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National Art Therapy Thesis and Dissertation Abstract Compilation

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In a culture where death now takes place primarily out of sight, with the intention of keeping it out of mind, greater awareness needs to be brought to the attention of caregivers who may be unknowingly experiencing anticipatory grief. This research examined the validity of an art assessment by comparing the Anticipatory Grief Scale composite score to a composite score of the Bridge Drawing art therapy directive. The Bridge Drawing was chosen because of its broad use with clients experiencing challenging life transitions and how it facilitates verbal and symbolic expression. Participants (N = 27) were recruited by posting flyers in counseling centers. The results revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between the measures for all persons anticipating loss except for grandchildren grieving for terminally ill grandparents. Results indicate promise for the use of the Bridge Drawing to assess individual grief experience.


The goal of this study is to investigate the relationship between attachment style in close relationships as measured by two self-reports (Relationship Questionnaire; Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised), and how participants respond to two types of art materials: resistive (colored pencils) versus fluid (watercolor), as measured by the Art-Based Intervention questionnaire. Participants (N = 36) were randomly assigned to art conditions. It was expected that secure style participants would prefer fluid art materials to resistive; avoidant style participants would prefer resistive to fluid; anxious style participants would show no preference. Results yield different outcomes for each measure of attachment. Significant results showed that the more avoidant and anxious the attachment style, as measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R), the more the participant enjoyed the art process, regardless of the art material. The conflicting results from categorical and dimensional attachment measures, paired with the strong correlation of both ECR-R high anxiety and avoidance with positive experience making art, suggest that attachment styles may have significant bearing on each of the dynamics of art therapy, resulting in a multi-layered relational experience that is not easily predictable.


The high demands of the role of caregiver can lead to stress and burnout, causing major health concerns. The goal of this study was to determine if clay-work would reduce on-the-job stress for professional caregivers (N = 29) after a single-session of an art therapy intervention. In this pre-post design, the Psychological Stress Measure 9 (PSM-9) was used to study caregiver stress through comparison of collaborative clay-work. In addition, it address the format for
implementing stress reducing art therapy interventions. It was hypothesized that clay-work would lead to a reduction in stress in both conditions and that the collaborative clay-work would produce the highest reduction of stress. Despite no significant difference between group and individual clay-work stress levels, results showed a significant reduction of stress after using clay for both conditions. Future studies should examine the implications of various art materials on stress and symptom reduction, as well as explore the benefits of group interventions to create a supportive environment to foster the reduction of stress.


Care for persons with Alzheimer’s disease is moving away from a medical model, toward a focus on facilitating individuals’ sense of well-being (Thomas, 2007). The present study compared the impact of an art therapy/art-making directive and a passive art viewing condition on quality of life for 30 elders living with dementia. The study showed that a collage-making art activity significantly improved quality of life during the session as measured by positive change in observed affect, engagement, and behavior. The art-viewing condition showed mixed results. The measures used were the Observing Quality of Life in Dementia scale (OQOLD) and the Quality of Life in Late-Stage Dementia scale (QUALID). A secondary goal of the study was to establish the validity of the OQOLD, and it was determined to be valid, with significant correlation to the previously validated QUALID. The study findings suggest that art therapy may be a useful tool in the effort to provide the best possible quality of life for elders living with dementia.


Substance abuse continues to affect millions of people worldwide. Determining readiness to change appears to be a significant factor in choosing appropriate treatment methods. The Road Drawing Scale (RDS) and its manual were developed by this author and used to rate (N = 41) road drawings by adults in substance abuse treatment, to assess readiness to change. Participants drew a road, described its destination, and completed the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA). The hypothesis that a statistically significant positive correlation would exist between aggregate scores on the RDS and scores on the URICA was not supported. However, the RDS item “destination” was positively correlated with URICA readiness to change scores. In addition, the URICA subscale “precontemplation” was negatively correlated with RDS total scores. Additionally, there was statistically significant positive correlation between length of treatment and scores on the RDS. Inter-rater reliability was excellent for all but one item of the RDS. Findings suggest that RDS items warrant further development to become more valid measures of change readiness.

The purpose of this study was to determine if a nondirective art therapy approach would decrease workplace stress in police officers. It was hypothesized that a nondirective approach to art making would significantly reduce stress in police officers. The aim was to determine if a nondirective art therapy task would be more effective in reducing stress than a directive art therapy approach. Thirty participants were recruited from a centrally located police department in Connecticut. The participants completed a PSM-9 questionnaire before and after engaging in an art making session. Results indicated that both the nondirective and directive groups showed a significant decrease in stress, supporting the therapeutic effectiveness of art making for the reduction of stress. Reliability was determined to be strong in both the pretest and posttest within the sample.


Art Therapists often work with clients to increase their well-being as well as to decrease their distress. One aspect of well-being, particularly stressed in positive psychology theories, is perceived meaning in life. Life’s meaning is usually an ever-unfolding, an ever-deepening process that impacts satisfaction with life, hopefulness and confidence about the future, and self-esteem. However, poor measurements have hampered art therapy research on meaning in life. This study sought to make a connection between the creative process and the presence of, or the search for, meaning in life. Participants (N=36) were given the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) to assess their current level of presence and search for meaning in life which was correlated to the participants art work using the Meaning In Life Drawing (MILD) art assessment. It was expected that there would be a positive correlation between the level of presence and search with the art work. This hypothesis was supported across six of the ten different conditions of the MILD.


There is a paucity of research on psychopathy in a non-institutionalized population despite the evidence of increased incidence of psychopathy in the fields of business, criminal justice, finance, and law (Babiak & Hare, 2006). Projective assessments such as the Rorschach Inkblot Test (Rorschach, 1927) and projective art assessments have been suggested as a means to bypass the psychopath’s social mask (Gacono and Meloy, 2013; Charney, 2002; Cleckley, 1941). The current investigation set out to determine if the projective drawing measure (Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale; FEATS; Gantt & Tabone, 1998) would be a valid measure of psychopathy in a non-institutionalized population. A purposive sample of 44 future business and law professionals from a small college in southern Connecticut was utilized to test the validity and reliability of the FEATS correlating imagery scores with the self-report psychopathy psychometric test (Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale; SRPS; Levenson et al., 1995). The results did not support the hypothesis and indicated that persons with psychopathic traits create normative drawings; which further supports the psychopath’s ability to function without detection. It is recommended that future research utilize a clinically accepted psychopathic sample and a control sample to evaluate FEATS as a diagnostic measure of psychopathy.
By becoming aware of implicit racial bias, art therapists may be able to recognize systemic racism. This study sought to explore a new projective drawing measure, Draw Yourself with a Client (DYC), created to measure implicit racial bias in art therapists. The DYC was correlated with the Implicit Association Test – race (IAT) as validation. The participants \(N = 31\) were sampled from an art therapy graduate program in the northeast, and regional professional art therapy association members, the majority of whom were White American females, ages 21-60. Intraclass correlation coefficient testing revealed high interrater reliability, however Pearson r testing revealed no positive correlation between the DYC and IAT bias scores. Examination of the graphic indicators to support educating art therapists about inclusivity is discussed.


Mood states can be categorized as either positive or negative and several disorders have been associated with the fluctuation in or duration of one’s mood. The purpose of this study was to examine if paper size, used for art making, has an effect on mood, more specifically if large paper would facilitate an increase in positive affect more effectively than smaller sized papers. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) was used to measure baseline mood, post a mood induction activity, and then as a post art making tool to assess change in mood for \((N=38)\) college students. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions that used three different sizes of paper for art-making. Results indicated that an artistic task is effective in decreasing negative affect while increasing positive affect, regardless of the paper size. Results, while not statistically significant, were contrary to the hypothesis, as well as trending towards the implication that a smaller size paper is more effective at influencing a change in mood. Further study of the relationship between paper size and mood is warranted.


This study examined whether adding art making to an ongoing support group would reduce the burden of family caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer’s. Fifteen participants were recruited from three Alzheimer’s caregivers support groups in Connecticut. Utilizing a repeated measures design, each group met twice during their regular support group time, once in order to gather baseline data in a no art making (control) condition and once as the art making (experimental) condition. The Zarit Burden Interview (ZBI) and The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory-Form Y (STAI Y) were administered as pre-and posttests. The hypothesis was that there would be a larger changes in ZBI and STAI scores from pretest to posttest for the experimental than control condition. Analyses indicated there were no interaction effects; the change from pretest to posttest for STAI and ZBI scores were equal across the two conditions, and therefore the hypothesis was not supported.

This exploratory study introduced a pilot art therapy intervention using repetitious dot making to reduce anxiety among young adults. College students (N = 64; 41 female and 19 male) were randomly assigned to three conditions of dot making: blank paper (no structure), paper with a pre-drawn circle (medium amount of structure), and paper with a pre-drawn circle containing a grid (high level of structure). The State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), a self-report measure for anxiety, was administered pre- and post art making. A response survey was used to evaluate the overall experience with the art materials. It was hypothesized that all three conditions of dot making would reduce state (current) anxiety. Results demonstrated that all three conditions of dot making significantly reduced anxiety. Thus, using repetitious dot making serves as a calming or centering device for anxiety reduction. In future research this researcher will further develop The Dot Method as a cost effective, simple, and quick art therapy intervention.


The construct of self-esteem is a significant aspect of an individual’s sense of worth, thus shaping attitudes and behavior about the self. Projective art techniques can reflect the individual’s self-concept in various ways. In the present study, the Human Figure Drawing (HFD) created by Koppitz (1968) was utilized to determine if the size of the drawn figure is an effective measure of self-esteem. Participants in the study included 47 undergraduate students. Figure height and area were measured from the HFD and self-esteem was measured by using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965). It was expected that larger and taller figure drawings would correlate with higher self-esteem scores. Results for this study were not significant, but other trends were noted. Individuals who scored in the high range for self-esteem were much more likely to include teeth in their figure drawings. Additionally, there were weak correlations noted in an exploratory analysis based on gender.


The purpose of this study was to determine if adding music to art making would have a stress reduction effect on elementary school students. Using a pre-post design with (N=34) elementary school-age students, the Smiley Faces Assessment Scale was used to measure change in levels of stress. Two art making conditions were used to compare results. Children in the experimental group (n=17) made a transitional object art piece with music playing during the activity, while the control group (n=17) participated in the same art making activity but did not have any music playing. The results of the study showed that adding music to art making did not have a statistically significant effect on the stress levels of elementary school students. However, art making alone did have a marginally significant effect on stress levels.

The present study compared the effectiveness of using the Zentangle method versus coloring pre-drawn mandalas for stress reduction. The Zentangle method is a fairly new therapeutic technique utilized in art therapy with very little empirical data. Therefore, this study sought to investigate whether or not the method would be as advantageous at alleviating stress as pre-drawn mandalas.

Stress levels were measured with the 10-item version of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10). Participants were recruited among students at a small Southern New England college. The sample was divided into two groups: the Zentangle group (n=15) and the pre-drawn mandala group (n=15). The results showed a significant reduction of self-reported stress in both the Zentangle condition and pre-drawn mandala condition.


Stress affects both the mental and physical systems of the human body, and different art materials have been studied in relationship to stress reduction. This study examined structured and unstructured art tasks using two different media choices: manipulating clay or mandala coloring. Using the Psychological Stress Measure (PSM-9) in a pre-post design, levels of change in stress scores were evaluated. Using graduate and undergraduate college students (N = 35), four different experimental conditions were utilized: structured mandala, unstructured mandala, structured clay and unstructured clay. It was hypothesized that participants in the clay conditions and those in the structured conditions would report the highest decrease in stress. While the hypothesis was not supported, it was found that female participants experienced a significant decrease in self-reported stress as compared to their male counterparts. Future clinical work may need to pay closer attention to gender differences responding to different art materials.


The purpose of the present study was to determine if creating road drawings could instill hope in recovering alcoholics. The Adult Hope Scale (AHS) was used as a pre to posttest measure of levels of hope, with attention to two subscales: an agency measure and a pathways measure. Agency refers to human actions being goal-directed with determination to meet desired goals. Pathways refer to having the ability to create successful paths to achieve goals. It was hypothesized that there would be an overall increase in hope after completing one road drawing. It was also hypothesized there would be a greater increase in hope on the pathways subscale as compared to the agency subscale. The sample consisted of 40 members from a 12-step recovery program located in central New Jersey. Results showed that there was an overall increase in hope, with statistically significant findings. The increase in the pathways subscale was not significant; however, the increase in the agency subscale was statistically significant. The results of this study support the use of the road drawing to improve hopefulness with a population of recovering alcoholics.

This study compared the anxiety reducing effects of digital art media versus traditional art media. Adult dental patients (N = 57; n = 20 male, n = 37 female) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions prior to their dental appointments: digital drawing, or digital collage using a tablet and stylus, or traditional drawing using markers and paper. The State Trait Anxiety Inventory state anxiety scale (STAI), a self-report measure for state anxiety, and the Modified Dental Anxiety Scale (MDAS), a self-report measure for dental anxiety, were administered pre- and post- art making. It was hypothesized that the use of digital art media in drawing and collage would reduce anxiety in dental patients prior to treatment, and this reduction would be equal to the anxiety-reducing effects of using traditional drawing media. Results showed a significant reduction in both state anxiety and dental anxiety for all three conditions. There was a significant main effect of time, as all three conditions reduced both STAI and MDAS scores significantly. Additionally, there was a marginally significant interaction effect found that was due to the digital collage group showing the largest drop in STAI scores. The findings of this study suggest the therapeutic effects of using digital art media in reducing anxiety. Suggestions for clinical applications and future research are discussed.


Burnout is a syndrome that affects many people in the helping professions. Burnout is defined as a chronic stress syndrome that affects people in different ways. Nursing students are one population that can be affected by burnout. This study used mandala-making combined with listening to music to reduce the symptoms of burnout. It was hypothesized that the combination of art and music would decrease the symptoms of burnout in nursing students. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used with participants (N = 31) who created mandalas in two conditions—art with music (n = 16) and art only (n = 15). The hypothesis was not supported as the participants in the combined condition of art and music did not experience a greater decrease in burnout than those without music and overall, the results did not show a significant decrease in burnout levels.


Using a pre-post experimental design this study explored changes in the three core dimensions of burnout; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, among mental health professionals (N = 13) across three art making conditions: collage, mandala, and directive drawing. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (Hastings, Horne & Mitchell, 2004), Human Services Survey version of the instrument was used. The results show that all three art making conditions effectively decreased burnout and that the mandala intervention was the most effective of the three. Further research in the effectiveness of mandala art making for burnout reduction with mental health professionals’ long term could contribute to art therapy research.

Developing cultural competency is currently a required component of training for community and social service providers. Cultural competency has also been connected with having an understanding of one’s own ethnic identity. Exploration of one’s ethnic identity can include self-reflection about cultural norms. The goal of this present study was to make use of a single art therapy intervention as a method for ethnic identity exploration. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) was used pre- and post art making to compare the change in ethnic identity levels. Participants were an ethnically diverse group of social service providers ($N = 40$; ages 25-62, $M = 49$) who participated in the study in small groups with random selection to conditions. One art-making condition utilized a directed exploration of ethnic identity ($n = 20$) while the second group ($n = 20$) was asked to create a free drawing. Results did not reveal any statistic significance of the mean changes in MEIM scores between the two conditions. However, it was noted that the two conditions produced significantly different thematic content within the artwork. The results suggest that art therapy expressions of ethnic identity may generate different material for discussion about cultural competency.


The purpose of this study was to determine whether the eight frame squiggle technique (EFST) would stimulate self-reflection and insight significantly more than the scribble technique (ST). The Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) was used to assess a change in self-reflection (SR) and insight (IN), and the Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS) was administered to measure one’s focus of attention on internal states (Abbey et al., 2006). Participants ($N = 30$) were randomly assigned either to the EFST condition or the ST condition, and both of the aforementioned measures were administered as pre- and posttests. Results showed that the hypothesis was not supported. No interactions between technique and pre/post measures were found for insight, self-reflection, or TMS scores. However, the TMS results did indicate a significant increase from pre to post-test as a result of participants’ engaging in the art techniques, which indicates an increase in mindfulness. Implications of these findings for future research are discussed.
For patients undergoing cancer treatment, providing psychological and emotional support is known to be important, but not always adequately addressed by health personals due to various factors. Despite efforts to lessen all negative effects of cancer, pain and other physical symptoms are the major focus of treatment. As the medical management of cancer is primary and the person diagnosed with cancer often experiences a rigorous schedule with multiple team members, it is worthwhile to consider meeting patients in the physical and transitional spaces where their cancer treatment is located. During the course of oncology, outpatient treatment, a majority of time spent is in a waiting area. This space has potential to be utilized as a way to provide psychological and emotional support. With little research regarding the effects of waiting areas and ways to enhance patients’ experiences in them, I wished to explore a way art therapy could be used in this space. Specifically, I explored decreasing anxiety and boredom for participants in an oncology waiting area, because these needs were anecdotally reported as pertinent negatives. Furthermore, I wanted to expand the use of art therapy to caregivers accompanying patients since I witnessed the impact waiting had them as well. This capstone project describes the implementation of an open art therapy group in a radiation oncology waiting area. Implementation occurred over five months, with only the first ten sessions reported and discussed. Consistent with the limited research available on waiting area interventions, art therapy was observed to provide a positive distraction, promote communication, reduce anxiety, and empower participants. Further, the art making helped provide a purpose to the time spent waiting and create a space to express thoughts and emotions. Challenges to creating this space are discussed and in particular, in regards to the weekly delivery of a table. The need to accommodate and be flexible as an art therapist facilitator proved to be essential for the success of this particular open art therapy group.
This arts-based research study explored the dynamics of expressing positive emotions, within the intersubjective art making process. The study addressed a multifaceted problem involving a gap in knowledge about the process of emotional expression through art making, which is key to therapeutic action in art therapy. The design was arts-based research, as art making was the primary means of inquiry. The philosophy and methodology of arts-based research were employed to explore the emotional aspects of intersubjective experience. Following the traditions of arts based research, the meaning-making capacity of creating art was used to illuminate the process of artistic creation in response to the research questions. The research was conducted following approval by the Drexel University IRB. Five English-speaking adults who were professional art therapists were recruited as key informants. The method of data generation involved an initial two hour Art Interview, followed by reflexive memoing and responsive art-making by the researcher and a subsequent second Art Interview with co-researchers. Methodological credibility procedures consisted of member checking and peer review. The data analysis processes involved: 1) traditional use of qualitative data analysis practices, such as the use of MAXQDA-10 software for coding for themes and 2) arts-based research data analysis methods. The analysis of the interview data, artistic data, artistic responses and a creative synthesis addressed the research question in the form of visual art pieces, poetry, a video, three stories, four themes, and a theoretical model. Overall, the verbal and artistic analysis of the data resulted in thematic categories that represent the emergence of emotions within the intersubjective art therapy relationship. Based upon the findings, the emergence of emotions within the intersubjective context was conceptualized as an iterative process beginning with metaphors of life and nature, the development of trust, revelations of emotion, empathic responses, reflexivity and joint artmaking creating and causing destabilization, deconstruction, reconstruction, and reimagining of perceptions and meanings. An emerging, holistic view of
emotions and the transformative capacity of artmaking in a context of relational trust were discussed. Clinical applications included consideration of the therapeutic use of response art and joint artmaking. The limitations of the study were also described, as was methodological criteria for arts-based research. Overall, this expanding discourse helped to identify ways art therapy works. The study achieved its aim by contributing knowledge to our understanding of how emotions emerge, are expressed, and assigned meaning within an art therapy relational context.


