; volunteer for tasks and show pride in accomplishment; talk about their feelings; offer to help others; and have the appropriate responses to social situations.

WHY PUPPET-MAKING?

USING PUPPETS WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN

Puppetry is a versatile medium that can be adapted to children of different ages and engages young children in fun play that helps them identify and externalize their problems. Puppets can be an effective tool that allows children to use their imagination in order to objectify and communicate negative experiences; by using and talking through puppets, children are able to distance themselves from the problem and find alternative methods by which they can externalize their feelings and give a voice to the problem.

Preschool-aged children can be easily engaged in puppet stories, which usually include lots of imagination due to young children's uncertainty about what is and is not real. As a result, using imagination and playing out thoughts and feelings through puppets comes more naturally to younger children; and in the case of young refugees, puppetry becomes an ideal medium for them to share their stories and express their pains, fears, and experiences.

STORYTELLING THROUGH PUPPETRY

Storytelling through children's art may have significant benefits on their social-emotional development, language acquisition, as well as their learning efficacy in general. A wide range of other skills is also involved in the process of listening to and participating in storytelling, such as the using imagination, creating mental and visual images, developing communication skills, promoting critical thinking, nurturing creative abilities, strengthening sequencing skills, and building self-confidence. Puppetry is one of the ideal mediums to use with young children to elicit storytelling. This can have a significant role in the lives of young refugee children in particular, where refugee children can "tell stories of home, of survival, exile and journeys to safety, stories of loss and separation and arrival in a place so far from home." Consequently, telling stories through puppets within a safe creative space promotes courage and inspiration, fosters connections, and engages young children's interest.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The next section outlines the process of puppet-making with young refugee children, and provides sample activities and guidelines for implementation, with a highlight on the following learning objectives:

• Children will engage in developmentally appropriate activities relevant to their interests, experiences, and sociocultural backgrounds

• Children will employ their cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills through creative and interactive learning experiences

• By adopting multiples modes of representation, children will experiment with materials, make art, narrate stories, listen to those of others, make connections, and gain a better understanding of their inner self and their surrounding

• By providing a fun and safe space, children will be able to participate in meaningful experiences, have the opportunity to express their ideas, emotions, fears, and hopes – and most importantly, tell their stories through art

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ACTIVITIES

OVERVIEW

The following section outlines three puppet-making projects that can be implemented with preschool-aged refugee children:

- Cardboard Tube Puppet
- Two-Dimensional Puppet
- Paper Bag Puppet

A variety of materials will be suggested as examples of what can generally be used in these activities, specifying the elements used in each project and how they can be alternatively replaced with other material. In addition to a step-by-step process that makes up each project.

Adults may model steps along the way to support the understanding of children. They can also show the children sample puppets and how they are made, keeping in mind to present them with a variety of options and to encourage freedom in choice of material and representation.

Some children may choose what character they want to present and create their puppet accordingly. Others may choose to create their puppet first then name/identify what it is afterwards.

At the end of this section, sample questions and prompts are included to encourage the storytelling activity following the art-making activities, and to facilitate conversations between the children and other children or adults about their puppet character.

MATERIALS

The following list includes examples of the kind of materials that can be used in the activities. These are suggestions and the materials are not limited to this list, keeping in mind to use resources that are affordable and easily accessible, in addition to being age-appropriate and safe for the target age-group.

Paper & Cardboards

cardboard tubes   paper bags   cardboard boxes   egg cartons

paper cups   paper plates   paper/cardboard scraps

Found Items & Scraps

ribbon   yarn   fabric rags   socks   buttons   laundry clips

plastic bags   popsicle sticks   paper/plastic straws   plastic spoons   pipe cleaners   paper clips

Other Supplies

glue stick   white school glue   child-safe scissors   paper tape (can be colored)   colored markers

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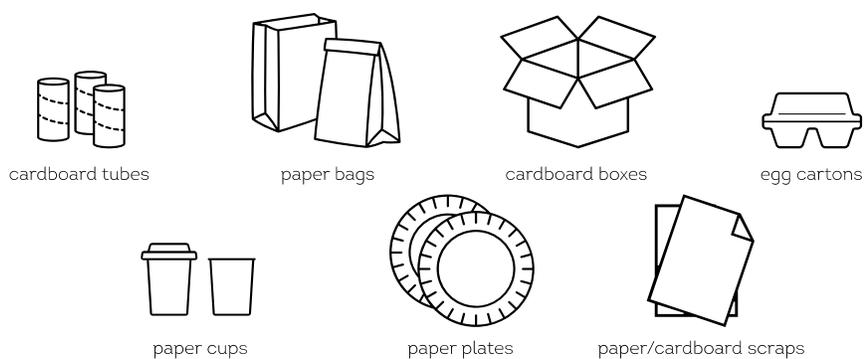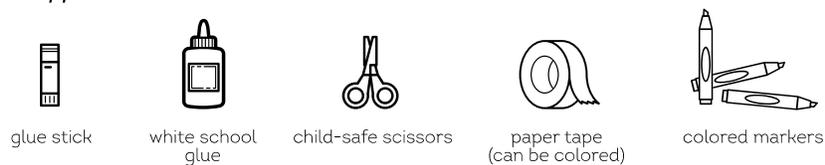
ACTIVITY 1
CARDBOARD TUBE PUPPET