The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of the Self-Book® art therapy intervention on emotional distress and psychological well-being in female cancer patients. Assessing and treating patients’ unmet emotional needs is a national focus in oncology care today. The intervention provided patients with an opportunity to portray their feelings and identify coping skills artistically through a creative process. The theoretical principles supporting Self-Book® are grounded in the nonverbal healing components from art therapy. One critical mechanism is based on the concept that the human mind tends to suppress adverse events, such as a life-threatening illness and that art therapy can help patients express what they experience rather than suppress it. To evaluate the intervention, a repeated measures randomized controlled trial design was employed. Sixty consenting women were enrolled and randomly assigned to either the six-session Self-Book® art therapy intervention group or the standard care control group. Results suggest that Self-Book® art therapy may help decrease emotional distress and enhance spiritual well-being in female cancer patients during active oncology treatment. Positive trends in the data were present, but there were no statistically significant differences between the groups for the two main variables. Small treatment effects were found for Self-Book® art therapy on participants’ psychological well-being. However, one subscale measure revealed statistically significant greater improvements in Self-Book® art therapy participants’ spiritual well-being compared to the standard care control participants. Additionally, 30% of art therapy participants reported post-intervention emotional distress scores that were below the clinical range for emotional distress, compared with only 5% of standard care control participants, suggesting that Self-Book® art therapy has clinical significance. Analysis of limited narrative data from exit interviews contributed to positive trends in emotional distress, suggesting that emotional needs were met for the majority of Self-Book® art therapy participants.


The purpose of this arts-based research (ABR) study was to conduct a systematic in depth exploration of how first time mothers express and make meaning of what is beyond_words in their experiences of transitioning to motherhood. Beyond_words, for the purpose of this study, was conceptualized as sensory-embodied, relational, and imaginal experiences that are difficult to articulate verbally. The research question that this study aimed to answer was twofold: 1) How
do first-time mothers express and make meaning of their beyond words experiences, and 2) how are these experiences represented using montage portraiture?

The participants in this study were five first-time mothers in their 30s who represent a homogenous sample of middle class, predominantly Caucasian, heterosexual, highly educated women with stable partners and homes.

In order to honor and capture the emergent, vital, and multi-dimensional nature of beyond words phenomena in transitioning to motherhood, ABR was used as a study design. Montage portraiture was the data generation and analysis method specifically designed for this arts-based research study. The arts were used throughout the study both by the participants and the researcher to systematically investigate the beyond words phenomena. The multiphasic data analysis included qualitative content analysis, portrait synthesis, and final synthesis. In the first phase the qualitative content analysis from the textual and visual interview data produced the categories and subcategories relative to sensory-embodied, relational, and imaginal participant experiences. Due to the aesthetic epistemic of the beyond words phenomena, they cannot be authentically described using only categorical reduction or discursive language. Therefore, the second phase of data analysis and representation included the Portrait Synthesis that used an arts based systematic synthesis of textual and visual data to portray each of the participants and her experiences holistically. To further analyze the data across cases, the Final Synthesis was conducted including a group portrait synthesis and a fictional dramatic portrayal of the participants experiences. The results were presented to an audience of viewers who contributed to the authenticity of the results. The Portrait Syntheses and Final Synthesis can stand alone as works of art and be presented to audiences outside of the academia in order to communicate and evoke empathy for the multidimensional emotional and embodied nature of beyond words experiences in transitioning to motherhood.

This heuristic self-study researched the impact of a geographic transition on my personal and professional identity by making art in nature with natural materials. A thorough review of the literature revealed a lack of research in making art in nature to study identity after a transition. The following research questions were studied: Does my principle of continuity change as I connect with nature in new places after a geographic transition? How is my self-concept impacted by my connections and disconnections with various places? Does art-making in nature affect my professional identity as an art therapist and my approach to clients? During the immersion stage, I spent 10 sessions exploring and responding to places near my place of current residence. Data collected from each session consisted of a photograph of the location, a photograph of response artwork made in nature with natural materials, and a written journal response. A committee analyzed the data and identified the following major themes: tension between seeking and grieving, protection and safety, boundaries and identity, and connectedness and aliveness. A surprise discovery of a flowchart named “Processing Identity after a Geographic Transition” emerged from a synthesis of the major themes. Possible implications for art therapy practice related to empathy for clients, approach for clients who have experienced a geographic transition, and the use of natural materials in nature in art therapy. Suggestions for further research included studying the impact of geographic transitions on the identities of various populations, evaluation of the proposed flow chart, and replication of this study under therapy with an eco-art therapist.


This study proposed to develop a conceptual model for equine integrated art therapy. A consensual qualitative research method was used to generate qualitative data. Five art therapists who were combining art psychotherapy and equine facilitated psychotherapy in their practices or were interested in discussing this hybrid form of art therapy were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed by a research team for domains and key ideas. The results of the data analysis were triangulated with the literature and researcher’s immersion experiences to make recommendations for the conceptual model and implications for future research.


This review of literature addresses the lack of literature concerning art processes and materials by synthesizing findings evaluating the effects of different processes and materials in the unpublished theses from the Eastern Virginia Medical School’s Art Therapy and Counseling Program. The theses evaluated the effect of the processes of clay work, printmaking, drawing, scribbling, and creating mandalas. The data contained in the theses address specific effects of
various processes and materials on clients’ mental and physical states such as levels of anxiety, depression, stress levels, and heart rate. The samples studied vary from the adult inpatient adults to university students. This review of literature compares the synthesized data from the theses and to current literature deriving implications for art therapy practice and future research.


The purpose of this art-based heuristic study was to explore unresolved grief through various fiber art processes and reflective writing. According to existing literature, there are several grief therapy approaches, in addition to bereavement support groups. Furthermore, many art processes are described in the literature as being valuable in the grieving process in art therapy. However, there are gaps in the literature describing the benefits and effects of fiber art processes for processing bereavement. A nine-week heuristic self-study was proposed to identify the potential therapeutic benefits and applicability of fiber arts within art therapy for those dealing with grief. The study provided a prism through reflective writing and fiber art making across ten weeks. As a result, twenty-one artworks and sixty-five written reflections were generated. The data was subjected to a content analysis, and thirteen themes were identified: affect, identity, ineffable, art process (formal), expressive therapies continuum (ETC), transformation, memories, preservation, ineffable, parallel process, cancer, loss/death and acceptance. Implications for clinical and self-application were also recognized, leading to the conclusion that fiber arts can be an effective material in art therapy for processing one’s bereavement.

Johnson, Tuesday. (2017). *The graduate school experience of art therapy students of color.* (Unpublished master’s capstone). Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, VA.

This study addressed the problem of lack of diversity in graduate art therapy programs and the art therapy profession as a whole. A qualitative interview methodology was implemented, and seven current art therapy students of color or recent art therapy graduates of color from one predominantly white institution were recruited and participated in individual semi-structured interviews and a group meeting. The four overarching patterns that emerged from content analysis included Courses, Internship, Affective Disruptions, and Differences. The 10 themes that emerged were Introduction to the History and Theory of Art Therapy, Cultural Competency, Internship Experience, Supervision, Individual Histories (Undergrad/life experiences), The Need for Same Culture Mentor, Reticience of Students Discussing Cultural Issues, Being the “Other” and the Desire to be Amongst “Others,” Being Perceived as Being Sensitive, and the Assumption of Representing the Entire Culture. Of the 10 themes that emerged from a content analysis, 14 subthemes appeared as well. The themes provide indications for the direction needed to address the lack of diversity in art therapy programs, and to enhance the unique educational experience of these students. The results supported what literature has suggested as ways to diversity the field, and yielded implications for improving the graduate school experience of students of color, for further research, for art therapy practice, and for art therapy education.


The purpose of this retrospective qualitative self-study was to gain insight into the usefulness of visual journaling to facilitate reflection on personal and professional growth. I made daily entries in my visual journal throughout my husband’s deployment as a method of reflection about
deployment, family, the graduate school experience, and professional identity. From over 150 entries, every ninth journal entry was designated data, which were analyzed through basic content-analysis methods. The themes that emerged from the analysis are Containment, Connection, Stress, and Acceptance of Deployment. Each theme that emerged had related subthemes. Themes and subthemes were illustrated with verbatim quotations and art from my visual journal. The results of this retrospective qualitative self-study suggested that visual journaling might be an effective method to reduce stress and help with the process of reflection on action.


This randomized controlled trial supplemented existing data from previous studies on the effect of art therapy in conjunction with Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) versus CPT alone on symptoms of combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder. The 11 veterans recruited in this study were clinically diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and were randomized by time of admission to either the experimental or control condition. Test measures included the PTSD Check List-Military Version (PCL-M), and the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), to measure symptoms associated with posttraumatic stress and depression, and the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) to measure positive psychological growth. The results on the PCL-M and BDI-II supported trends from previous studies suggesting art therapy in combination with CPT was more effective at reducing symptoms of combat-related PTSD compared to CPT alone. The PTGI was administered to a smaller number of participants, thus positive psychological growth was not evident in quantifiable measures. However, additional qualitative measures conducted from semi-structured interviews revealed areas of positive growth in participants randomized to the experimental condition; and content analysis of interview data identified participant intervention preferences for both CPT and art therapy. The addition of art therapy to established evidence-based treatments significantly increased recovery from symptoms associated with PTSD, which suggests that art therapy can clinically inform best practices for the treatment of PTSD.


Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia and causes problems with memory, behavior, and thinking. The symptoms of this progressive disease commonly develop slowly and worsen over time. Family members who are caring for individuals with Dementia of the Alzheimer’s type (DAT) experience significant burden that affects their psychological well-being. This may result in an increase in stress/anxiety and a decreased mood. In this mixed methods case study, six individual in-home art therapy sessions were conducted with one 80 year old woman who was caring for her husband who had DAT, in order to gain preliminary understanding of the effects of art therapy upon her perceived burden, stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. The sessions were tailored to the participant’s experiences and individual needs. The Zarit Burden Interview and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale were used as pre and post measures. At the conclusion of the treatment, a semi-structured interview was conducted.
with the participant and content analysis was performed to determine themes that emerged regarding the experience of the participant. Although scores from the DASS and ZBI increased from pretest to posttest, the participant identified art therapy as beneficial. Three main themes were identified. The themes included (a) increased coping skills, (b) art therapy provided a distraction, and (c) art therapy helped. Based on the pre and post measures, implications for the practice of art therapy with this population were discussed.

Keywords: Art therapy, Dementia, Alzheimer’s, caregiver

Simmons, Alisa. (2017). Exploring the lived experience of being a spouse and caregiver to a combat-wounded veteran and an art therapy student: An art based, heuristic study (Unpublished master’s capstone). Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, VA.

This qualitative, art-based, heuristic self-study was designed to explore the impact of my experience as a spouse and caregiver to my husband, a combat-wounded service member, on my personal self and on my professional development as an art therapist in training. Data from 13 weeks of art-making and reflective writing revealed the following themes: (1) containment of difficult feelings (2) internal experience versus external expression, (3) effects of injury and caregiving on the marital relationship, (4) influence of personal experience on professional development, (5) effects of caregiving on personal well-being, and (6) the experience of reflective artmaking and writing over time. The following research questions guided the study: (1) What is the impact of my experience as a military caregiver and spouse on my personal self, (2) What is the impact of my experience as military caregiver and spouse on my current professional development as an art therapist in training, and (3) What are the implications of this study for art therapy practice and art therapists in training.


Although existing literature asserts that personal experience greatly impacts the development of professional identity among mental health professionals, the impact of personal crisis during graduate education and training—the formative period of professional identity development—remains largely unaddressed. Through engagement in this art-based heuristic self-study, I examined my own experience coping with personal crisis as an art therapy graduate student. I committed to eight weeks of art making and reflective writing in order to achieve greater understanding and self-awareness regarding the effects of coping with parental cancer and the death of my father on my professional identity development. Content analysis of the resultant artwork and writing revealed several recurring patterns and themes including trust in the art process, necessity of self-care, and maintaining appropriate boundaries between personal and professional experience. Synthesis of emergent themes and patterns also led to implications of art-based self-work for interactions with future clients, art therapy education and practice, and further avenues for research.

Within the field of art therapy, numerous processes and materials exist to promote expression of affect and the enhancement of creativity. These mediums are crucial to the progression of art therapy, including drawing, painting, and three-dimensional processes such as clay, containers, and fiber arts. Art therapy is part of expressive therapy, where puppetry, doll-making, and mask-making have moved from the field of drama therapy to art therapy. The evidence for certain techniques, such as costuming in art therapy, is still lacking. This study implies Landy’s continuum in drama therapy as parallel to Lusebrink’s Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) in art therapy, suggesting transference of costuming to art therapy. A nine-week heuristic self-study of costume-making was proposed through weekly reflection of related techniques, resulting in eight costume pieces and nine weekly art and written reflections. The data was analyzed through a content analysis, identifying the themes of affect, identity, art process, protection, the ETC, transformation/integration, symbolism/projection, acceptance, expression, containment, and aesthetics. Implications for the self, clinical application, and research in art therapy are identified, suggesting costume-making and costume-wearing as an effective art therapy process and material.


The purpose of this case study was to gain a preliminary understanding of the effects of art therapy on anxious and depressive symptoms in a 32-year-old African American military wife experiencing military-induced separation from her active duty husband. The mixed methods study design included administration of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) before and after six sessions of individual art therapy and a semi-structured interview conducted at the conclusion of the study to gain insight into the participant’s experience of art therapy. Results of the BDI-II revealed no change in overall score pre to post-intervention, but showed improvement in symptoms related to “loss of pleasure, punishment feelings, irritability, and changes in appetite.” Additionally, there was an 18-point reduction in State-Anxiety symptoms pre to post-intervention on the STAI. Themes derived from qualitative content analysis of the transcribed post-intervention interview included: (a) increased coping and reduced stress, (b) validation and expression of feelings, (c) increased self-esteem, and (d) art therapy is beneficial overall. Results of this pilot study suggest that art therapy may be effective in reducing anxiety and mitigating depressive symptoms in women experiencing military-induced separations.
The purpose of these two case studies was to explore the perspectives of women offenders diagnosed with co-occurring disorders on the treatment provided by a state psychiatric hospital, so that appropriate recommendations for changes in treatment may be made. Two women hospitalized at a psychiatric hospital in the DC metropolitan area participated in the study. Data was collected via two semi-structured interviews and a four-week eight-session art therapy treatment period that included both individual and group art therapy session. Three major findings emerged: 1) women with co-occurring disorders feel that they must hide or suppress their emotions, so they are not viewed as weak or crazy. 2.) Women diagnosed with co-occurring disorders have significant trauma and substances abuse histories. 3.) Women diagnosed with co-occurring either lack a family support or experience an extreme amount stress for not being with their families. It is recommended through the findings of these two case studies that a gender-specific treatment program should be developed to meet the individual needs of women with co-occurring disorders.

Undergraduate students can encounter a number of challenges leading to the development of heightened levels of stress. These challenges include financial strains, striving to create their own identity, forming a social network, and managing the demanding academic coursework requirements (Vázquez, Otero, & Díaz, 2012). This qualitative single-case study gives an undergraduate female student exploratory art activities to increase her awareness of the positive coping skills, inspire engagement in genuine creative expression, and discover alternative stress management techniques available. This case study utilizes the approach of Person-Centered Therapy allowing the participant to exercise autonomy in her experience of the art materials (Wedding & Corsini, 2014). Incorporating creative activities serves as a potential preventative measure against moments of heightened anxiety caused by the transitional period of adjusting to college life (Abbot, Shanahan, & Neufeld, 2013; Sandmire, Gorham, Rankin, & Grimm, 2012).

Within the oncology and hematology pediatric setting, there is a significant lack of mental health resource outlets for medical caretakers, specifically nurses. Due to their busy working schedules with the chronically ill and their families, nurses are often overworked and have high amounts of stress and burnout. This paper describes a qualitative case study involving story cloths that was
conducted over five session in an employee communal space. This case study introduced the use of story cloths and its ability to help the nurses decompress at the hospital, while also fostering communication with other nurses about burnout and self-care. Nurses were encouraged to participate in the group story cloth that was centered on the theme of community. While many nurses came to watch the project, only nine participated in the art-making portion of the story cloth. While creating the story cloth, themes of hope, resiliency, memory making, community, and love were depicted in the artwork. The story cloths sessions did provide the nurses an outlet to express themselves in a safe space.


This mixed methods study aims to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of three qualified art therapists relating to the use of personal art therapy. Due to the inherent presence of art-making in the art therapists’ work, the study intends to explore what perceived personal and professional life outcomes may be provided to art therapists who seek personal art therapy specifically, as opposed to other forms of therapy, by examining the relationship between art therapists and artist identity. The limited, but growing research on the use of personal therapy for therapists condones that mental health practitioners engage in some form of personal therapy not only as a means of emotional self-care, but also to obtain a more in depth understanding of the client experience and to gain additional exposure to experienced clinicians to achieve greater clinical mastery. Using brief, self-report surveys, as well as individual, semi-structured interviews, responses were collected and systematically categorized into seven main themes to be discussed and analyzed in accordance with the current literature on each. The themes include: personal outcomes of art therapy; professional outcomes of art therapy; incorporating personal therapy into graduate student training; reasons against seeking personal therapy; effects of the art-making process; artist identity; and art-making in clinical supervision. A triangulation of data from the verbal and written responses of each participant suggested that overall, the participants strongly agreed that personal art therapy may improve both the professional abilities and personal life of the art therapist client, and that its use be recommended for graduate level art therapy training programs. Limitations and recommendations for future research are outlined and discussed in conclusion.


This paper presents the findings of a heuristic self-study which explored how the process of creating art could help me, an adult child of divorce, find meaning in ambiguous loss/grief over the loss of my father due to divorce. Through the investigation of eight works of art and journaling done weekly during eight weeks in 2014, I have identified three major themes along with subthemes: resilience, “the bad,” and both “the good and the bad.” Under resilience, the subthemes of faith and family relations occurred most frequently and under “the bad,” the subthemes of brokenness and the unknown occurred most frequently. The art making process enabled me to explore my loss nonverbally in a manner I had never done before. Through this
heuristic self-study I was able to reflect more deeply on my experiences and both the positive and negative effects that losing my father due to parental divorce has on my life.


There are no studies that research the role of language match or differences between a therapist and a client in art therapy. This study examines the role of an individual’s native language and its effect on art therapy. This paper contains a literature review of the topic of language barriers in mental health services and the implications on treatment outcomes, cultural competence, and therapeutic relationships. The study utilized a qualitative case study method approach to observe and examine the effectiveness of a client’s use of Spanish and English languages in art therapy session. The researcher served as the art therapist and conducted sessions in Spanish and English with three Hispanic participants whose native language is Spanish. It was observed that participants used more affective words in the native language. During the use of their preferred language, it was observed that participants disclosed more about their personal life thus building a better therapeutic alliance. The results implied the need to bridge the language gap in art therapy in order to be more culturally competent and effective in art therapy treatment outcomes.


This paper explores how making and discussing art about spirituality supports and promotes the development of spiritual awareness and insight for individuals living with addiction who are beginning the process of recovery. There is a lack of literature about the use of art therapy to address spiritual concerns specifically with individuals in recovery from substance abuse. This paper aimed to contribute to this gap in the literature. A pilot intervention study was used to focus on honoring the qualitative data of three participants’ art-making experiences. The instruments to measure spiritual growth were: self-reported information, a questionnaire that assesses spiritual awareness, three art therapy interventions that included meditation and group discussions, a written post-study interview, and writer observations. Common themes arose during the interventions, such as nature, community, and perfectionism. The themes reflected in the artwork and the discussion mirrored the spiritual journey that each participant was experiencing in the moment. The qualitative data indicates that participants increased and strengthened spiritual awareness and insight by making art that specifically addressed spirituality and a relationship with a higher power.


Culture shock is a common occurrence among international travelers and if not appropriately managed, it can have potentially harmful affects. The qualitative study investigated the expression and management of culture shock from a group of undergraduate and graduate
students who participated in daily reflective journaling and response artmaking in South Africa over the course of three weeks. The reflective journal entries were examined using thematic analysis based on Hottola’s (2004) five phases of culture shock: euphoria, disillusionment, hostility, adaptation, and assimilation. The visual portion of the data, the response artwork, was used to enhance understanding of the written portion. Additionally, Taft’s (1977) definition of culture shock was used to further inform the coding process. The participants’ data reflected all five phases of culture shock in varying degrees and orders, with the first phase occurring most frequently at 70% and the third phase occurring least frequently, at 2%. Overall, reflective journaling and response artmaking has proven to be an effective tool for both identifying and processing culture shock, however; further research is needed in regards to the relationship between reflective journaling, response artmaking, and students’ experiences with culture shock abroad.


Attention Deficit Disorder Predominately Inattentive (ADD-PI) is a little known and often overlooked diagnosis (Greatschools, 2016). A diagnosis in adulthood can have further impact on the recipient’s quality of life. The goal of this heuristic study was to explore the crisis of being diagnosed with ADD-PI as an adult by creating art. As an alternative intervention to stimulant medication, artmaking was utilized as a behavioral modification technique to help create emotional awareness and focus when facing learning challenges. The questions explored were “How have these inattentive symptoms made an impact on my overall wellbeing?” and “How can art creation help me to confront a possible inattentive diagnosis?” The author engaged in 30-60 minute visual journaling sessions within a visual journal, approximately every 4 weeks. The art was done through line, shape, color, patterns, collage, and a few words of written expression. The artist believes this goal was achieved. Facing one’s ADD-PI challenges were more effectively confronted, with the utilization of art creation. The art became a visual and physical representation of the artist’s efforts in ADD-PI management, which increased feelings of confidence and motivation. Like others with ADD-PI, the artist is a visual and kinesthetic learner, leading to a gratifying art experience that became both informative and healing.


In addition to the known biological and psychological impacts of war, such as posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, grief-specific symptoms have been identified as an important component of combat-related stress that is often overlooked or treated after the fact in regard to other psychological symptoms. This pilot study aims to investigate the multiplicity of losses a veteran may experience during war, and suggests that current treatment options appear to overlook the impact of grief and loss. Research indicates that art therapy is a promising therapeutic modality for the treatment of PTSD, particularly for its ability to use imagery in a way that accesses traumatic memories in a safe way, to promote verbal processing, and to encourage an active construction of atrauma narrative, all of which support healing and recovery.
This pilot study will be the first of its kind to focus on the containment of a veteran’s military experience within a three-dimensional art form, utilizing the process of feltmaking. Lusebrink’s (1990) Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) provides a framework for the use of this medium, with an opportunity to transition within and between all three levels (kinesthetic/sensory, perceptual/affective, and cognitive/symbolic). One participant, neutral to the study’s inclusion/exclusion criteria, participated in this study. Pretest-posttest self-report inventories measured the impact of the felt box directive on symptoms of complicated grief and PTSD. In conclusion, the results showed change in a positive direction. Although neither hypotheses could be supported due to limitations of the study, the results and feedback generated provided important information that will positively inform future research.


This study aimed to investigate the role of visual journaling in moderating anxiety and occupational stress among firefighters. A small sample (N=6) of on-duty firefighters in a major metropolitan area took part in the study, a single-group A-B-A design. In the first meeting, participants completed a written packet containing questions on demographics, sources of occupational stress, and anxiety, followed by an interview with the researcher. They then engaged in a 3-week visual journaling period in which they were asked to draw or write about whatever was on their mind. At the end of 3 weeks, they returned for a follow-up questionnaire measuring occupational stress and anxiety, as well as a second interview. Although results were inconclusive, several important trends were noted in the qualitative data. The visual journaling exercise revealed coping and defense mechanisms at work, notably humor, seeking social support, intellectualization, and distancing. The theme featured most prominently in the artwork was relaxation, and an aversion to emotional material was found. More research is needed to investigate the role of art and art therapy in firefighter well-being.


Current research indicates poorer outcomes associated with bipolar disorder with psychotic features, as compared to bipolar disorder without psychotic features. Stabilization is critical during the first few years of illness, during which any relapse increases the patient’s risk for further relapse and chronic course. As such, this project explores (1) How does art therapy help address symptoms of bipolar disorders? (2) How do art therapy interventions enhance self-regulation in individuals with bipolar disorder with psychotic features? (3) What materials and processes enhance self-efficacy? To investigate these questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three board certified art therapists experienced in treating individuals with bipolar disorders. Thematic analysis of the transcribed conversations yielded five main themes that address the project’s questions, which include (1) approaches to art therapy, (2) safety and stabilization, (3) therapeutic relationship, (4) self-management, and (5) collaborative team. These themes relate to current research on self-regulation and self-efficacy that links illness representations to adaptive psychological and behavioral processes and outcomes. Further qualitative research that draws from larger samples sizes and collects data directly from patients
is recommended, in order to explore the ways art therapy relates to self-efficacy and self-regulation in individuals with bipolar disorders.


This study employed an object relations approach to art therapy and explored the perceptions of 4 children who were experiencing the deployment of a parent in the U.S. Military. Six individual art therapy sessions were conducted with each participant over the course of 6 to 8 weeks. The Bird’s Nest Drawing was selected as a pre- and post-test measure for evaluating potential changes in the graphic indicators that Kaiser and others have linked to parent-child attachment styles in various studies (Francis et al., 2003; Kaiser, 1996; Kaiser & Deaver, 2009; Sheller, 2007). The Ulman Personality Assessment Procedure (UPAP) (Ulman, 1975) was selected as a tool for evaluating and gaining insight into the participants’ responses to art directives and materials. Additional art-based interventions were selected and implemented on a prospective, case-by-case basis, depending on the unique needs and strengths of each participant. Results are discussed in terms of the themes that surfaced in the artwork and verbalizations of the children, as well as the utility and benefit of the art-based measures and individualized interventions. The limitations of the study are discussed, and recommendations for future research involving this deserving and underserved population are offered.


As art therapy is expanding outside of traditional settings, art therapists are broadening their approaches when working with clients. Many are recognizing the benefits of adopting socially active approaches and the importance of viewing clients within the larger system that effects their everyday lives. Through the implementation of socially active art projects, art therapists can bring awareness to social issues and even create social change. The present systematic review of literature provides a thorough understanding of how socially active art projects are currently being implemented. This includes data collected from site and participant variables, methods of art making and exhibition, and the benefits and impact of such projects. The most common benefits, as determined by analysis of the data, are: bringing together communities, increasing social awareness, creating interpersonal change, giving clients a voice, and offering emotional expression. Less common benefits include empowerment through artist identity, community wide change, problem solving, and memorializing. The findings of this systematic literature review demonstrate areas of successful implementation, guidelines for art therapists developing their own socially active art projects, and implications for further research.

This paper explores the experience of GWU graduate art therapy students in an international service-learning course. An emergent research design, with no predetermined hypotheses, was used to identify themes and patterns in the visual and written reflections completed by one cohort of students during their time in India. Data from a total of 13 participants were included in this study. Participants were primarily Caucasian females in their twenties. The results revealed five primary themes: emotional reactions, cultural awareness, challenges of service work, successes of service work, and meaning making. These findings are consistent with contemporary research in the field of cultural adjustment; they indicate that adjusting to a new culture is a complex process, involving a variety of factors and a wide range of emotional reactions, which ultimately leads to enhanced cultural awareness and personal growth. The findings also support current literature on the use of art-making and writing during the experience of cultural adjustment, suggesting that engaging in a combination of these two forms of expression can promote cultural understanding and growth. The implications of these findings for GWU and other graduate art therapy programs, as well as directions for future research, are discussed.


Presented in the following heuristic study is research exploring the effects of structured, semi-structured, and unstructured art making on mood. Every evening for three weeks, I completed either a predesigned mandala (structured), an open mandala (semi-structured), or made a free drawing (unstructured) in addition to gathering quantitative data using the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS) before and after art making and gathering qualitative data using reflective journaling after art making. Subscales within the BMIS, the Arousal-Calm scale and the Pleasant-Unpleasant Mood scale, were used as a focus to determine mood changes. Within the data is sufficient evidence suggesting that each level of structure influenced different facets of my mood in a positive or negative way, while leaving other aspects of my mood without any impact. The structured art making showed the greatest shift towards a calmer mood as well as an unpleasant mood; while the semi-structured art making had the middlemost effect on my mood. Finally, the unstructured art making was most effective at generating a more pleasant mood, however, it was least effective at generating a calmer mood.


As there is little research regarding the use of communication interventions in adults with profound intellectual disabilities who do not use language-based communication, there is a need for attention to be given to this topic. The use of art therapy as an approach to increase non-language based communication in this population is presented in this paper. The role of the Sensory/Kinesthetic level of the Expressive Therapies Continuum, an open-ended approach, and the use of mirroring were utilized over the course of ten weeks in eight one-hour long sessions with one male participant, age 33, who lives in a group home. The primary caregiver was interviewed before and after the art therapy sessions, and the researcher conducted three observation sessions before the initiation of the eight sessions and one after all of the sessions.
had been executed. The primary caregiver reported that the participant smiled and listened more after engaging in art therapy. The researcher found an increase in communication behaviors after the completion of the eight sessions, and qualitative observations by the researcher support these results. The importance of caregivers, the role of the object, and the development of the therapeutic relationship were central to the findings in this study. Given the exploratory nature of the study, future research will be needed to further promote the use of expressive therapies with this population.


This study explores the relationship of performing a Mindfulness Based Yoga Sequence (MBYS) while simultaneously making art and the effects it has on mind and body awareness. Over the course of six weeks this investigator performed a weekly thirty minute meditative yoga session while capturing the movements on cloth using charcoal. Pre and post reflections were made about this researcher’s physical and mental awareness/state, as well as, a narrative written reflection about reactions to the artwork. Results are suggestive that integrating the two therapeutic interventions can help to reduce anxiety and enhance an overall physical and mental well being. Results also indicated a deeper gained sense of self awareness through interaction between the Mindfulness Based Yoga Sequence and art making. Combining the two interventions elicited emotions and themes which were processed through the narrative journaling technique. The four themes emerged after reviewing the pre and post reflections were protection, resiliency, containment, and balance. Additionally, this paper presents indicators for the use of bilateral art as a technique which involves engaging the left and right brain hemispheres simultaneously. Existing research supports how activation of the whole brain can help to reduce anxiety by involving mental, emotional, and physical processing.


An arts-based approach is used in this heuristic self-study to explore the process of art making through the lens of an Internal Family Systems model to understand how art aids in recovering from complex trauma. This paper explores how parts of the self manifest in artwork, what purposes art serves for the parts, and how these investigations help the researcher understand the functions of art making as a way of processing trauma.


Childhood sexual abuse is defined as sexual exploitation involving physical contact between a child and another person in which exploitation implies an inequality of power between the abuser and the child (Green, 2008). In the United States 15% to 25% of women have reported being sexual abused as a child, which can lead to post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, negative
feelings about self, and depression (Draucker, 1993). The use of art therapy and visual journaling is a powerful, but under-researched tool, in treating the negative effects of child sexual abuse in adult survivors. In this pilot study researchers were looking at the effect of visual journaling in changing and reducing levels of depression in female, adult survivors of child sexual abuse. The data collected both from the visual journal, the Beck Depression Inventory II, Person Picking and Apple from a Tree, and The Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale indicate that the use of visual journaling may reduce symptoms of depression in survivors of child sexual abuse.


This paper describes the process of designing and completing a culturally relevant, community-based mural project with inner-city students of the D.C. public school system. All too often, inner-city youth lack the support of a two-parent household as well as the resources for creative expression due to arts education budget cuts, especially in low-income communities. This project is rooted in the assumption that planning activities that support group cohesion, such as brainstorming, cooperative learning, and peer interaction, contribute to the development of mastery and the creation of identity. Arts education should provide students with the opportunity to express thoughts and feelings as well as to feel that their art is important to them and to others. Art therapy can facilitate appropriate social behavior and promote healthy affective development, both of which enable children to be more receptive to learning and realize their social and academic potential. This project will explore the benefits of group mural making in an inner-city public school in Washington, D.C., from an art-as-therapy perspective. The goal of the mural project described in this paper is not only to involve the student population but to enable students to take responsibility for the brainstorming process and the development and execution of the mural. The project’s objective is to introduce a greater sense of student involvement, peer support, and pride in the academic community. The expected outcome is that the group and individual creative processes will help the students develop a greater sense of confidence, mastery, empowerment, and identity.


The effectiveness of art therapy for families of children with high functioning autism spectrum disorders or Asperger’s Syndrome was examined through a mixed methods design. Participants (N=6) were two families with one child diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome who participated in multi-family art therapy groups over the course of four weeks. Data was collected over a six-week period during a pre-session interview, art therapy sessions, and post-session parent focus group. Quantitative data was examined from pre and post administrations of the Parenting Stress Index Short Form (PSI-SF) and the BASC-2-PRQ. Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data is discussed and compared to previous research findings from reviewed literature. Findings suggest increased stress levels for parents with children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, possible positive effects of family art therapy for family dynamics and communication for the chosen population, as well as possible evidence for the effectiveness of art therapy for
individual family members as well as the family unit. Implications and further research are discussed and related to the field of art therapy treatment and research.


This paper explores the role and use of art therapy within the context of an eating disorder day treatment program. This topic has been investigated through the completion of a single-subject case study of a 28-year old single, Caucasian female diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa. The data collected was based on individual and group art therapy sessions. Major themes in treatment: motivation, emotion processing, depression, trauma, perfectionism, control, secrecy, and isolation are discussed and connected to prior literature. The results of this case study support previous data indicating varied treatment results for individuals with chronic eating disorders. Recommendations for future research are made in exploring the use of art therapy with this population.


This exploratory qualitative case study was utilized to examine the benefits of a phase-oriented art therapy approach in treating an individual with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). The participant was a 54-year old female who sought the services of a graduate student-run art therapy clinic to address her past trauma and current symptoms associated with the diagnosis of DID. Art therapy interventions were used in conjunction with a phase-oriented approach to address the goals of the first two steps of treatment: establishing safety and creating a narrative of the trauma. Artwork and verbal processing were gathered as sources of data in this exploration. Safety, fear and anxiety, and the trauma narrative were the themes that emerged. The results emphasized the importance of the first phase of trauma treatment in establishing safety through the therapeutic alliance, grounding techniques, and psycho-education. Through art therapy, the participant was able to communicate her inner experience through the art materials and establish a healthy relationship with the therapist. These were the first steps in beginning to piece together her trauma experience through a visual narrative.


Empathy is an important component of the therapeutic process. Art therapists, philosophers, and psychologists have touted the connection between art and empathy for decades. Yet, there is a lack of quantitative evidence supporting this conjecture. In this mixed methods study, the art therapist-researcher compared two experimental sessions implementing art processes with a control session utilizing verbal therapy in order to explore the effects of the presence of art on the development and portrayal of art therapist empathy. Results indicated that the presence of art, and the subsequent multiple modes of expression, allowed the art therapist to understand the
participants’ experience in a different way and connect with them on a deeper level. Though, differences between the results of the two experimental sessions suggest the power of art to enhance or disrupt the therapeutic alliance. Based on these findings, future research concerning the use of specific techniques to foster the creation of empathy in the art therapist is warranted and recommended.


Children with specific learning disorders are faced with many difficulties including low self-perceptions and poor social skills, in addition to primary academic struggles, which are most effectively addressed by metacognitive strategies. Art therapy has been shown to be an effective approach to improve self-related concepts such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, both of which impact academic achievement. Not only can art therapy improve self-perceptions, but it can also be utilized in a cognitive and metacognitive way to promote self-reflective regulation of thoughts and actions, which are essential to academic success. This paper reviews literature on the nature of self-concept and self-efficacy in children with learning disorders as well as the most effective practices for working with this population. Based on this review, an art therapy program informed by cognitive behavioral therapy techniques is presented as an interdisciplinary approach to provide the most thorough and efficient approach to working with children with specific learning disorders.


This project examined the impact of group art therapy on adolescents experiencing suicidality from three different groups in three different settings (an outpatient setting, an intensive outpatient program, and a partial hospitalization program) in the greater District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia area. Data was collected through the method of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with the three art therapist group facilitators. Data analysis yielded four themes and four subthemes. The themes were: (1) therapist experience; (2) adolescent risk factors; (3) interventions with subthemes of (3a) mindfulness and (3b) art; (4) resilience with subthemes of methods that were (4a) direct and (4b) indirect. The emergent themes with the most noteworthy showing of data points were resilience and therapist experience. After analyzing these results, the methods of actions for instilling resilience and reducing symptoms of suicidality in these groups were found. The resultant themes were supportive of the literature on the topic. The questions were raised as to whether or not this was an efficacious measure of the research question, as quantitative or mixed method studies including measures for resilience and data from non-art therapists may be necessary.

Compassion fatigue is a response to hearing about the traumatic events of significant others. Those in the helping professions are particularly susceptible to the development of compassion fatigue, due to repeat stories about others’ trauma. While there is literature describing the use of art therapy to prevent compassion fatigue, there is a lack of literature on the use of art therapy or art making in treating compassion fatigue. Trauma therapy is recommended to treat compassion fatigue, and art therapy has been beneficial in the treatment of trauma. This heuristic study sought to begin filling a gap in research about art therapy’s use in treating compassion fatigue. A heuristic study on the impact of treating compassion fatigue was conducted. Through the artwork, it was found that the author progressed in identity development from a place of feeling deep personal brokenness because of compassion fatigue, to a superficial injury that can be treated. The identity developed from an elevated estimation of self before compassion fatigue, to a broken identity after compassion fatigue, and finally to a recognition of one’s humanity and need to accept help and care for self at the end of the study. In this heuristic study, art making was a helpful way to address the underlying beliefs associated with compassion fatigue. Future research can explore the generalizability of the benefits of art making and art therapy.


Although over 400,000 children have been accounted for in foster care placement, very little research has been conducted on successful therapies with this population. The purpose of this practicum-based case study is the investigation of art therapy with an integrative psychotherapy approach and the effectiveness of this treatment model. Included in this case study, is a literature review on art therapy and foster care, 26 art therapy sessions for one hour a week with an adult who lived with a relative foster home, and the results of his treatment. Theoretical rationale and overview of his art therapy treatment plan was evaluated through thematic content analysis. Using a qualitative approach, the individual’s sessions were evaluated for emotional needs, reduction of depressive and anxiety symptoms as indicated by Clinic Surveys, and treatment plan. Three major emotional needs surfaced: frustration, feeling unloved, and disappointment. Evidence indicated that the individual receiving art therapy intervention showed a reduction in symptoms, and felt his emotional needs were addressed and processed in art therapy.


This paper explores the ways in which the creation of a book of feelings, in an art therapy setting, can aid in facilitating an understanding of emotions for an adolescent with autism. The literature suggests that adolescents with autism have a deficit in emotional recognition and an impaired capacity for managing emotional states. This case study focuses on a 17-year-old Caucasian male diagnosed with autism, who exhibits difficulty in his ability to use appropriate coping skills to manage emotional states. Through individual art therapy sessions, the participant used both digital and traditional art media to explore recognizing emotions through
body language, processing the reasons behind emotions, and considering coping skills for managing emotions. The researcher found an increase in the participant's ability to recognize and manage emotions after the completion of an eight-week protocol; and qualitative observations by the researcher support these results. The importance of art therapy for fostering emotional recognition, awareness, and regulation; the role of various art media; the process of storytelling; and the use of the final product as an at-home coping strategy were central to the findings in this study.