MATERIALS

- cardboard tubes*****
- popsicle sticks
- glue / glue stick
- child-safe scissors
- paper tape
- colored markers
- scraps (as available)

* *Cardboard tubes can alternatively*
be replaced by paper cups
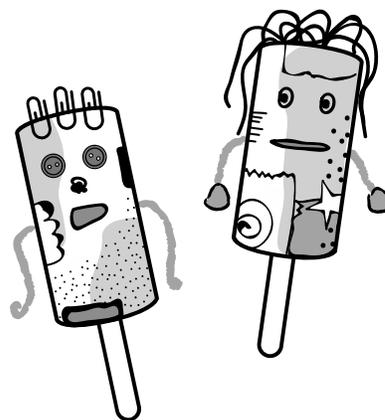
Step 1: Start with the cardboard tube as a base. Children can color it with markers, crayons, paint (upon availability), or glue colored paper over it.

colored in

paper tape
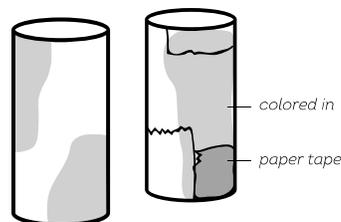
Step 2: Prompt children to think about the main features they would like to add to face/head of the tube (i.e. eyes, hands, mouth, hair, etc.)

Present a variety of options children can use to represent these features; these could include elements like buttons for eyes, yarn for hair, cutout colored paper, or drawn on with markers, etc.

paper clips

buttons

yarn knot

yarn

drawn
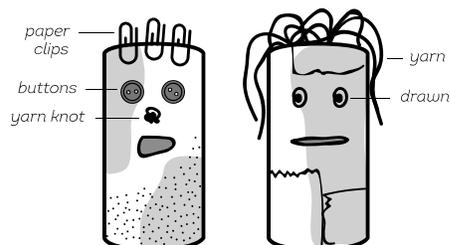
Step 3: Point out any additional features that might be added to complete the character's body (i.e. arms, legs, clothing elements, etc.)

Some children may choose to apply Step 1 here instead, where they decide to customize or "decorate" their puppet by adding elements at the end (drawing marks, coloring, gluing paper, etc.)

paper cutouts

pipe cleaners

drawn

drawn

paper cutouts

Step 4: Make a handle for the puppet for children to hold it with. This can be done by gluing or taping a popsicle stick or a straw on the bottom part on the inside of the tube in a way that about three-quarters of the stick/ straw is sticking out of the bottom opening.

paper tape

popsicle stick

Step 5: Prompt children to introduce/ describe their puppet character with the group and share their stories, adults can ask questions to encourage conversations* and children may end up asking each other questions through their own puppets.

This may be done in the form of free [pretend] play with the puppets after the art-making activity, or in the form of staging a show or scenario between the puppets.

* *Sample questions and prompts that adults can ask to elicit conversations is discussed in further details on page 15.*

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ACTIVITY 2
## TWO-DIMENSIONAL PUPPET

MATERIALS

- flat cardboard*
- popsicle sticks
- glue / glue stick
- child-safe scissors
- paper tape
- colored markers
- scraps (as available)

***** *Cardboard can alternatively be replaced by paper plates*
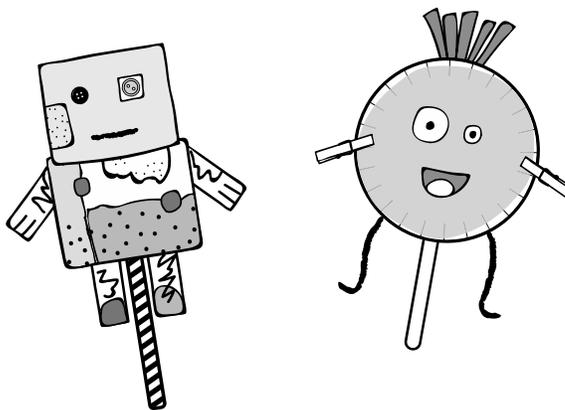
Step 1: Start with the body of the puppet as a base. Different sized cardboard pieces can be cut for the head, body, arms, or legs. These will need to be taped or glued together to form the body.