This heuristic study examined the author’s participation in personal art therapy, response art, and reflective journaling as tools for self-awareness. It followed the author’s growth while processing resurfaced traumatic grief alongside her professional development, as she constructs her identity as an art therapist. In therapeutic professions, there is no way to leave your life experiences at the door. However, through increased self-awareness, the therapist can learn how to recognize and react to instances of countertransference and view them as opportunities to increase her understanding of the therapeutic relationship. Themes found during this study included professional development, personal development, internal resources and external resources. Through this study the author realized how much of an impact her traumatic grief has had on her life both personally and professionally. Through the use of these introspective tools she has began to learn to use her experience to inform her belief in the healing power of art as well as her approach to art therapy with clients.


This study explored how art therapy could facilitate processing staff members’ wilderness experiences. The literature indicated there is a high need to reduce wilderness staff burnout and turnover (Marchand, Russell, & Cross, 2009) and that art therapy lowered burnout symptoms of staff members working in fields that experience high levels of stress (Potash, Ho, Chan, Wang, & Cheng, 2014; Visnola, Sprudza, Bake, & Pike, 2010). This paper outlines three wilderness staff members’ responses to an art therapy workshop that took place during the off-season at summer-based canoe guiding camp. Qualitative data was gathered in the form of observations of the group, staff member artwork, written responses about the artwork, and an audio recording of the discussion from the workshop. The discussion was transcribed, added to the written responses, and then subject to line-by-line coding analysis. The themes that arose from the codes were narrowed down into five overall categories: anxiety, responsibility, control, hope, and process. When reviewing the relevant literature and correlating it to the staff member responses I found that the artwork and the workshop aided the participants in processing and understanding their feelings of anxiety, responsibility and control, as well as encouraging feelings of hope and camaraderie to increase hardiness.

This paper explored the possibility of the benefit of applying art therapy into the couples therapy. The traditional couples therapy addresses the importance of verbal treatment, which is easy to build up couples’ defense. This study used the non-verbal and untraditional art therapy to testify if couples could improve their marital relationships. This study used Wadeson’s (1973, 1980) conjoint art techniques as the tool. There were two sessions and both included the joint picture without talking, which could highlight the importance of the non-verbal tool. This study also used the pre- and post- Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) scale (Schumm et al., 1986) to measure the changing of marital satisfaction, which could represent one important index of the marital relationship. There were three couples attending this study to see if these two art therapeutic sessions could change or bring different perspectives into their marital relationship. The study compared couples’ attitude and behavior between two sessions, and used the changed degrees of the pre- and post- KMS scale to understand if the marital satisfaction would increase or not. Three couples have different cultural backgrounds: the first couple comes from Taiwan; the second couple comes from America; the third couple is mixed that the husband is Indian and wife is American. The difference between their results was also an interesting issue to explore. The result did not show specifically the degree of the marital satisfaction, but the art-making process showed how art therapy affected their interaction and relation.


This research examines the use of art making and reflective journaling for self-exploration about experiencing cultural differences between oneself and an art therapy client. This study utilized arts-based heuristic research design to understand how the experience of art making and reflective journaling can further racial and cultural identity development. This researcher investigated her identity status according to Helms's White Identity Development Model by taking into consideration the following identity aspects: SES, ethnicity/race, and developmental disabilities. This study found that by demonstrating art making and reflective journaling aided the researcher’s cultural development. The implications highlight considerations for developing the researcher’s art therapist identity when working cross culturally.


A qualitative case study approach is employed to examine the role that art therapy in the recovery of two women with eating disorders in a partial hospitalization program. The study focuses on three interventions: “Road to Recovery,” “Feelings Textures,” and “Self as a Developing Seed” demonstrated to be specifically beneficial to this populations in related research, and provides an overview of additional art therapy sessions conducted over the course of treatment and their perceived effects on recovery. The primary method of data collection involved artwork, individual and group verbal processing, observation of behavior and processes, and treatment background. The results suggest art therapy’s positive effects on self-awareness,
emotional identification and expression, self-actualization, self-esteem, goal setting and coping skills acquisition for the individuals involved. The conclusions suggest that creativity through art therapy plays an important role in bridging the disconnect between internal processes and outward expression of emotions, while providing the individuals with positive coping skills, autonomy and mastery through artistic expression. The case study supports the need for additional research on the topic of art therapy in the treatment of eating disorders.

Key words: art therapy, eating disorders, treatment, recovery, interventions, case study


This paper explains my process of exploring my experiences related to chronic illness by engaging in a heuristic, mixed-methods, self-study, utilizing Clark Moustakas’ 6-stage model of self-immersion (1990). For 12 weeks I completed visual journaling directives in response to emotional issues surrounding chronic illness for 2 hours each week. Pre and post study cortisol was collected and pre and post session heart rate, heart rhythm, blood pressure and self-report measures were collected. I analyzed written work, art work, and the above biomarkers in the aim to answer the questions, “what themes emerge from the individual’s art work and journal?” and “what are the effects of visual journaling on stress, anxiety, the grief process, and mood?”

Through this three-month long visual journaling process several themes immerged in the journal and art. The three most common themes were: Medical (illness, hospitals, medication, surgery, and doctors), Life Death and Time, as well as Family and Friends. The visual journaling process reduced stress, anxiety, and negative affect or (NA) as shown by pre and post salivary cortisol, self-report measures State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1983), Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson & Clark, 1994). (Positive effects on vital signs were observed according to pre post heart rate, ECG, and blood pressure and positive affect or (PA) increased as shown by pre and post (PANAS) measures). Results of this study indicate that visual journal can be an invaluable therapeutic tool, increasing mood and decreasing anxiety and stress. Because of the nature of a self-study, changes in the two self-report measures and heart rate, ECG, blood pressure and cortisol cannot be analyzed for significant affects, nor are the results generalizable to medical populations. Although this is stand-alone research, I recommend that an efficacy study be conducted to more fully support the positive mental, physical, and emotional effects of visual journaling on populations coping with chronic illness.


To date, there has not been a comprehensive review of community-based art therapy, which has continued to expand in the field. This study explored how community-based art therapy is employed in various communities through a systematic literature review of social action articles from Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association. Theme, population, techniques of practice, participant involvement, ole of the therapist, balance of power and cultural factors were reviewed. Integration of ideas, strength of individuals’ identity within a culture and possible social change as a result were observed to measure the amount of
community engagement. Based on this review, community-based practices have an overarching theme of uniqueness in format. A multitude of environments, cultures, ages, races, genders, and socio-economic statuses were present in the articles. Themes of community building, empowerment, and art as language were found to be most prevalent. Art therapy was able to transcend boundaries and bring together communities to further social action. Resulting data shows the importance of creating a structure to meet the needs of each unique population and the ways art therapy can adapt to meet those needs.

Martinez, Johanna. (2016). Assessing the development of multicultural/diversity competencies among art therapy graduate students through their art journals (Unpublished master’s culminating project). The George Washington University, Alexandria, VA.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discern the development of multicultural and diversity competencies in art therapy graduate students who participated in the George Washington University’s International Social and Cultural Diversity course in India in 2012. The art journals created by a cohort of thirteen art therapy graduate students, which included visual and written entries, were used as the data set. Using the American Art Therapy Association’s multicultural and diversity competencies, the researcher created an a priori coding system and observed how the written and visual entries reflected or not reflected self-awareness, the knowledge of the clients’ worldviews, and art therapy skills in developing and implementing culturally attuned interventions. The researcher found that a majority of the art journals depicted an increase in the students’ awareness of their personal values, cultural heritage, biases and assumptions. The art journals showed some development in the other two competencies. However, it is suggested that future studies include interview with art therapy graduate students in this study abroad program and other data sources in order to gain a more holistic perspective on a student’s development of multicultural and diversity competencies.


This culminating project describes a heuristic study in which I examined my experience as a graduate art therapy student responding to historical and artistic representations of the Holocaust. I focused on how my self-awareness may have been affected by reading the graphic novel Maus and visiting the permanent exhibition of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). Qualitative data consisted of keeping a visual journal as I read Maus and using a protocol designed by Betts, Potash, Luke, and Kelso (2015), including an art therapy directive and discussion questions, while visiting the USHMM. Content analysis of both the drawings and text revealed frequently occurring themes of self-awareness and empathy. Subthemes of self-examination and general empathy were especially numerous. Findings suggested the necessity of future research regarding reading graphic novels and the utility of keeping a visual journal as an experiential learning opportunity for art therapy graduate students. It is recommended that future studies include more test subjects and more researchers to analyze data.

This study investigated the integration of art therapy interventions and the museum setting. Data was collected using qualitative, semi-structured interviews with three art therapists who have experience with art therapy programming in the museum setting. Data analysis revealed seven themes and six subthemes as significant factors impacting the successful integration of art therapy in the museum setting. The themes and subthemes were: (1) role of the therapist, (a) responsibility to participants, and (b) responsibility to museum; (2) museum setting, (a) ‘sacred space,’ and (b) accessibility and resources; (3) structure of the museum visit; (4) method of evaluation; (5) interrelatedness, (a) personal, and (b) interpersonal; (6) participant empowerment; and (7) sensory experience. From the themes that occurred in the data analysis, the role of the therapist: responsibility to museum, museum setting: accessibility and resources, and the structure of the museum visit were identified as key factors in ensuring a successful program and accounted for the most data points. Through analysis and discussion, the results reveal the importance of established methods of evaluation and documentation pertaining to the areas of funding, sustainability, and accessibility to communities through programming. The study also revealed that the integration of art therapy interventions into the museum setting, consistent with established literature, does have a positive effect on participants. Moreover, museum education is a reasonable practice to include when providing art therapy services in addition to the introduction of museum objects in art therapy practice in the museum setting. Additional research assessing long-term benefits using well documented, qualitative and quantitative studies that include data from museum educators and non-art therapists is desirable.


Phenomenological qualitative research was conducted to explore the effects of art therapy with Vietnamese Nationals in comparison to students from the George Washington University. Due to the gap in literature addressing collectivist and autonomous worldviews in the mental health field, this research was conducted. This is the first time that the Vietnamese population is represented in art therapy research. The emergent process looked for themes within written, verbal and artistic processes incorporating the World Café model as data processing and analysis, NVivo9 software and finally open, axial and selective coding. It was found that group therapy was a positive experience for both groups of participants and that group cohesion, social interaction, and sense of belonging was an important factor in the research groups.


This paper presents the results of a heuristic self-study, using Moustakas’ heuristic model (1990), that explored the effects and process of intuitive watercolor painting on stress, relaxation, self-awareness and self-care. In this study 12 watercolor paintings were completed in 12 sessions over the course of six weeks. The sessions were 20 minutes each. There was no particular goal
that influenced the outcome of the painting, instead the materials were used intuitively. The experience of stress, relaxation, self-awareness, self-care, as well as the art process was measured using an altered Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983) in the first two sessions followed by a pulse rate phone app. The altered Perceived Stress Scale was replaced by journal entries after two sessions because the Scale turned out not to be an appropriate method for this study. The pulse rate smartphone app as well as the journal entries were consistently applied before and after the remaining 10 sessions. Furthermore, four altered scales of the Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale (Gantt & Tabone, 2012) were used to reflect on one’s personal art making style to increase self-awareness. The results of the study suggest that the art intervention had a stress reducing effect that also increased my sense of relaxation, promoted self-awareness, and self-care. In 10 out of 12 sessions, my recorded pulse rate was lower after completion of the painting. In conclusion, the intuitive watercolor painting appears to be an effective method to reduce stress and increase self-awareness. However, since this is a heuristic self-study the results may vary from person to person. More research needs to be done to gather relevant data to generalize these findings.


Brief art therapies may be cost effective and time efficient treatment modalities with individuals making the transition from incarceration to society and living with substance use disorder. This study utilized a mixed methods approach to measure the impact of art therapy interventions on the self-efficacy of three male participants living with substance use disorder. This research utilized the projective art based assessment Bridge Drawing (Hays & Lyons, 1981), the Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (ANS-IE) (Nowicki & Duke, 1974), and The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) to measure self-efficacy levels of males living with substance use disorder. This paper contains a literature review of research that demonstrates the use of art therapy as an effective method of treatment in the prison environment. Art therapy has been shown to unify diverse populations (Argue, Bennett, Gussak, 2009a, & Gussak, 2009b) and impact individuals moving from a higher level of care to a lower level of care. The results imply that the introduction of brief art interventions increase self-efficacy.

Ortiz, Emily. (2017). Fiber arts as therapeutic interventions: Implications for the field of art therapy (Unpublished master’s culminating project). The George Washington University, Alexandria, VA.

This project explores the current uses of fiber arts in art therapy through qualitative interviews. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with art therapists who currently use fiber arts in their therapeutic practices. Examination of the interview data led to the identification of six themes and two subthemes that address the questions of how and why art therapists are using textile arts with clients. Two themes were identified as uses of fiber arts in art therapy: (1) Social action and (2) community. Four themes and two subthemes were revealed as being factors in the usefulness of incorporating fiber arts in art therapy. They were (3) gender; (4) cultural connections; (5) meaning making; (6) therapeutic aspects of fiber arts, (a) materials and (b)
processes. Therapeutic aspects of fiber arts: Processes and community were the most frequently occurring themes, suggesting that the techniques involved in fiber artwork and the group setting in which fiber arts are frequently practiced may play an important role in the perceived benefits of fiber art work. Though the data presented in this project is not necessarily generalizable, it provides a review of the existing knowledge regarding fiber arts and art therapy and identifies avenues for future study.


The relationship between self reports of artistic ability and experience, and Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale: the Rating Manual (FEATS) (Gantt & Tabone, 1998), ratings based on normative Person Picking an Apple From a Tree (PPAT) (Gantt, 1990) assessment and still life drawings was explored through a pilot study using both quantitative and qualitative data. This paper details the process of modifying the original research design to accommodate one participant. Data was collected during one session in which the participant created two drawings and filled out a questionnaire. Both drawings were rated using the FEATS and an artistic ability rubric designed by the student researcher and the research advisor based on six FEATS scales. The participant questionnaire was examined using content analysis to discover themes, which helped to better inform the quantitative data. The results are discussed and compared to previous research. While no formal statistical analyses were conducted, findings from the present study support the benefits of conducting normative research, and suggest that art experience and artistic ability are important factors to consider during art therapy assessment and treatment. Limitations and future research of the present study are discussed in the context of the field of art therapy.


The objective of this study was to determine the opinions held by art therapists concerning the benefits and consequences of including technological elements - email, texting, video conferencing, digital achieving - and digital media as a therapeutic tool. Articles related to digital media and technologies used in art therapy, published in the Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association, from 1985 (vol. 2) to 2014 (vol. 31), were subjected to a systematic review. The goal was to determine how techo-digital media is applied to art therapy practices, and the spectrum of opinions on the use of digital media as a therapeutic tool. The results indicate that the published articles in Art Therapy often contain bipolar thinking. These conflicting views range from early support of the technological advancement of art therapy (CAnter, 1987; Weinberg, 1985), to mixed views as the digital age progressed (Alders, Beck, Allen, & Mosinski, 2011; Austin, 2009; Canter, 1987; Collie & Cubranic, 1999; Malchiodi, 1999; McLeod, 1999; McNiff, 1999; Parker-Bell, 1999; Peterson, 2010; Peterson, Stovall, & Elkins, 2005; Weinberg, 1985). Through this systematic literature review, it was determined that technology has provided art therapy a global platform for communication and advocacy (Asawa, 2009; Kapitan, 2009; McLeod, 1999; McNiff, 1999; Peterson et al., 2005). Nevertheless, it
appears that with the rapid development of technology, art therapists opinions have shifted, becoming hesitant in its use as a therapeutic tool (Austin, 2009; Canter, 1987; Collie & Cubranic, 1999; Gussak & Nyce, 1999; Kapitan, 2007; Klorer, 2009; Mattson, 2012; Orr, 2006; Parker-Bell, 1999; Peterson, 2010; Potash, 2009.)


Art therapy is a comparatively newer branch in the field of mental health care. Before it officially became known as art therapy, some visionary artists and health care professionals had already started noticing the benefits of art, thus tapping into art for therapeutic purposes. One such person is Rawley Silver. This narrative inquiry sheds light on her work through many decades, working with people who were hearing impaired and could not speak, people who had mental disabilities and/or people who had emotional disabilities. However, this paper mostly explores Rawley Silver's journey in relation to the author's own journey. The paper also explores the similarities and differences in their lives as human beings, women, wives, mothers, and art therapists. The author conducted the research for this paper through a series of live interviews with Rawley Silver, also utilized articles, books and art by Rawley Silver, along with supporting articles related to the paper by other researchers.

Schaerrer, Francesca. (2015). A case study tracking the developmental progress of 6-year-old twin brothers through their artwork (Unpublished master’s culminating project). The George Washington University, Alexandria, VA.

Twins experience a multitude of changes entering the school setting where their separation is often a difficult adjustment, but it eventually nurtures their individual development. This qualitative case study explores assisting six-year-old identical twin brothers with classroom separation. The art therapy directives are used to identify developmental lags and track the changes through their artwork. This case study is approached from the theoretical orientation of Humanistic and Person-Centered Therapy. It examines how Art Therapy provides a means to identify creative developmental markers and track progress over time.


Family as a unit is often defined as a social context of an individual. Many clinicians and therapists in the mental health field recognize the merits of looking at a broad picture of a client’s family background in treatment. In order to answer a question about how enlarged understanding of family background serves and assists the progress of a child with defiant behaviors and stress management issues, it is proposed to explore a direct involvement of a family member in art therapy treatment. Hence, this qualitative study uncovers a case of one such child and his mother in family art therapy, conducted in South Korea. Through the in-depth narratives of ten sessions (one intake assessment session, eight family art therapy sessions, and one final assessment session), this study describes the phenomena of family interactions between
the two participants, along with their produced artwork, and investigates the changes in communication patterns and family dynamics. In addition, two different types of art assessments: Kinetic Family Drawing and Family Art Psychotherapy, were administered before and after the treatment sessions, to provide comparative analysis of the participants’ progress. Accordingly, three emerging themes: changed family dynamics, progress of the identified child, and significance of the art, are discussed to countenance the parenthetical question. As a conclusion, this study examines the applicability of family art therapy and how it can be beneficial in a multifaceted way.


This paper explores how directive-based art therapy groups can be effective in increasing internal locus of control among a culturally diverse population of adolescents admitted to the inpatient psychiatric unit of a large children’s hospital in a major metropolitan area. Following a review of the relevant literature, several case studies are presented and discussed as they relate to locus of control. Analysis of the artwork suggests that mild to moderate changes in locus of control can be achieved. A brief addendum follows addressing the same topic among elderly adults, specifically those with dementia. A single case study spanning six months is presented which supports the hypothesis that art therapy can be effective in strengthening an internal locus of control.


This study investigated the effects of an intervention that combined creating self-portraits and viewing art historical examples of self-portraits on self-esteem, mood, and the visual expression of participants. Two participants were consented for the study; both were evenly matched for age, ethnicity, and level of education, but represented disparate levels of comfort and familiarity with the artistic process. This study employed a mixed methods, repeated measures A-B design to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. In the first and fifth sessions, participants engaged solely in the art task of creating a self-portrait to provide pre- and post-test measures, and the intervening three sessions included the review of an art historical example of self-portraiture. All forms of the data were reviewed, including the artwork created, participant remarks, observations by the investigator, and scores from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The qualitative and quantitative data were then considered collectively within the framework of the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) as an assessment (Hinz, 2009) to illuminate differences across the protocol and between participants. Both participants showed changes in visual expression as a result of viewing art historical examples, and theoretical explanations regarding the differences between the two are explored. The findings suggest that future research on the nuances of using the self-portrait and art historical images independently in art therapy should be pursued.
Bilateral art therapy pairs creative expression with sensorimotor or verbal activity to engage both hemispheres of the brain. Some studies have indicated that bilateral art therapy can facilitate the resolution of traumatic experiences. In this case study, the author administered four different bilateral art therapy protocols over the course of six sessions, in order to answer the research question: “what is the experience of bilateral art therapy like for the client?” The client was a young woman with a history of trauma. The method was a qualitative case study, relying on video recordings, artwork, verbal discussion, and pre-post surveys for data analysis. Results seemed to support the research that bilateral art therapy may unblock traumatic experiences and promote healing. Above all, bilateral art therapy seemed to be a powerful vehicle for accessing a client’s inner emotional life and sensory memories.


A qualitative case study approach was used in an attempt to determine if the scent of art materials would evoke emotional memories in an art therapy client during an art therapy session. Lisa Hinz’s (2009) Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) assessment was implemented during an art therapy session, whereupon the case study participant was directed to pay attention to the scent of an art material, as she made art during the ETC assessment. The aim of this intervention was to determine if the unique scents characteristic to a range of art media would evoke emotional memories within an art therapy client. These emotional memories are assumed to be related to associated learning experiences from when an art therapy client experienced an art material in the past. The conclusion of this case study was that the participant’s experience of the art materials during the ETC assessment did not involve scent-evoked-emotional memories. Rather, it was observed that the tactile qualities of the art media influenced the participant’s response, which is in line with Kagin and Lusebrink’s (1978) theory of the ETC. However, the Mr. Sketch brand scented markers included in the intervention influenced the compositional content of the participant’s artwork. Further research may be required in order to form more conclusive results as to the specifics of the olfactory system’s psychological influence during art therapy practice.


The Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978) is a theory that provides a framework for classifying visual expression and processing of information into a hierarchical structure ranging from fluid to resistive. It explores how properties of art media influence information processing from the Kinesthetic/Sensory level up to the Cognitive/Symbolic level. The purpose of this exploratory culminating project pilot study is to examine how media property preferences relate to an individual’s style of information processing, as identified by Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) (1983) and measured by the Multiple...
Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales (MIDAS) instrument (Shearer, 2009). Three subjects completed an art experiential that instructed them to explore various art materials, ranging from fluid to resistive, in a sequential fashion. Artwork was scored on a fluid to resistive scale and compared to MIDAS scores.


This study examined the impact of art therapy on academic performance in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Data was collected in the form of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with the three DCPS art therapists. Analysis of the data revealed eight themes and six subthemes regarding how to evaluate and contextualize the impact of art therapy on academic performance. The themes presented in two discrete categories: overall impact, and impact on academic performance. The themes categorized as assessing overall impact were: (1) clinical setting; (2) approach to intervention; (3) service delivery model, (a) targeted intervention, and (b) systematic support; and (4) definition of roles, (a) distinct specialty, and (b) responsibility to students. The themes categorized as assessing impact on academic performance were: (5) identifying underlying issues; (6) process of targeting improvement, (a) direct, and (b) indirect; (7) method of evaluation; and (8) student empowerment. Of the themes that emerged, approach to intervention, service delivery model, and process of targeting improvement yielded the highest number of data points. Through analysis and discussion, these results served to raise the question of whether improved academic performance is indeed a reasonable measure of success in therapeutic support and intervention within the school setting that includes services provided by an art therapist. The study concluded, however, that if schools require concrete evidence that art therapy has a direct, measurable impact on improved academic performance in order to motivate the creation and expansion of school-based art therapy programs, then more evidence is needed. Quantitative or mix methods studies that include data from academic reports and non-art therapists may be necessary.


The death of a parent is a universal experience, and healing from this loss can be one of the most difficult challenges that an individual endures within their lifetime. This qualitative single case study explores the grief of a twenty-year old female who entered art therapy treatment following the sudden loss of her father. In this study, the participant’s grief process is thoroughly addressed within an art therapy setting using two different grief frameworks: Meaning Making and Meaning Reconstruction, followed by Continuing Bonds. Furthermore, the integrative use of visual metaphors and symbols were encouraged throughout the participant’s art therapy process to facilitate a more in-depth means of grief exploration.

This paper describes an art therapy program design for using altered books with adolescents with emotional disturbances in residential treatment. Three male adolescents, ranging in age from 13 to 17 years old, completed individual art therapy sessions for the course of one semester as a pilot for the Tearing Pages program. The program’s goal is to show improvement in the adolescents’ self-concepts and sense of personal identity through altered book making. This will be measured through interviewing the participants, the art therapist’s clinical notes and viewing the altered book as a document of the adolescents’ lived experiences. The altered books also acted as an externalized representation of each client’s experiences at the residential treatment facility and their progress during art therapy. The books acted as a way to provide structure and consistency to the art therapy sessions, and the adolescents developed patience, ability to delay gratification, and understanding of how the book could be used as a vehicle to tell their stories. The art therapist gained a wealth of information about each client and his growth and progress towards developing a sense of self.


This research paper explores the impact of art therapy and a cognitive behavioral treatment approach in modifying the problem behaviors of a child in a practicum-based case study. The literature suggests that children with behavioral difficulties benefit from cognitive behavioral techniques such as problem-solving, positive reinforcement, and relaxation techniques. It also suggests that the group therapy format is beneficial, in that children’s emotions and behaviors are normalized and validated. The format of this case study was a practicum-based case study which focused on a 10-year-old, biracial female who exhibited behavior difficulties and aggression towards other classmates in response to bullying. Through individual art therapy sessions, the participant engaged in directives to explore emotions and problematic behavioral responses in the classroom. It was found that through the art therapy interventions with the participant, she developed more appropriate responses to bullying using effective coping skills. The implications from the study suggested the importance of uncovering the causes of the problem behaviors, the significance of relaxation techniques and coping skills; the process of expressing disturbing thoughts and emotions through art making and verbal processing; and the development of a safe and warm therapeutic relationship between the participant and the researcher.


This study investigated common elements of community-based art therapy and art intervention services for homeless adolescents and adults in Washington, D.C., to determine the specific needs of homeless adolescents and inform a basis of competent art therapy practice serving homeless adolescents in Washington, D.C. Three qualitative interviews were conducted with facilitators of art therapy and art intervention services for homeless adolescents and adults in Washington, D.C. Interviews were coded to determine common elements of the community-based services. Data analysis revealed the following eight elements, which include goals, methods, and outcomes of the services, as well as needs of the population: flexibility and stability, person-centered approach, goal-oriented approach, safety and community, access to
resources, offsetting systemic restrictions, social and emotional growth, and autonomy and identity. Specific needs of homeless adolescents identified within the common elements are: safety, community, access to resources, creative communication and expression, stability, empowerment, autonomy, and the need for more services. In response to the need for more services for homeless adolescents, these core elements of art therapy and art intervention can inform art therapy practice that targets the specific needs of homeless adolescent youth in Washington, D.C.


Children who fall under the umbrella of special needs, whether it is due to an intellectual or physical disability, a psychiatric diagnosis, or multiple disorders/diagnoses, often struggle with emotional regulation. This paper reviews literature concerning common practices and programs, across therapeutic modalities, implemented, with a focus on preventing and de-escalating children experiencing acute emotional outbursts, within this vulnerable population. Based on the resulting data, it appears reactive techniques have given way to school-based, long-term, preventive interventions strongly rooted in the cognitive behavioral approach. While art therapy has garnered some success in areas of ideas of self and fostering ego strength it has yet to be significantly implemented as a means of increasing the internal management resources of children that fall within the spectrum of those with special needs. It was also found that inclusion of a parent component, providing skill-building and opportunities for group processing, increased intervention efficacy in all studies that utilized this additional approach. As a result of the findings, recommendations for further integration of art therapy practice into pre-existing, evidence-based, cognitive behavioral approaches as well as its implementation as an independent approach were offered. Limitations concerning the restricted sample size, scientific rigor and ethnic diversity of the studies reviewed were identified and explored.


This paper presents the findings of a heuristic self-study in which I explored themes of countertransference while reflecting on previous art therapy sessions with three children diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder. My interactions with the children occurred during my first year internship, while attending The George Washington University, at a Maryland hospital. I created three different response artworks over a 22-day period. After each art making session I wrote reflective journal responses describing my experience creating the artwork. Following the art making and journaling, I used two different expected codes to determine themes of my countertransference reactions. First, I utilized Wilson and Thomas (2004) Type 1 and Type 2 modes of countertransference. Type 1 incorporated denial to detachment modes of the patient's trauma history where as Type 2 involved modes of dependency to rescue fantasies. Second, I used Pearson (1991) archetypal structure of the Warrior as a means to determine my identity formation as a child therapist. My findings indicated a strong propensity toward feeling protective and wanting to become a savior in the
lives of the children. This heuristic study has strengthened my ability to become self aware of my therapeutic practice while also fostering a greater sense of empathic attunement while conducting art therapy with children.


The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not themes found in mandalas drawn after personal therapy sessions would parallel treatment progress. Both mandalas and visual journals are well known tools within art therapy, but there is little research about using a combination of the two. In this study, Joan Kellogg’s Great Round was utilized as a framework within which conduct a art-based heuristic investigation. Mandalas were coded according to Kellogg’s Stages, and by comparing the dates to each coded mandala, I was able to observe patterns in my thought processes. My findings suggest that I exhibit a fearful-avoidant attachment type. This statement is based on my cycling throughout the Stages following distressing interpersonal events. The results indicate that utilizing this method can reveal knowledge that may not be immediately visible within therapy sessions. In addition, it is suggested that mandala journaling may be a useful tool to use in conjunction with regular sessions. Recommendations for future research and limitations of the study are outlined.


This paper aims to explore ways art therapy can aid in understanding a sibling of a pediatric oncology patient’s experience with cancer and how art therapy can foster exploration of self-concept in the midst of grief and loss. The limited, but growing literature suggests that siblings of pediatric oncology patients experience a myriad of emotions, from more empathy towards others, to guilt, jealousy, loneliness, and anger. Due to the high demands of cancer treatment, unexpected losses and changes within the family system occur and this population has been identified as needing psychosocial support. This case study focuses on a 7-year-old Caucasian female whose identical twin was diagnosed with acute erythroid leukemia (AEL) 6 months prior to the study. Through individual art therapy sessions, the participant expressed how cancer affected her life and explored her recent losses due to her sister’s treatment. A triangulation of data through the individual art therapy sessions, a standardized open-ended interview with the participant’s mother, and the Personal Attributes Inventory for Children provided a single understanding of the participant’s experience and self-concept. Themes from her art included remaining healthy, loss of shared experiences with her twin sister, loss of attention and time with parents, loss of home, normalcy and routine, and the transitional roles. Limitations and recommendations for future research are outlined.

The Bird’s Nest Drawing (BND; Kaiser, 1996) is an art therapy assessment that provides information about an individual’s attachment security. The current study examined a data set derived from Harmon-Walker and Kaiser (2015), comprised of graphic indicators of 136 adult undergraduate students’ BND drawings, that was used to determine validity and reliability of the BND in relation to attachment security. Participants completed the BND, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), and the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire (ECR).

In the present study, the BND Story Rating System was developed, yielding nine thematic content areas. Chi-square analyses were conducted to test for correlations between demographic variables, ECR, IPPA scores, BND-TCC (Two Category Checklist), BND-OIF (Overall Impression Form), and the BND story data from the original collection (n = 136). Two of 11 graphic indicators reached statistical significance when compared with attachment score groups. The inclusion of a family of birds was significantly associated with high IPPA scores and bottomless nests were associated with low ECR scores. An association was also found between overall impression ratings and the ATM (Attachment to Mother) sub-scale of the IPPA. A significant relationship was reached between positive coherent stories and high ATM scores; positive coherent stories and secure and fearful OIF ratings; negative coherent stories and low ATM scores; concrete descriptive stories and insecure OIF ratings; humorous stories and insecure OIF ratings; humorous stories and age; and mid coherent stories and ethnicity. These results provide preliminary support for the importance of triangulation of multiple data points in which the clients’ qualitative descriptions of artwork are factored together in conjunction with quantitative global rating systems of a drawing for a more complete evaluation process.


In today’s society, providing advocacy for population commonly referred to as homeless is being regarded as significant social issue. There are numerous studies and programs established to resolve and connect with such an issue. However, these establishments often operate in a narrow scope by unilaterally defining this rather unique population as homeless. Such myopic scope and definition does not explain or account for diversity that penetrates this particular population. This qualitative case study explores an open group studio art therapy approach for a diverse group of homeless population who need special attention in our society. This case is examined through the lens of the large amount of current research on homeless advocacy, group art therapy programs, and art therapy open studio programs. The case also explores the writer’s reflections on working with this diverse population and addresses important factors of how art therapy played a significant role in a homeless advocacy program.


Marked developments in neuroscience provide extensive knowledge of pernicious influences on the brain that can result not only from a life-threatening trauma, but also from “small t” traumas, such as maltreatment and prolonged exposure to anxiety-provoking experiences. Different forms of bilateral art therapy protocols have been effectively used for the treatment of trauma related
disorders. Bilateral art therapy approaches are neurologically-based art therapy protocols that purposefully facilitate an engagement of both the hemispheres of the brain during creation of art through varied bilateral stimulation. Current research seek to gain comprehensive understanding of effects of bilateral art therapy for an individual with traumatic experiences. It was hypothesized that bilateral art therapy will have positive effects on an individual’s symptom release such as mood stabilization, trauma processing, decrease in anxiety and/or depression, as well as decrease in cognitive distortion. This research was conducted as a retrospective single case study, and was created through in-depth qualitative data collection and interpretation from multiple sources, such as documentation of the researcher’s clinical notes and journals; the participant’s direct feedback; observations; artworks; and the themes revealed during the sessions. The results supported that bilateral art therapy, through the repeated use of both hands along with the scribble technique, facilitated an integration of the cognitive left-brain and emotional right-brain processing. The positive effects of bilateral art therapy were manifested in the participant’s improved abilities of association and verbalization as well as improved emotion. The findings of this study could lead to future research on the different types of bilateral art therapy protocols and contribute to the field of trauma treatment.


This paper aimed to explore cross-racial/ethnic therapy dyads between minority-group member therapists and different minority-group member clients. There is limited research about these types of cross-racial/ethnic therapy dyads, with the majority of research focusing on White therapist/minority client dyads or minority therapist/White client dyads. Working cross-racially/ethnically with other minorities presents unique transference and countertransference issues given historical and present-day race relations and tensions in the United States. This heuristic inquiry was specifically intended to examine how the minority-group member art therapist is personally affected by working in a cross-racial/ethnic therapy dyad with a different minority-group member client. Through pre-artmaking journaling, response artwork, and post-artmaking journaling after art therapy sessions with my client, I examined my own reactions to the therapy dyad and discovered six themes: direct vs. subtle discussion of racial/cultural identity, use of personal “we” form, empathy through artwork, distinct minority experience, empathy with minority experience, and empathy with human experience. My findings showed that I had difficulty relating to her distinct minority experiences, but empathized with our shared minority experiences and shared human experiences. These themes demonstrated the uniqueness of minority cross-racial/ethnic therapy dyads and indicated a need for further research. Limitations and recommendations for future research are outlined.
Loyola Marymount University
Master of Arts in Marital Family Therapy – Clinical Art Therapy


This qualitative case study explores the long-term effects of domestic violence through the lens of art therapy treatment. The study is based on a twelve-week long art therapy treatment group for women who have experienced domestic violence. The study includes a literature review and a qualitative analysis of the participants’ artwork and details of their experiences of domestic violence related trauma. The research focuses on two participants and utilizes textual and visual analysis to identify four emergent themes: Family and identity, hope in moving forward, support and connection, and freedom. The findings discuss the value of art therapy in revealing coping skills, strengths and internalized fears related to domestic violence trauma. The women in the study illuminate an increase in awareness of internal resources and hopeful narratives for healing. The study demonstrates the potential of art therapy to make visible the long-term effect of domestic violence, and assist in the treatment of survivors.


This research examines the impact of acculturation and immigration through the lived experience of first, second, and third generation Hispanic/Latina clinical art therapists. The objectives include the exploration of cultural identity, processing the immigration experience and the role of art therapy. Topics that emerge in the general literature include development of identity, depression, and immigration-related stressors. Although the art therapy literature is limited within the context of immigration and acculturation, information regarding the role of the art, common imagery in groups, and the importance of cultural awareness is available. An arts-based approach is used in the clinical work to help inform each researcher’s acculturation and immigration experience. Through the clinical modality, each researcher processed their immigration story. Themes of sense of identity, family, tension/struggle and choice of materials arise in the findings. The meanings, for each participant vary, encompassing the differences in each of the immigration and acculturation experiences. The results expose the variety of issues encountered when working with immigrant and acculturated Hispanic/Latino/Latina individuals. The findings include the impact of identity, mental health issues and immigration-related stressors.


The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and beliefs of art therapists towards Evidence-Based Practices (EBP). EBP is a rising trend in healthcare that refers to the process of using empirically validated research to make clinical decisions that best meet the needs of each client (Patterson, Miller, Carnes & Wilson, 2004). The investigators used a mixed methods.
approach to the research topic. Part A consists of a survey distributed to graduates of the Department of Marital and Family Therapy (MFT) at Loyola Marymount University (LMU). In addition to answering questions, survey participants were asked to create an art response depicting their perspective on the relationship between art therapy and EBP. In the second phase (Part B), the researchers used an arts-based methodology to further explore the findings from Part A. Part B involved the creation of key idea cards pulled from the literature review and the findings, individual art responses by each investigator, and verbal and written analyses of the content and process. The idea that art therapists are already integrating EBP and art therapy in their practices emerged as the major finding of the research. This realization that clinicians are already at the intersection of EBP and art therapy was a contrast to the cautious divided attitudes that were discovered in the literature review. Further research could not only strengthen the evidence base of art therapy, but also illuminate how exactly therapists have managed to bridge the gap between EBP and art therapy.


The purpose of this research was to explore cultural similarities and differences that could be found from analyzing the images of the Kinetic Family Drawing and their accompanying narratives. The current literature on the Kinetic Family Drawing as an assessment tool and the literature on the role of culture in psychotherapy were examined. The researchers have collected Kinetic Family Drawing images and narratives from groups of college students from the United States and groups of college students from two different areas in Mexico. Participants were asked to perform the Kinetic Family Drawing, title the drawing, write a brief narrative about the drawing, and list any cultural affiliations that may aid in contextualizing the drawing. Researchers used the Kinetic Family Drawings and the accompanying narratives collected to look for similarities and differences in perceptions of family among the different cultures and the ways in which environment and culture may impact family and family perceptions.


This research explores the connection and interaction between literature describing addiction theory and clinical art therapy practice. Literature spanning a wide variety of theoretical understandings of addiction and recovery was reviewed, as well as literature published on the use of art therapy with the substance abuse population. Using the review of the substance abuse literature as a base, key theoretical concepts were identified and formatted into a table that came to serve as a data coding system. Applying case study methodology, this coding system was then utilized as an analysis tool for the art therapy process and artwork of four clients in residential substance abuse treatment. Analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of five prominent themes amongst those listed in the coding system: 1) Intolerance of negative emotion 2) Problematic family dynamics 3) Traumatic experiences 4) Schemas and restructured cognitions and 5) Cultural issues. These findings were then examined in the context of the art therapy literature on substance abuse. The meanings derived from these findings make a case for greater...
integration between substance abuse literature and art therapy literature, illustrating the utility of clear and organized incorporation of theoretical ideas about addiction into art therapy with substance abuse clients.


This research paper explores the use of creative arts therapies with children and families in a pediatric hospital setting as experienced by the therapists who provide these services. The research investigates art therapy, music therapy and dance/movement therapy at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA), with an in depth consideration of the role of art therapy services in this setting. The researchers reviewed general literature regarding hospitalization, specifically its effects on children and families, availability and role of psychosocial services and the intensive care units (ICU). Literature discussing creative arts therapies (art therapy, music therapy and dance/movement therapy) was also reviewed, with a focus on art therapy and its role in medical settings with children/families, with pediatric cancer patients and in psychosocial services. Based on information gleaned from the literature review, the researchers crafted an online survey utilized to gather information regarding the experience of providing creative arts therapies in a pediatric hospital setting. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with three selected survey respondents to further explore these experiences through interview questions and art making. The qualitative data from survey/interview responses, including the art, was reviewed and analyzed by the researchers. Analysis of the data resulted in five prominent themes from the online survey data: being present, family, support, change and identity. Four prominent themes emerged from the interview data: empowerment, culture, being present and identity. The researchers then examined these themes in the context of the general and art therapy literature. The meanings derived from these findings demonstrate the importance of continued and expanded use of creative arts therapies in pediatric hospitals.