For a paper plate puppet, a single paper plate may be used, the puppet's head and/or body in this case can be the single round shape.

cardboard pieces

glue or tape parts to the body
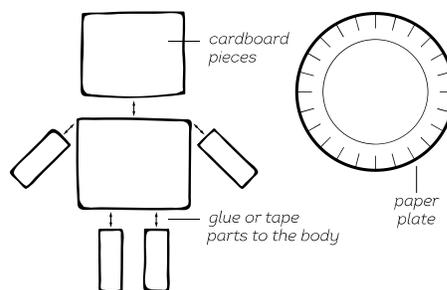
paper plate

Step 2: Coloring the body/background of the puppet. Children can color in, paint, or glue colored paper on to the background of the cardboard or paper plate.

colored

colored
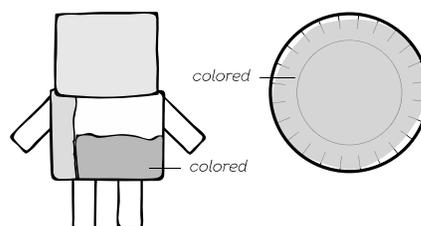
Step 3: Adding the main features to the puppet. Children can use a variety of materials to add elements on to their puppets (eyes, mouth, clothing details, identifying marks, etc.).

In case there is a lack of scraps and other materials, this step can also be applied solely by drawing the elements using colored markers or crayons, or pasting pieces of colored tape or paper.

cutout paper
buttons
pipe cleaners
drawn
drawn
cutout paper
pipe cleaners
laundry clips

Step 4: Make a handle for the puppet for children to hold it with. This can be done by gluing or taping a popsicle stick or a straw on the bottom part on the inside of the tube in a way that about three-quarters of the stick/straw is sticking out of the bottom opening.

paper tape
paper straw
popsicle stick

Step 5: Prompt children to introduce/describe their puppet character with the group and share their stories, adults can ask questions to encourage conversations* and children may end up asking each other questions through their own puppets.

This may be done in the form of free [pretend] play with the puppets after the art-making activity, or in the form of staging a show or scenario between the puppets.

* *Sample questions and prompts that adults can ask to elicit conversations is discussed in further details on page 15.*

ACTIVITY 3
PAPER BAG PUPPET

MATERIALS

- paper bag*****
- glue / glue stick
- child-safe scissors
- paper tape
- colored markers
- scraps (as available)

* *Paper bags can alternatively be replaced by socks, in which case white school glue is recommended to use for gluing elements onto the sock/fabric*
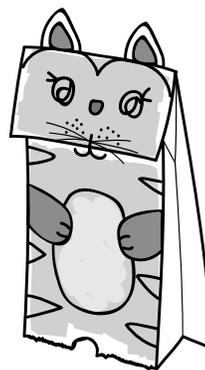
Step 1: Start with the paper bag flat on a surface with the bottom flap and fold facing up and towards the child. This top part will be the face/head of the puppet.

Children may start with coloring or painting the background of the paper bag.


this face up
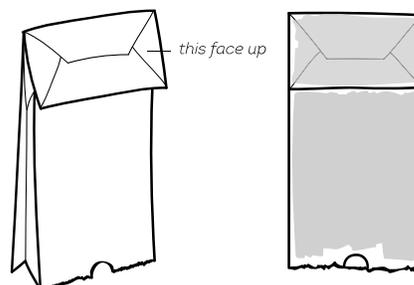
Step 2: Making the face/head of the puppet. Children can begin with the adding the facial features such as eyes, nose, mouth, etc. These can be drawn with colored markers, cut out from paper and glued/taped on, or gluing on various scraps and found items.

It is recommended that mouth is drawn or cut out and glued right on the fold, which will make the "talking" motion of the puppet more interactive in the end.

*drawn facial elements*

mouth drawn on fold
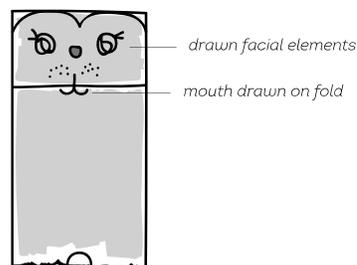
Step 3: Children can continue with making the body of the puppet by drawing or collaging the different elements onto the lower/long part of the paper bag.