This research seeks to utilize an art experiential to explore the potential of art and art making as a means to stimulate empathy towards refugee populations. Researchers attempt to show how art can evoke empathy and inspire social action by communicating the experiences of marginalized communities, specifically Syrian refugees. This research follows a qualitative approach utilizing appropriate quantitative methodologies for data analysis. The research design includes experiential art based focus groups, implementation of guided relational viewing (Potash & Ho, 2011), surveys, response art, and verbal discussion. The data analysis observes for common themes among the three parts of the experiential, and assesses for graphic empathy (Potash & Ho, 2011) and empathic imagination (Kapitan, 2012). Our inquiry explores how participants from two groups, undergraduate studio art majors and first year art therapy graduate students, understand and relate with the experience of Syrian refugee children through art viewing and making. Researchers’ examine how these processes may act as a way to stimulate empathy and act as a catalyst for social action. After analyzing the participants’ response art and their
discussions about the art viewing and making process, researchers identified four major themes distinguishing the two groups, and three major themes the groups had in common. Researchers’ examination of pre- and post-surveys on attitudes and behaviors towards refugees indicated changes that informed the conclusions of this research. Researchers conclude with a discussion of the results and how the results inform answers to the research questions and future implications.


This research examined the usefulness of art therapy techniques in the assessment of attachment in couples treatment. This case illustration consisted of one couple who were invited to complete four questionnaires, participate in individual and joint art making tasks. The participants also engaged in conversation and discussion about their art and their experience throughout the art making process. The data was then analyzed and categorized into three emerging themes: (1) Relational dynamic between participants (2) Relationship and response to the art, and (3) Integration of shared and personal experiences. Through the discussion of themes, researchers found that art techniques, specifically the nonverbal joint drawing task, was a beneficial and useful tool to assess a couple’s attachment.


This research examined the usefulness of art making in exploring sexuality. Specifically, women participating in partners of sex addicts groups and the LGBTQ online community were invited to take an online survey, exploring both visually and verbally discuss how they view their sexuality and how they think others view their sexuality. The data was then analyzed within and between categories to produce three overarching themes: (1) Expressing sexuality: the tension between the self and others (2) The usefulness of art making to explore sexuality, and (3) Limitations and challenges of the study. Through the discussion of the themes, researchers found a dichotomy between how participants see their sexuality and how others see it. Art was found to be a useful device for exploring the emotionality and complexity of sexuality.


This study explores how Landgarten’s Family Art Assessment can provide clinicians with valuable information about families that can be used to advocate for the needs of the children in the family. A comprehensive literature review covers family assessments using art developed by Psychologists, family art assessments created by art therapists, and the benefits of using them in clinical treatment. The researcher utilized a qualitative research approach. The data gathering took the form of surveys and semi-structured interviews with clinicians at a community mental health agency following their participation/observation in a Family Art Assessment administered to a family on their caseload by a board certified art therapist. The researcher used textual
analysis of the interview transcription to identify emergent themes. The emergent themes included: the impact of domestic violence, power dynamic, disconnection, and the therapist’s efforts to increase connection and communication in the family. Study findings indicate that Family Art Assessments, when used as a consultation service administered by an experienced art therapist, can serve as an invaluable tool to provide clinicians with a more complete understanding of the families they are treating quicker than verbal therapy assessment methods alone. The findings also indicate that the Family Art Assessment helped clinicians conceptualize their cases from a more systemic perspective that considers the children’s environment and relational patterns within the family as contributing to their problem behaviors and symptoms, and allowed clinicians to envision a path in treatment that included advocating for the children’s needs.


This research is a qualitative art-based study exploring trauma markers found in the artwork of serial killers through the participation of licensed art therapists trained in the identification and treatment of trauma. The literature review covers a broad range of variables that influence the development of mass murderers, and how art therapy may be useful in working with serial killer populations. The study offers a unique, non-verbal exploration of the trauma experienced by serial killers through the art therapy lens. The three participants provided invaluable data through their responses to a questionnaire and creation of response art that demonstrates evidence of complex trauma, military trauma and traumatic brain injury; all of which were supported by previous research found in the literature. Themes identified through the analysis of the data included: communication, representation, chaos and violence, life and death, and illusion of power. This study demonstrates the importance of understanding serial killers’ psychological makeup, the traumas and other experiences that have profound impacts on them, and the contexts in which they develop. This may lead to a better understanding in how to look for the warning signs in their development and artwork; allowing for the potential to prevent such violent behavior with early intervention.


The purpose of this study was to explore existential group art therapy (EGAT) as an alternate or integrated method in treating clients with substance abuse and a history of trauma. Subjects for this study were male and/or female adults, ages 18 and older, volunteer participants who were in treatment for substance addiction at Tarzana Treatment Centers. A group of seven participants who met the criteria for both substance abuse and history of trauma received Existential Group Art Therapy (EGAT) treatment for eight consecutive weeks. Participants were asked to fill out the Scale for Existential Thinking (SET) at the start of the group and at the end of the treatment process to determine whether or not there was an increase in “existential thinking” following eight weeks of EGAT. The group engaged in the art-making process and discussion of their artwork each week, and were asked to answer Post Group Survey Questions (PGSQ) after the
termination of the group. This study details four of the seven participants since they attended most consistently and were deeply engaged in the process. The statistical significance of the observed results was measured using a paired two sample for means T-test (one-tailed). Changes in SET scores were deemed to be statistically significant with a result of p


This research explores the impact of a three day Artist Residency Program at a K-8th public school on a Native American Reservation. The program is evaluated through a lens of Social Action Art Therapy and aims to uncover how this program impacted a community—including teachers, students, and parents, and facilitators. The researcher examined social action literature, social action art literature, social action art therapy literature, as well as social action with Native Americans literature. The researcher used a qualitative approach, specifically an Inquisitive Case study, in which data was collected through the researchers notes. These notes then informed the creation of a survey that was given to teachers as well as the Artist Residency program facilitators. Next, the researcher conducted interviews for further examination of the impact. All the data was placed into an organizing table in which four main themes and three minor themes emerged. The resulting data themes include: 1) Art illuminated the students Native American Hoopa identity and culture, 2) art increased student participation, facilitated storytelling, and conversations about the student’s feelings and art provided a sense of agency, 3) art created and strengthened bonds among the students, teachers, parents and facilitators and facilitators were seen as role models for the students, and 4) the facilitator’s desire to be involved in similar art therapy social action projects increased as they were personally and professionally impacted by the Artist Residency Program. Three minor themes include: a) Some teachers found new ways to integrate art in their classroom, b) the foreign art medium choice increased risk taking, engagement, creativity as well as provided students with new skills, c) some changes noted, more time needed to see larger change. These themes were then examined in the context of art therapy social action literature and findings suggested positive impacts of the social action art therapy informed Artist Residency program.


This research examines the experience of a long-term creative arts project within a women’s cancer support group. Specifically, the research explores the effects of a creative arts project on quality of life. Literature describing cancer support groups has been reviewed, as well as literature published which specifically studied the effects of art therapy with those living with from medical illnesses including, but not limited to, cancer. Qualitative data was gathered through surveys, interviews, and by analysis of the creative art projects. Group participants were offered the directive to create an altered book in which to express their cancer journey. The art directive was a long-term project, with participants given the opportunity to work on their altered books over the course of six months. Both the processes by which the creative art projects were created as well as the content of the finished products were evaluated. Four prominent themes were discovered during analysis of data; time, a sense of life and growth, gratitude for social
connections, and the creative process. These findings were then examined in the context of the general literature as well as art therapy literature on medical support groups. The research supports general literature which identifies that cancer diagnoses and treatment can create social isolation, creating a vital need for social relations and connection. The art therapy research studied chose to focus more on the art product, whereas this research also greatly considers the process of the art-making as significant data.


Art therapy and narrative therapy techniques are both used separately in treating sexual abuse, however they are not often used together. This heuristic study explores the experience of a wounded healer when using art within a narrative therapy process, specifically storytelling, to support healing from multigenerational incestuous abuse. This researcher used a science fiction story she is currently writing, to stimulate 8 reflections on the parallels in that story and in her personal trauma narrative, and then made adjoining art pieces about the reflections. The data was analyzed to find themes, such as protection, anger and fear. The art helped support the story by documenting the journey of wound healing. Both the art and text informed the creative synthesis, which exemplified this researcher’s process of forming her identity as a wounded healer. The parallels found in the science fiction story helped reveal and enlighten this researcher’s own trauma narrative and encourage self actualization. This study supports the use of art and storytelling with survivors of multi-generational incestuous abuse.


This research explores mentorship as it developed through the lived experience of adolescents who participated in a community arts outreach program, for a lower SES Latino population. The purpose is to identify different roles of mentorships and relationships that contribute to the program. The literature review looked specifically into adolescents as mentors, understanding the developmental impact on mentees, such as peer relationships and natural mentors focusing on the Latino culture. The art therapy literature looked at art therapy and the affects on the Latino culture as well as art therapy process in community-based programs. Utilizing qualitative methodology the researcher conducted an open-based interview that including art directives. The collected data explored the lived experiences from two original members, based on their participation as mentee’s and mentors in the program. The results of the data emerged into themes that emphasize the value of mentors for adolescents, the value of natural mentors and the connection to collectivistic values in a Latino culture.

Miller, Angela R.; Thomas, Alice Mary; Rivera, Melissa; Pfaff, Brooke A.; Zuanic, Ana; and Esquivel, Monica. (2017). *BAAAMM* (Master’s final research project). Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu

BAAAMM was born in April 2016, when a group of six creative researcher-artists came together to investigate cultural identity through art making. Through searching, reaching, and wrestling,
the group developed creative experiential processes by which to discover and communicate cultural identity through art and language. Over a few weeks, the creative researcher-artists generated a body of work expressing their unique cultural identities and felt responses to one another. This diverse collaborative wants to share their work to stimulate others to enter the realm of creativity, vulnerability, and receptivity to understand themselves better. BAAAMM is an exploratory cultural happening exhibiting individual and collective creative findings. BAAAMM is a collaborative endeavor to understand, communicate, and connect oneself to others. BAAAMM is a multicultural work of progress. This Jagazine (journal and magazine) chronicles the seven phases of BAAAMM's research. It provides brief biographies of the creative researcher-artist and captures our extended findings, additional art and written work inspired by the investigation. This Jagazine is part of our original research project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Art at Loyola Marymount University within the Department of Martial and Family Therapy. This magazine will be presented at the American Art Therapy Association Annual Conference on November 9, 2017. Warning! This dynamic research is not for the faint of heart. It tests boundaries, schema, nerves, and feelings. Those who passionately search for opportunities to express themselves artistically and verbally, disagree, negotiate, be called out, humble, connected to others, and be heard may find that this cultural identity research framework stimulates growth and gratification.


This arts-based research investigated the personal responses of a trainee art therapist working with displaced refugees in Jordan. This inquiry is based on the belief that it is important for a new trainee to cultivate a broader appreciation of cross-cultural issues for both personal and professional applications. The art-based data, analyzed through Betensky's (1995) phenomenological approach, inspired a profound exploration of the refugee experience while simultaneously exploring the role and identity of the trainee. The author presented seven prominent themes that emerged from the refugee and trainee experiences: displacement, survival, connection, loss of control, safety, competence, and countertransference. Between both refugee and trainee there are three main shared themes, (a) connection, (b) loss of control, and (c) safety, which highlight shared meeting points of empathy. The research highlights meeting points and differences between the trainee and refugees to provide a deeper understanding of the refugee experience as understood by the trainee. The results of this research strive to provide insight into the ways art-making can help trainees navigate through cross-cultural encounters.

Moses, Edith Matilda. (2017). A review and analysis of the MFT Clinical Art Therapy Program at Loyola Marymount University in connection to a clinical case study (Master’s final research project). Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/

This capstone project explores the themes and principles of the Clinical Art Therapy MFT graduate program at Loyola Marymount University to a clinical case study. The purpose of the study is to provide a comprehensive overview of the connections between academic learning and its clinical application, and to illustrate the role of academic learning in identity formation for a student. It incorporates the therapist’s own art making process as a part of the inquiry strategy.
Personal identity, as defined by Mason and Vella (2013) are “those things that distinguish individuals from each other”, and which may require effort “something to be invented rather than discovered” (p.236). In art making, the process and the creation of the art product support the assumption that the creation of identity involves an internalization of social influence and it requires invention. Identity formation in children, according to social theory, occurs in context of the family, and significant others, whereas values and attitudes about self place them in society. Art teachers can use this to help “problematize mythical and stereotypical representations of childhood and family relations and increase awareness of multiple viewpoints (Trafl, 2008). These viewpoints can be reflected upon in art therapy increasing self-awareness by contemplating alternative viewpoints and perspectives in a supportive environment. Cognitive psychologists understand self-awareness as a key indicator of personal identity (Leary and Tangney, 2003. p3). Henriques views the human ego as a self-awareness system (as cited in Schaffer, 2005, p. 50), with the capacity to use ones mind as an analogy of the minds of others, including differences in perspective and in recognizing the limits of what others know (p.50). According to Mason and Vella (2013), individuals develop a self-image via their reflection very early in life, and they may decide to change themselves due to the judgments of the people they interact with, or perhaps, rebel against change. These stages of development transform identity. The self-portrait can assist in one’s examination of one’s changing self and evolving self-schema contributing to self-awareness in the context of the therapeutic relationship. Charles Horton Cooley, interested in the development of the self, formulated The Looking Glass Self-Theory (as cited in Schaffer, 2005, p.53) which posits that people’s self-image is based on how they suppose others perceive them, and that the looking glass self is actually the product of an active process of construction through the developing mode of imagination (p.53). This phenomenon can play out in the therapeutic relationship as transference and counter-transference, and can be used to examine personal identity in the process of reflecting upon one self, in the supposition of how the other perceives them. The art therapist’s identity evolves in the context of the therapeutic relationship, whereas she is providing her self to the other, and in her understanding of how she is perceived by the other, that her self-awareness and self identity becomes known to her.

Peña, Lauren E. (2016). The role of the art therapist: A multi-faceted approach (Master’s final research project). Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ This research explores the role of the art therapist in a nonclinical setting. The research dissects the experiences of nine art therapists who participated in an artist residency that was informed by art therapy but was not clinically based. The spectrum of literature reviewed focused on the professional identity of art therapists and therapists as well as social action art therapy and working with Native American cultures. A qualitative approach was utilized through the conduction of a focus group along with four individual interviews, which were both enhanced by a parallel art making process. Analysis of the data resulted in four significant themes: illuminating strengths and activating existing resources, containment, chaos, and finding hope amidst inadequacy. The findings were triangulated with the art therapy literature reviewed on the identity of the art therapist as well as leading art therapists’ visions for the field’s future. The research accentuates the complexity and significance of art therapists participating culturally informed, with underserved communities and redefining their role in order to carry out that purpose. In sum, the research offers insight into how art therapists can creatively and with great sensitivity, “meet clients where they are at”.

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This research is a qualitative art-based case study exploring the facilitation of resilience through the observation of a resiliency-building art therapy group with adolescents. The researcher was the subject and utilized both direct and participant observation of a ten-week resilience-based art therapy group to gain a better understanding of how an art therapy group in a school setting is run. Reflective art making that mirrored the art directives given in the group were incorporated by the researcher to gain a deeper and more personal understanding of the resilience building process. The literature review covers a broad range of resilience and a variety of methods for observing therapy. The weekly art directives were based on the resilience literature and designed to develop personal strengths, self-discovery, communication, self-reliance, problem solving, flexibility, and future planning. Themes identified within the analysis include: flexibility, structure, anxiety, cohesive relationships, and creativity. The researcher found that flexibility in the co-facilitators and structure in the art therapy program are key elements in a successful group. Through this study the researcher identified the usefulness of direct and participant observation of therapy for developing clinical skills and highly recommends both be included in therapeutic training programs.


This research examines the effects of a daily, ritualistic, intentional practice of Sufi meditation Tamarkoz, Sufi Zikr and art making in the life of a female art therapist graduate student, in a transitional professional and developmental stage of life. The general psychology and art therapy literature were examined to look at contemporary understanding in the integration of spirituality and art in mental health. A lack of information in the art therapy literature prompted the interest in the development of this study to respond to this inquiry. This art-centered research informed by a heuristic, phenomenological, dialectical inquiry of self-examination, encompassed the practice of Sufi Zikr and Sufi meditation Tamarkoz as understood from the perspective of the Sufi Order Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi School of Islamic Sufism, followed by art making as a way of documenting and contextualizing the qualities of the internal and external emotional landscapes to uncover themes and broaden self-knowledge in the support and enhancement of growth and well-being. The data was analyzed by looking at emergent themes. Conclusions drawn aligned the combined practices of art making and spirituality to that of a relational home where the Self and all parts of the psyche can coexist and contextualized for meanings to emerge and healing to take place. The findings of this inquiry were in overall alignment with the reviewed art therapy literature; gaps in the reviewed literature were noted in the exploration of the somatic component of the practice of art making as it relates to healing. Further research is warranted to expand and explore the data and the uncovered areas.
Art therapy is a comparatively newer branch in the field of mental health care. Before it officially became known as art therapy, some visionary artists and health care professionals had already started noticing the benefits of art, thus tapping into art for therapeutic purposes. One such person is Rawley Silver. This narrative inquiry sheds light on her work through many decades, working with people who were hearing impaired and could not speak, people who had mental disabilities and/or people who had emotional disabilities. However, this paper mostly explores Rawley Silver’s journey in relation to the author’s own journey. The paper also explores the similarities and differences in their lives as human beings, women, wives, mothers, and art therapists. The author conducted the research for this paper through a series of live interviews with Rawley Silver, also utilized articles, books and art by Rawley Silver, along with supporting articles related to the paper by other researchers.


This qualitative research study examines the use of art therapy as a treatment modality with transgender individuals, as well as provides a brief background into transgender identity, in order to recognize considerations for enhanced care of this population. A semi-structured interview approach was applied with art therapists who have utilized art therapy with transgender clients. This study focuses on areas of identity development, aspects of trauma and transphobia and their effects, treatment approaches, and cultural components to working with transgender individuals. Through this research, a recognition of transgender identity as its own cultural entity was found to be important in providing increased awareness and visibility of transgender treatment concerns.


This qualitative research study presents an examination of the role that art making fulfills in the recovery efforts following the development of a physical disability due to a trauma. Pre-existing literature informed the current study on art making’s ability to manage psychological and physical stressors that can accompany the development of a physical disability due to a trauma experience. The current study utilized a focus group to gain a better understanding of art making’s benefits by obtaining firsthand accounts from individuals with experience incorporating art making in their own recovery process. Data collected during the focus group suggests that the art making process is beneficial as part of the recovery efforts. Data showed that art making possesses the ability to aid with the processing of psychological and physical stressors encountered during recovery, and functions as an integrative process that helps individuals to accommodate their new identities. Such findings suggest that the inclusion of art therapy, of which art making is the core foundation, can be a beneficial component to incorporate into recovery efforts.
This research investigates the researcher’s experience of the integration of art making within sensorimotor psychotherapy as they relate to the resolution of attachment trauma. The heuristic method of research inquiry was employed in which the researcher was the subject in the research. The basis for the research was an increasing awareness of attachment trauma present in her life history. A review of the literature yielded that a large body of research had been published on attachment theory, trauma, and art therapy. There existed at the time of the research inquiry a lack of literature exploring the utilization of art making in sensorimotor psychotherapy. Data was gathered in the form of artworks created during individual psychotherapy with a psychologist certified in sensorimotor psychotherapy and in the form of post-session reflective writings. The artworks and post-session writings were analyzed. Themes that substantiated the research inquiry emerged. Multiple meanings were derived from this research. A primary meaning was the recognition that the therapeutic alliance coupled with art making and sensorimotor psychotherapy provided a secure environment for integration of attachment trauma. Further research is warranted. There is a potential for development of methodology for incorporating art making into sensorimotor psychotherapy for clients with whom the process is merited. Future iterations of the developed protocol might include replications of the study and modification and expansion of the protocol. The protocol could be employed for processing other types of trauma. Additionally, there is a need for more art therapists who are concurrently trained in sensorimotor psychotherapy.

This study discusses the intergenerational impact of mass incarceration on families. The general literature repeatedly described the negative effects of mass incarceration among children who have an incarcerated parent by pointing to the difficulty of educational attainment, social exclusion, stigma, substance abuse, and the exacerbation of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and antisocial behavior (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Miller & Barnes, 2015; Turney, 2014). Unfortunately, most incarcerated individuals are parents and most incarcerated women are mothers (Scudder, A., et al., 2014, and Miller, et al., 2014). Through the use of art, service providers (artists, clinicians, etc.) that facilitate parent based programs in correctional facilities or re-entry programs can alleviate the trauma caused by incarceration that affect the emotional and mental well-being of families. Two organizations that provide art programs to incarcerated parents participated in a qualitative study about the effective use of art in their programs. Themes from the interviews discussed the value of cultural humility, as well as the role of social justice and restorative justice frameworks when providing art-based programs for parents. The lack of trust, compassion, and empathy were barriers in the process of delivering services to families. Since the creative process is inherently inclusive and actively engages its participants (e.g., therapists, patients, observers), the results of this study point to art creation as a
vehicle that promotes trusts and supports family relationship restoration in order to intercept the cycles of intergenerational trauma.
Long Island University
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Traumatic events can have long lasting effects on a child's development. A review of the literature will describe studies that indicate that art therapy can be effective in dealing with the aftermath of trauma, specifically as caused by a natural disaster. Some children do not have the ability to verbalize their feelings and art therapy gives them the opportunity to visually express their underlying emotions. This thesis presents a case study of a five year-old female whose family lost their home during Hurricane Sandy. She presented with symptoms of depression, withdrawal and anxiety both at home and at school. This researcher hypothesized that providing art therapy sessions for her could be helpful in decreasing those negative effects. Results include all of the descriptive data from observations during and after the sessions, the child’s artwork, discussions with the child and her teacher, as well as observations by school staff and her mother. These results indicated that she had fewer depressive, withdrawal or anxiety symptoms, and had a higher degree of overall positive affect after the 8 weeks of art therapy. Although this study was limited and cannot be generalized with a larger population since it included only one subject, there were several interesting results which might form a basis for additional meaningful research.

Keywords: art therapy, PTSD, natural disaster


Utilizing art therapy methods and the creative process within the schizophrenic population is very therapeutic for the participant. Various techniques and directives allow for the art therapist to assess, analyze and understand an individual's symptoms. This case study introduces both two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials along with art therapy assessments. Drawing, craft and clay materials were used along with art therapy assessments such as road and bridge drawings. Art therapy has a definite therapeutic impact on individuals who suffer from chronic schizophrenia, paranoia type, by increasing symbolic expressionism and reducing symptoms of social anxiety and rigidity. The data collected supports that there was a specific change in the participant's mood, affect, self-expression and sociability. The findings of the study identify an increase in motivation and flexibility. Art therapy treatment leads to positive change of mood, emotions and creativity over the course of the sessions as well as in daily life. The therapeutic implications of art therapy are also discussed in the context of the participant developing coping skills with struggles of the unknown.

Keywords: art therapy, schizophrenia, self-expression, materials, asociality, depression, symmetry

Despite the generally improved legal definitions of rape and sexual assault, many of the negative stigmas for victims, or victim blaming, that have permeated history are still prevalent today. The stigmas rape victims carry, which can lead to self-blame, only add to the psychological trauma that survivors of rape and sexual assault must deal with. Because of these stigmas, many of the survivors, who choose to report their rape, are left feeling as though they are the ones having to prove their innocence instead of their rapists. This historical research will focus on the seventh century Italian Baroque artist Artemisia Gentileschi, and how the trauma caused by her rape is reflected in her art work. This writer will examine the life and work of Artemisia Gentileschi and the implications of her art. Art therapy will be studied as a way for Gentileschi to work through the trauma of her rape and subsequent trial.

Keywords: Artemisia Gentileschi, Baroque art, historical research, rape, art therapy


The purpose of the study is to explore the effects of art therapy with a population that may have a tendency to become isolated from society. Art therapy has been shown to have benefits to the growing geriatric population. The benefits of art therapy on socialization and mood in the communities of geriatrics are often seen in nursing homes, assisted living centers, and residential care facilities. Art Therapy has been seen. in these particular populations who are affected by dementia, and evidence has suggested that art therapy may have social and emotional improvements. In addition to the above, the researcher examined other possible beneficial qualities that art therapy may provide such as improving reminiscing abilities. Researcher focused on one particular individual, and focused on her interactions in art therapy sessions. Data was collected over a nine-week period in an assisted living facility in Queens, New York. Researcher includes one-on-one sessions as well as group sessions. Findings from the researcher due to the art therapy sessions, the case-study participant had increased in social as well as an emotional improvement. There was also a sense of motivation and positive memory sharing during sessions from the participant. Therapeutic implications of the study were also discussed for the elderly population as in the context of an assisted living facility

Keywords: art therapy, assisted living facility, dementia, socialization, reminisce


This research is a qualitative single case study, examining the process of working with a 6-year-old boy who has witnessed domestic violence. The purpose of this research is to explore how art therapy can positively influence a child’s expression of emotion and to ultimately teach how to cope with anger. This is done by using art as an alternative tool to constructively convey emotions. Children exposed to domestic violence often show a variety of mental health
problems. Trauma symptoms may vary in each individual, although typically children with traumatic experiences are at greater risk for difficulties with anxiety, depression, self-esteem, anger, and externalizing problems. A component of successful treatment with traumatized children is for the therapist to understand the child’s subjective experience of trauma. Art therapy interventions are used to observe how a child expresses his anger and trauma related emotions with art materials. Data is collected through observation, recording progress, and comparing session notes. The finding of this study is that art therapy could be a viable way to assist a child to cope with anger, anxiety, and withdrawal. Art therapy may also provide a sense of safety and comfort in the environment that promotes greater self-expression.

Keywords: domestic violence, children, intimate partner violence, play therapy, art therapy, anger, and divorce


The study explores reminiscence through sensory material within the setting of a nursing home for a client diagnosed with dementia. The client suffers losses as a result of his dementia. These losses include his short term memory, and some control over his motor functions such as keeping his hands steady. The client also suffers from depression because of these losses. This research study explored to utilize natural sound and art therapy to help the client cope with his short term memory loss. This paper details the benefits derived by the client who attended the sessions regularly. Findings of the study includes, the client being able to retrieve long term memories, confidence building, mood improvement, as well as a strong relationship built between the art therapy intern and the client. These experiences served to increase a sense of self and to preserve the uniqueness of the individual.

Keywords: reminiscing, dementia, art therapy, natural sound


This single case study will explore the use of art therapy on improving the self-expression of an adolescent with Autism that resides in a Residential Treatment Center. Data will be collected through direct client-therapist interactions using qualitative research. Observations of an 18-year-old adolescent autistic boy were recorded in both individual and group art therapy Sessions. Firstly, the ability to explore, identify, and verbalize thoughts and emotions will be documented. Secondly, the adolescent’s ability to connect his emotions to his art productions will be analyzed. It is anticipated that this research will benefit autistic adolescents and help to improve their ability to express themselves in a healthy and adaptive manner.

Keywords: Autism, self-expression, residential treatment center, foster care, art therapy

This study examines Jackson Pollock's unique painting methods from an art therapy perspective to find connections between his methods of painting and any therapeutic effects of the art creation process. Pollock was an innovative painter who suffered from an addiction to alcohol as well as a bipolar disorder. He became famous for his unusual painting techniques, including drip painting. This active process appeared to cause him to take out his anger on the canvas, discharging some of this violent emotion. This paper reviews the literature to examine how art-creation can be used as means to alleviate some of the symptoms resulting from substance abuse and/or bipolar disorder, specifically as related to Jackson Pollock and how he used his unique painting methods for self-expression. Pollock's work will be interpreted based on recurring themes and symbols, including Freud's and Jung's theories of the human unconscious and how its contents become conscious through art.

Keywords: Jackson Pollock, art therapy, alcoholism, bipolar disorder, symbolism


This research is a heuristic study on the unresolved grief surrounding the loss of my mother to breast cancer. This study will attempt to explore my new and evolving relationship with my mother as a method of bereavement through the Continuing Bonds Theory (Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996) and William Worden's tasks of mourning (Worden, 2015). According to Meshot & Leither (1993), unresolved grief is when the process of grief is delayed, prolonged or intensified. Repressed feelings surrounding grief can eventually cause deficits in social, emotional and psychological functioning (Rosenblatt, 1996). Exploring a new relationship with a loved one who is deceased can be beneficial for anyone who struggles working through grief (Silverman & Nickman, 1996). Since traumatic memories are encoded emotionally and sensorily rather than cognitively, art-making can be used to express emotions on the unconscious level (DiSunno, Linton, & Bowes, 2011). Therefore, art-making and journaling will be used in this study to work through my unresolved grief as well as to explore a new relationship with my mother,

Keywords: grief, bereavement, mother, breast cancer, continuing bonds, Worden's tasks of mourning, art therapy, journaling


The Inclusion policy within our current educational legislature provides students with disabilities the opportunity to receive support services while being educated in the regular classroom (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004). Suspension rates and the number of students with disabilities have increased in the past two decades, with statistics showing most of the disciplinary actions in the U.S. involve students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Unfortunately, some commonplace disciplinary exercises can be emotionally and educationally damaging for these students. Research supports art therapy as an effective treatment for decreasing disruptive classroom behaviors, and in addressing the developmental difficulties impeding students’ academic success (Shostak et al., 1985; de Chi ara, 1990; Banks et al., 1993). This single case study explores art therapy
Interventions for a child with disruptive classroom behaviors in an inclusive education setting. Disruptive classroom behaviors will be defined as behaviors deemed maladaptive or "unwanted" in a classroom setting, including both internalizing and externalizing behaviors. This research intends to use art therapy interventions with components of the Eidetic Imagery method with Nature photographs (Ahsen, 1993) to decrease the participant's disruptive classroom behaviors, specifically: social withdrawal, aggression, noncompliance, impulsivity/inattention, and insecurity. The data collected will be analyzed using art therapy analysis to investigate the effects of the interventions on the participant's behaviors.

Keywords: art therapy, inclusion, education, disruptive classroom behaviors, eidetic imagery, children


The coming out process is a unique and complex journey for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals. This research aims to analyze an openly gay artist and his work to explore how aspects of his coming out may have manifested in his art. Keith Haring displayed homosexual themes in his art during a time where most LGBTQ artists did not dare to be so outward about their sexual orientation. Conducted using the historical method, the study reviews the artist's life, his progression of artwork, studies of the coming out process, and theories of identity formation. The research examines four selected artworks that relate to various events that seemed to be part of his process of identifying his sexuality. Findings suggest that Haring's expressive qualities and use of symbolism may have connections to his coming out process. Symbolic meanings were found in colors, symbols, patterns, and the portrayal of figures that seemed to connect to themes such as feelings of alienation, confusion, gay culture, and coming out itself.

Keywords: LGBTQ, Keith Haring, coming out process, symbolism


Integration and adaption are key to a beneficial experience and the creative development of the emerging adult who is living internationally. Adapting to a new culture and environment helped me to establish an identity within the social group and culture of which I was living in. Living internationally can be a transformative experience. These adoptions result in identity negotiation, providing insight and growth into one's values and beliefs. The findings of this heuristic study indicated that living abroad positively impacted my growth and development by exposing issues as well as, providing time and space to process these emotional issues. By uncovering through repetitive themes in the artwork, I was able to understand myself better and accept my present self. The artwork created was significant throughout the process of self-analysis and reflection. Loss played a central role in the study with regards to the Irish culture and my personal experience.

Keywords: emerging adulthood, loss, culture, identity negotiation

Emerging adulthood can be defined as the age of: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in between, and possibilities. Today's young people are considered to be digital natives, in regards to their ability to express themselves and maintain connections via technology (i.e. social media). According to Weiser (2008), every snapshot a person takes or keeps is also a type of self-portrait, a kind of "mirror with memory" reflecting back those moments and people, that were special enough to be frozen in time forever. The purpose of this inquiry is to see how self-portrait photography, or "selfies", uploaded to social media sites, responses evoked from others, and personal interpretations can be used to define an emerging adult. The use of self-portrait photography will allow for the emerging adult to explore the adult identity formation process through both self-presentation and social media usage in today's society.

Keywords: Emerging adulthood, self-portrait photography, identity, social media, cyberbullying, self-esteem, suicide


The scientific process that examines logical cause and effect of data is called historiographical methodology and was used for this research. A historical review of attachment theory, Vincent van Gogh and The Bird's Nest Drawing directive was examined (BND; Kaiser, 1996). The BND is an assessment task which was developed to elicit symbolic visual representations of attachment styles. Van Gogh created four still life birds' nests paintings which were examined and then compared with the BND checklist of attachment indicators. Results from the checklist as well as the historical examination of Van Gogh's life indicated an insecure attachment. In addition, the discussion of Van Gogh's life circumstances suggested support of BND results and provided further implications for a specific adult attachment, insecure preoccupied style.

Discovery of attachment styles have shown to be useful for interpreting individuals' internal and external perspectives. Understanding this process can help future art therapists to assess for attachment.

Keywords: Attachment theory, attachment styles, art therapy, bird's nest drawings, Vincent Van Gogh


The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the cultural relevance of the House-Tree-Person drawing technique (Hammer, 1980) with adult Chinese schizophrenia inpatients. Standard HTP tests were given to 2 patients to determine if it is possible to detect culturally relevant themes or objects. This study was able to discover the cultural relevance of this drawing technique. Additionally, the study also proved the drawing test's cross-cultural validity and broaden its application.

Keywords: House-Tree-Person Drawing Test, Chinese schizophrenia inpatients

Adolescents who have difficulties managing behaviors in the classroom setting are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and anger. Difficulties in regulating emotions can be associated with poor academic performance and concentration. School-Based art therapy has therapeutic implications on concentration and motivation to complete school tasks for adolescents by increasing engagement, enhancing emotional regulation, and classroom behavioral management. This single-case study was conducted over six weeks for a duration of thirty-five minutes each session. The art therapy directives included a large watercolor painting, a sculpture, a series of multi-media drawings, and an interactive sculpture that was made from Legos. The findings of the study suggest that problem solving skills were facilitated through the processes of making and completing art tasks. Management of difficult emotions such as anger and aggression was possible through the relaxation techniques of art making and talking with a trusted adult. Increased concentration and motivation to complete school tasks through the art making process has been discussed. Building rapport by providing structure and choice was beneficial for decreasing resistance and developing a therapeutic alliance.

Keywords: Classroom behaviors, School-Based Art Therapy, Motivation, Emotional Regulation, Engagement


This study investigated the efficacy of using coloring as an art therapy modality for a dementia patient with depression. This was a qualitative research, single-case study that explored the therapeutic benefits of coloring and measured its effects on depression and the quality of life for a dementia patient with depression. The participant attended the art therapy sessions twice a week for six weeks. Each session, the participant was offered coloring pages with different images and different materials to complete the coloring activity. Third hand intervention was applied during some sessions to provide the patient appropriate motivation and assistance. A combination of observation, information from the client's chart and artwork, as well as other staff and clinicians' observation, were used to collect data. The results of this study indicated improvement in the willingness to engage in the art therapy sessions and relieve feelings of confusion but no significant difference in depressive symptoms. Additionally, coloring images with themes of nature could stimulate the patient's engagement and showed a positive impact on mood. However, the inability to complete the coloring of the whole image in one session sometimes caused the client to feel frustrated and anxious. While not all aspects of the interventions were successful, overall, attending regular art therapy sessions was beneficial to the dementia patient with depression.

Keywords: dementia, depression, coloring, art therapy, quality of life
Alzheimer’s disease, along with other forms of Dementia, is a progressive illness that affects the brain severely. These illnesses are mostly seen within the Geriatric population. While this population may suffer tremendously both physically and emotionally, it may also result in greatly affecting their activities of daily living. Research has suggested that those who are suffering from progressive memory diseases such as Dementia may also suffer from additional mental health issues such as depression. Depression may further hinder one's overall emotional well being. Art Therapy is currently used as a supplemental form of treatment for those diagnosed with dementia. It may also be utilized as an effective form of treatment for those suffering from depression. This historical research thesis focuses on how dementia patients may also be suffering from depression as seen through their artwork. This research will focus on William Utermohlen, an artist based in England, who during his artistic growth received the diagnosis of Alzheimer’s Disease. Through the analysis of his artwork and information collected from his spouse and physician, this research will attempt to illustrate that Utermohlen may have been suffering from depression in addition to his Dementia diagnosis. This historical study will explore a deeper understanding about Dementia and the diagnosis process, how depression may be linked with this disorder, and how art therapy may be a tool that can help investigate the relationship between these disorders.

Keywords: Dementia, Depression, Art Therapy, William Utermohlen


This study explores the history of the feminist movement and how feminist theory has been integrated into psychology as well as art therapy. It will explore how feminist therapy has the ability to advocate for social, political, and other rights of women as equal to those of men. The purpose of this research is to provide awareness on how to bring about a more equitable therapeutic relationship while taking into consideration how cultural norms have influenced one's perspective self. Through the examination of the development of feminist therapy as well as feminist art therapy, many key concepts such as the personal is political, oppression, consciousness raising, and empowerment will all be discussed. Through exploring feminist artist Judy Chicago's influential work, the researcher will investigate the undervalued feminist therapy and how it can begin to avoid oppressing women with misogynistic discourses in the mental health field, particularly art therapy.

Keywords: Feminism, feminist therapy, art therapy, feminist art, Judy Chicago


Throughout black history in America periods of great political turmoil have led to expressive movements within the black communities as an outlet for their emotions and also as a voice for
their opinions and thoughts. The following research will follow the artwork within black culture from its origins in Africa to illustrate a brief history of black art when the community was not necessarily under duress and then continue through historical eras, including slavery and Civil rights in America as well as the Harlem Renaissance Movement. This research will also include how black culture, and specifically the political struggles within the black community, have continued into modern day America and continue to be seen through artistic expression. Edith Kramer's philosophy of art therapy and specifically art as therapy will be used to show this expressive artwork was used as an important outlet for blacks during these times of struggle. This particular population was not given a voice or a means to express their opinion and their thoughts and so the arts (music, drama and fine arts) may have been used as a way to keep their emotional and mental well-beings stable. As was said by Martin Luther King Jr. " We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force." It is my belief that through the use of artwork, African Americans have embraced the concept of Dr. King's "creative protest" and continue to do so today. In the second portion of this research the author will examine the art of Kara Walker and Glen Ligon, two African American artists, with the considerations of not only history leading into present day black culture but through the perspective of an art therapy lens of sublimation.