In case there is a lack of scraps and other materials, this step can also be achieved solely by drawing the elements using colored markers or crayons.

cutouts

cutout paws
from paper

drawn patterns
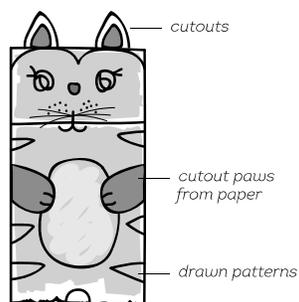
Step 4: For the paper bag puppet, children may also customize/design the back of the bag (body of the puppet).

cutouts

drawn patterns

cutout tail
from paper
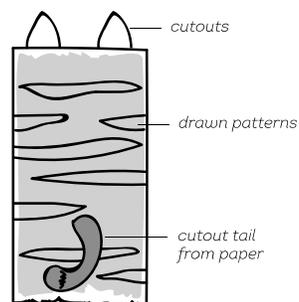
Step 5: To use the paper bag puppet, children can open the bag from the bottom, place their hands all the way up the bag such as their fingers are inside the top flap to control the mouth movement.
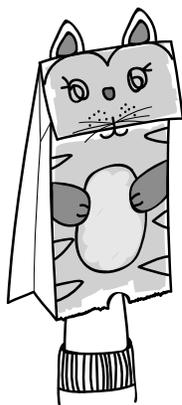
Step 6: Prompt children to introduce/ describe their puppet character with the group and share their stories, adults can ask questions to encourage conversations* and children may end up asking each other questions through their own puppets.

This may be done in the form of free [pretend] play with the puppets after the art-making activity, or in the form of staging a show or scenario between the puppets.

* Sample questions and prompts that adults can ask
  to elicit conversations is discussed in further
  details on page 15.

PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS

For these activities to be most effective, it is advised that adults encourage both verbal and nonverbal means of expression in the process. Adults can scaffold learning by guiding children through the art-making process, but also by giving prompts and asking questions that motivates the children to talk about their puppets, through their puppets.

This step is an important part of the process not only for each individual child to express his/her ideas and emotions, but also for the children to listen to each other's stories and feel like they are part of bigger group. In addition to its importance for adults to understand what the children are thinking and feeling in order to provide further engagement and support as needed*.

Examples of prompts and questions that may be asked in the process can include:

- What is the puppet's [character] name, why does it have [a specific feature or choice of representation]
- Where did the [puppet's name] come from? Where does it live?
- Adults can share a personal or made-up short story about a character who had been on a journey or a trip, then ask the children to share the story of their puppet and the journey it has been on.
- Who is/are the [puppet's name] best friend/s?
- What is the favorite thing that the [puppet's name] likes to do? Adults can also share personal stories to give the children examples and encourage responsiveness in return.
- Adults can also encourage two or more puppets to talk to each other, as each other questions, share stories, or collaboratively perform a little activity/show.

In most cases, children will initiate conversations amongst each other throughout the process since the play aspect comes naturally to young children. The art-making process itself will also encourage verbal expression where the children may describe what they are doing, ask for materials, observe works of other children and show their own work to others.

It is important to note that the role of the adult in this case is not as an art therapist, these questions are merely meant to encourage free expression and conversation amongst the children in ways that promote their communication and support their social-emotional skills, as well as engage the children in fun and creative experiences within a positive and safe environment. Should the art bring about negative or traumatic experiences, it is advised to seek professional support from therapists, counselors, or social workers who are specialized to deal with these situations should they arise.

DOCUMENTATION

Observation and documentation is an integral part of this process. Noting how the children interacted with the materials and activities being presented to them helps adults understand what the children were more interested in and responsive to. Furthermore, documentation of the applied activities becomes a sort of data collection of the repeated workshops that can provide useful information on what were the most effective aspects of the workshop, what engaged the children most, and what learning outcomes were common or recurrent from one application to another. This highlights which steps of the activities were most successful and which could require further refinement and/or adaptation in the future.

Such documentation can be in the form of note-taking and sample photos of the artworks and processes. However, having an official consent from parents, guardians, or other respective responsible personnel is crucial before recording or sharing any information about a child, in addition to respecting every child's privacy and anonymity in the case of recording and/or sharing any data.

LIMITATIONS

Some of the limitations in these activities may include (a) availability of materials, and (b) language barrier.

(a) Availability of Materials: It is possible to go through all the processes of these activities and target the same learning outcomes even with very minimal availability of resources. These can be applied simply by having a base to work with (e.g. any found cardboards), a single marker, and adhesive tape. This not only encourages further creativity by showing the possibilities that can be made even with the least resources available, but also encourages refugee families to engage their children in similar positive and nurturing experiences no matter the limitations.

(b) Language Barrier: There is a high chance that many young refugee children (and their families) are English language learners, or are not familiar with the English language altogether. It would be helpful to ask for volunteers who speak the children's native language for support and assistance. However, even in the absence of such support, this workshop can still render effective and beneficial for the young refugees. Adults can model examples and behavior for the children, and the art-making process will encourage conversations amongst the children themselves who might share the same language and would therefore be able to communicate and understand each other.

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Further Reading: Art Education MAEd Thesis "Using the Visual Arts to Support the Development of Young Refugee Children: A Puppet-Making Workshop" by Ghenwa El Souki - Georgia State University, 2019