This thesis explores the visual indications of child abuse through the implementation of art therapy assessments, and how art therapy interventions may contribute to developing coping skills for a child who has experienced abuse. Children, who have experienced abuse at a young age, may develop long lasting detriments physically, emotionally, or cognitively. In addition, child abuse may influence the formation of future relationships with peers, authority figures, and adults. The examination of a single case study was investigated to observe the suggested indications of child abuse, as well as the therapeutic benefits of art therapy. Within four months of treatment, three art therapy assessments, four art therapy interventions, and a trauma screening were conducted to better understand the child. The collected data was observed to identify age inappropriateness, maladaptive behaviors, and developmental detriments reinforced through visual indicators. Findings of the study suggest means of sublimation through forming a positive therapeutic alliance, which contributed to developing coping skills as well as emotional and behavior management. Thus, therapeutic implications of visual indicators among child abuse victims, specifically physical abuse, are seen as prevalent in the art making process.

Keywords: Art Therapy, Childhood abuse, Visual Indicators in Artwork, Coping Skills, Positive Therapeutic Alliance


This research explores an elderly woman’s spirituality, meaning making and belief systems
through the Belief Art Therapy Assessment (BATA). Developing meaning for one’s experiences may help the elderly cope with the changes in each domain of life and the stressors of aging. Personal meaning and value of spirituality are influential components to a sense of well-being. This qualitative single case study is conducted using art therapy in a rehabilitation center. The BATA is administered, data is collected through the peierogion questions, two pieces of artwork and the post-interrogation questions and this data is then analyzed. The findings of the study display that spirituality and creation of meaning for life’s experiences impacts a positive sense of self, greater awareness of self and increases relaxation and self-expression. This study SVEEPSIS therapeutic implications to understand the client’s belief systems, and how spirituality may be an influential aspect in her sense of well-being.

Keywords: Belief Art Therapy Assessment, spirituality, elderly, art therapy, meaning


Art Therapy education, which started in Europe and the United States, has since extended into Ghana. This prompted a look at three New York Art Therapy institutions to identify the underlining principles that guided their programs and possibly translate that information into a proposed Creative Art Therapy (CAT) education program to be applied in KNUST, Ghana. In the Literature Review section, topics reviewed included theoretical influences on art therapy, art therapy education in Europe and USA, art therapy in Africa, mental health in Ghana, and art based assessments. In the Results section, three Art Therapy Education Programs were analyzed. Using a qualitative approach, secondary data was mainly obtained to answer the research questions since primary data was inaccessible. The results of the study showed that all three programs met AATA requirements, had specific philosophical underpinnings for each program and took into consideration multiculturalism. It was determined that in the short term, it will be appropriate to have an eclectic theoretical orientation for the CAT program that is culturally suitable. In the long term, the CAT program may be affiliated with AATA, though it may not necessarily meet all its requirements as a result of cultural modifications of the program content. The results of the study, thus, suggest that borrowing or incorporating the concepts of the three New York institutions into the CAT program may produce an effective art therapy education program, but one that has to be modified to make it culturally appropriate for Ghana. A follow-up on the implementation of the enhanced CAT program and possible affiliation to ACATE through AATA are recommended.


This study explores the use of Therapeutic Photography with the midlife mother facing what she feels is a loss of her sense of self, due in part to the lack of time and focus in her self care. The purpose of this investigation proposes that through the therapeutic use of taking snapshot photographs and comprehending their meaning, change can be brought about through the seeing of the self in a new light, leading the individual to understanding and transformation. The method employed for this study is heuristic in which the participant took photographs
spontaneously throughout a three month period. The findings of this study suggest that Therapeutic Photography is effective in assisting the midlife mother dealing with a loss of identity through the recognition as to why she is feeling the way she is and in the development of a new perspective of her life and needs. The therapeutic implication of the use of photography for the search for a sense of self through the heuristic method has been discussed.

Keywords: Therapeutic Photography, midlife, midlife mother, identity loss, individuation, Analytic Psychology


For the international student, the transition time to adapt to the American culture brings up conflict and confusion about the self. Integration of international experience and assimilation from different cultures (America and Taiwan) are important to the development of self-esteem. When experiencing language barriers and cultural differences one can become frustrated in unfamiliar situations. As a result, this may cause lower self-esteem and negative emotions. The purpose of this research study is to explore self-esteem development with an introverted International Graduate Student through the art making process and suggests a direct effect on self-esteem improvement and a decrease in negative feelings of the self. Also, Jung's theory of the introvert is examined. This heuristic study was endeavored through the creative process and examined through an art therapy lens. Data collections included a weekly journal, and other art works as well as a solo exhibition showcasing these works. Through art analysis and self-reflection, this research shows evidence that the creative process serves to positive affect in self-esteem promotion and the significance of reduction in negative emotions.

Keywords: International student, self-esteem, introverted, assimilation, art therapy, journaling, Jung, multiculturalism


This historical study will aim to provide supporting information as to how Alberto Burri used art as therapy by examining his artwork and relating the imagery to theoretical concepts within the field of art therapy. In addition, supplemental data on the symptomology of artwork with trauma victims and individuals with PTSD will be examined. This study will explore three areas: (a) empirical studies relating to the effects of art therapy with trauma victims and/or individuals with PTSD, (b) mental health treatments for military and/or victims of war during the 20th century, and (c) discussion on the traumatic experiences of Burri and how they are manifested through his artwork. The study is limited to investigation on Burri and the effects of his involvement in WWII, including his experiences as a prisoner of war and his beginnings as an artist during his internment. These areas will coincide to support the notion that Burri pursued art making as means of trauma recovery during his experiences as a medic turned prisoner of war; which lead to a career as a prolific artist. The writer will examine the historical context and biography of Alberto Burri, including a review of five significant artworks and discussion on his methodology and techniques of art making. This examination provides an example of how the artwork of this WWII artist is an example of art therapy and an experience of catharsis.

This research examines the benefits of art therapy interventions in reducing the negative effects of reverse-migration in children known as "satellite babies". Satellite babies can be defined as children who were born in the U.S. and were sent to China to reside with extended family members during early childhood. According to Bohr and Tse (2009) and Kwong et al. (2009), studies denote a behavioral change when satellite babies return to the U.S. at school age. These behavioral changes are based on the children's separation issues and not meeting milestones within attachment theory. Often these children displayed behaviors such as anger and acting out. In a single case study methodology, I discuss the role of art therapy as tool to deal with a child who has recently returned back to the U.S. from China. This work was conducted with this child at the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) COMPASS program at P.S.20, Queens, NY. By reviewing attachment theory and noting the cultural determinants unique to these satellite babies, I explore art therapy protocols that may be useful in remediating the negative impact of assimilation back into the U.S.

Keywords: reverse-migration, separation, satellite babies, behavior, art therapy, attachment theory


Homosexuality has been a topic of debate for many years; regardless of the political rhetoric that currently exists in today's society. Although, in today's social climate, coming out has become more common and acceptable than it was in the past. There are still those who shun or oppress the homosexual population. This research aims to analyze the artwork of two gay artists: Hugh Steers and Keith Haring, in an effort to make connections of their feeling of their sexual identity through their self-expression in art with regards to the societal pressure of the time. The analysis of their artwork may suggest some similar emotional discord that may mirror comparable conditions in the present homosexual population. This research will also examine the connections of the historical events that may have indirectly applied pressure to the societal views of homosexuals of the past and connect it to homosexuality in today's climate. This research will also discuss how major world events affected the manner in which each artist manifested their creativity in such a time of post World War II and the AIDS Epidemic.

Keywords: Homosexuality, Hugh Steer, Keith Haring, Sexual Identity, AIDS

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the researchers' identity as an artist and future art therapist and to gain self-awareness through the creation of a mural in an urban pediatric hospital setting. The literature review has examined how art in the hospital setting affects the environmental factors and the children during medical procedures. The researcher sought to explore her personal growth as a graduate clinical art therapy student during this mural creation. Results were documented utilizing journaling and art making. An anxiety scale was used to rate her anxiety during each painting session. Through the triangulation of data, the researcher identified themes of content, color and space in the artwork. In the journal, the core themes include interactions with staff, identity, and feelings of motivation as well as how they relate to the professional world. The researcher recognized the creation of the mural as personal art therapy and gained self-awareness both professionally and personally.
Marylhurst University
Master of Arts in Art Therapy Counseling

Beaufort, Anne. (2016). *The case of a young heroin addict* (Unpublished master’s culminating project). Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, OR.

This case study concerns a 22 year-old Caucasian, upper middle-class male heroin addict. The case will be discussed with a focus on this client’s struggles to find an identity other than “junky,” during nine weeks of art therapy at a residential treatment facility. Critical components of a Twelve Step program for treatment include acknowledgement of the disease and its consequences, dealing with feelings of shame and guilt associated with recovery, and gaining a greater awareness of the spiritual dimensions of recovery. However, another critical component in addiction recovery, more recent research has shown, is the necessity, often, of reshaping a sense of identity. In this case study, the integration of Twelve Step approaches, cognitive behavioral therapy, and art therapy to help an addict gain increased emotional coping skills, self-esteem, and a new sense of identity will be demonstrated. This case addresses an aspect of art therapy treatment for substance abuse that has not been reported in the literature so far.


Children often use play and art making as a way to learn about their environment and themselves while their brain is still developing. Children’s developing brains can be injured by external or internal events. These injuries are called Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs) and have different manifestations depending on the cause and severity of the brain damage. After a brain injury occurs, medical rehabilitation is required to regain optimal brain function. Within a medical setting, several therapies are offered for the improvement of the child’s brain development. One of these therapies is art therapy. In a hospital setting, art therapy joins a team of physicians and therapists to help improve a child’s physical, cognitive, and especially, emotional development after a TBI. Goals in art therapy focus on the child’s emotional expression, integration of new self, or holding of overwhelming feelings. Lonnie is a thirteen-year-old Hispanic boy, who was injured in a car collision and has come to the hospital to regain as much independence as possible after his TBI. Art therapy with Lonnie focused on developing his self-concept after autobiographical memory loss, re-learning emotions and emotional expressions, and offering an environment for holding when Lonnie wanted to talk about his troubles, anxieties, and the car collision that initially injured him.

Cannon, Lara. (2016). *No title included.* (Unpublished master’s culminating project). Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, OR.

This paper explores how art-making can be used within a therapeutic relationship to support the emotional development of little boys who are growing up in at-risk environments. Research is presented on the male brain and how nature and nurture combine to create a distinct male reality. Research is also presented on how gender influences development, behavior, and self-expression, and some of the significant social and cultural risk factors that young males face in their early
development. Methods for engaging a little boy’s interest and supporting his development within a Child-Centered Art Therapy intervention are included. The application of this approach is demonstrated in a case vignette with a seven-year-old boy, diagnosed with ADHD, who is growing up in an environment with domestic violence, mental illness, and financial stress. His emotional and social growth is highlighted by a discussion of his artwork and how it reflects his development over the course of eight months.
Nazareth College
Master of Science in Creative Arts Therapy


College students are a population that experiences a significant amount of stress. Negative impacts from stress have shown to decrease when college students are able to effectively cope with stress. In the past, research has found that yoga can reduce stress in college students. Likewise, art-making and art therapy research has also found to have a positive effect on stress. However, research conducted on the effect that yoga and art making combined may have on stress is scarce. This study utilizes a single subject A-B-A design in order to investigate the effect that a yoga and art intervention may have on stress reduction in college students.

Participants in this study documented their daily stress using a Visual Analog Scale (VAS) for a total of 21 days and during the second week participated in three interventions of yoga and art combined. Results indicated that the yoga and art intervention was ineffective in reducing stress over time for participant one and effective in reducing stress over time for participant two. Visual analysis of data also revealed that stress was temporarily reduced on all three of the intervention days for participant one and for two of the intervention days for participant two.


This thesis was intended to contribute to the effectiveness of a specific intervention, mandalas, to further validate the use of art in therapy. The quantitative study examined the effects of creating a mandala in comparison to coloring a pre-designed mandala with a population of caregivers addressing the following questions: “Does coloring mandalas decrease anxiety levels in caregivers who are waiting for their care recipients in clinic waiting rooms? Is one mandala form more effective than the other at reducing anxiety?” The data was collected from 15 caregiver participants in the clinic waiting rooms at Nazareth College using a randomized design and the *State Anxiety Inventory* (SAI) measurement. The participants were randomly assigned to either the pre-drawn mandala group or unstructured mandala group. Both groups had their anxiety measured with the SAI at baseline- Time 1 (T1) and post intervention- Time 2 (T2). The results found that both the pre-drawn and unstructured mandalas were statistically significant (p < .05) at reducing anxiety from T1 to T2 when compared to each other using a 2 x 2 ANOVA. Thus, the first null hypothesis (H01) was rejected. However, the pre-drawn mandala did not demonstrate a greater decrease in anxiety than the unstructured mandala. The second null hypothesis (H02) was accepted. Paired samples t-tests and independent samples t-tests supported the 2 x 2 ANOVA results. This research provides preliminary evidence that both structured and unstructured mandalas are beneficial at reducing caregiver anxiety levels short term.

Keywords: mandala, caregivers, anxiety, art therapy, quantitative study, State Anxiety Inventory

This thesis examines the anxiety, depression and self-esteem levels, as well as the subjective experience of, the primary investigator as she engaged in individual therapeutic horticulture and artistic reflection. Over the course of three months, the primary investigator participated in weekly horticulture tasks with plants living in the Nazareth College greenhouse as well as in her home. Each week she created an art reflection and journal response to explore her phenomenological experience. The primary investigator expected levels of anxiety and depression to decrease, as self-esteem increased, over the three-month period. The quantitative data points collected in this study do not provide sufficient evidence to support her hypothesis, however qualitative themes found in the artwork and journal reflections may indicate her experience of increase in mood. Qualitative findings also show that the primary investigator explored difficult emotions, positive emotions, anxiety, transition, connection, family relationships and identity during her experience of individual therapeutic horticulture and artistic reflection.

Keywords: Horticulture Therapy, Art Therapy, Heuristic Phenomenological, Qualitative Methodology, Quantitative Methodology


The aim of this study was to explore the possible graphic indicators of depression as depicted in art. A literature review was completed to bring together the current literature concerning art therapy and depression. This search yielded 36 articles published in 14 journals. A majority of the research discussed in this review was conducted prior to 2002. This demonstrates a significant gap in the research and provides an opportunity for future research to be done. This study used pre-existing Cognitive Art Therapy Assessment, or CATA, drawings and paintings from the Nazareth College Art Therapy Clinic. This study was conducted over an eight month period and had a total number of 14 participants. This study generated quantitative data which answered one research question: “What are the possible graphic indicators of depression in the Nazareth College art therapy clinic artwork?” A graphic indicator checklist was used by two raters to rate the pre-existing artwork. SPSS was used to analyze the inter-rater reliability, frequencies, and chi-squares of the indicators. In conclusion of the study the hypothesis was neither supported nor rejected however, this study creates future opportunities for further research.

Keywords: Quantitative, Graphic Indicators of Depression, CATA, Nazareth College, Art Therapy Clinic, Art, Art Therapy


Frida Kahlo was a woman who suffered from loss, betrayal, physical injuries, and illnesses. The purpose of this research study was to explore Frida Kahlo’s method of using art as therapy while experiencing these events. Ten of Frida Kahlo’s paintings were analyzed using Gantt and Tabone’s (1998) Formal Elements Art Therapy rating scale (FEATS). The FEATS was applied to Frida Kahlo’s paintings to analyze for possible graphic indicators of psychiatric symptoms in her artwork. The researcher found possible bipolar disorder indicators within one of Frida’s paintings. Five themes were developed from the analysis of Frida Kahlo’s diary that were then compared to her artwork to see if there were any similarities or patterns among the two. It is
hoped that future art therapists can learn from Frida Kahlo’s experiences and use her methods of self-care and journaling for themselves and for their clients.

Keywords: Art as therapy, FEATS, five themes, bipolar disorder


This thesis investigates the primary investigator’s experience as she addresses sexual, grief, and loss traumas with the Expressionistic art therapy intervention, “A Place to Grow.” Throughout the course of this study, the primary investigator has explored four different emotions she assigned to separate works of art that she has created and manipulated over the course of three months. By taking the time to sit down for a minimum of seven hours per month to address emotions associated with previously experienced traumas, she hoped to decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety while improving self-esteem and memory. The results of her study supported her hypothesis, demonstrating a significant decrease in symptoms of anxiety and depression while improving memory and self-esteem.

Keywords: trauma, sexual, grief, loss, memory, self-esteem, depression, anxiety, PTSD, heuristic, self-study, expressionist, art, therapy


This thesis examined the emotional and symbolic significance of tattoos in order to understand the decision-making process of tattooed individuals and the potential emotional benefits of getting a tattoo. The study implemented an online Qualtrics survey containing 18 questions regarding tattoo motivators, symbolism and emotional benefits. There were 207 participants included in this study. The results were converted into percentages to show the most common motivators and symbolic themes of tattoos along with potential emotional benefits for the recipient of the tattoo. The study found that tattoos have been used as a way to express individuality and life transitions and to improve body image, among other personal motivators. The results found that individuals believed tattoos hold emotional benefits and may represent past life events.


Low body image and low self-esteem are rampant symptoms in today’s society and can lead to clinically significant disorders such as depression and eating disorders. Phototherapy and art therapy are beneficial in increasing self-esteem and body image; but this writer wondered what the effect would be like if they were combined. The primary investigator created this heuristic self-study in order to investigate whether the PhotoArt Exploration intervention over the course of three months would increase self-esteem and body image. She focused her investigation on different life experiences, emotions, cognitions, goals, progressions, and accomplishments that prominently presented themselves each week for twelve weeks. She measured and assessed her
experiences through both quantitative and qualitative data. Through analysis, she found that the PhotoArt Exploration significantly increased her self-esteem and body image.

*Keywords:* Mixed Method, Heuristic Qualitative Methodology, Photoart Therapy, Self-esteem, Body Image


This quantitative research study investigated and compared the effects of completing pre-drawn mandalas and creative mandalas as measured by the State Anxiety Inventory (SAI). Mandalas are a common art therapy method used to reduce anxiety. Mandalas may refer to any circular form and have long been used in the arts throughout history. Compared with designs that feature hard angles and squares, which may be related to frustration and anger, rounded lines and shapes are thought to convey relaxation. While there have been many studies using a college population and many studies studying the varying effects of mandala creation, few studies have directly investigated the effects of creative (blank) mandalas compared with pre-drawn mandalas on the reduction of anxiety. Participants in this study included 26 college graduate students. They were divided into two groups in which they each completed a baseline SAI, an anxiety induction, another SAI, either the pre-drawn or creative mandala, and finally the posttest SAI. Statistically significant results indicated that both forms of mandalas are effective in reducing state anxiety and that neither mandala form is more effective than the other.

*Keywords:* mandala, State Anxiety Inventory


This quantitative research study explored the effectiveness of coloring pre-drawn mandala for reducing anxiety as measured by the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). Art therapists often utilize the creation of mandalas as a tool for relaxation and relief of anxiety symptomology. The research question was: “Which is more effective in reducing anxiety: Simplistic pre-drawn mandalas or complex pre-drawn mandalas?” The 20 participants recruited on a college campus were divided into two groups in which they each completed the STAI at baseline (T1), after a four-minute writing exercise to induce anxiety (T2), and after the participants complete the intervention by coloring either a simplistic pre-drawn mandala or complex pre-drawn mandala (T3). The writing exercise (T1-T2) produced statistically significant results for the simplistic pre-drawn mandala group, but not the complex pre-drawn mandala group, although both groups increased anxiety. The simplistic pre-drawn mandala and complex pre-drawn mandala were both statistically ineffective at reducing anxiety from T2 to T3 when compared to each other, according to the 2 X 2 ANOVA. However, the simplistic pre-drawn mandala group’s paired sample t-test analysis supports that as an intervention the simplistic pre-drawn mandala can be statistically significantly effective in reducing anxiety from T2 to T3.

*Keywords:* Mandala, Coloring, Anxiety, Art Therapy, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, STAI

This research sought to find out if there was a significant difference between using a two-dimensional medium, colored pencils, and a three-dimensional medium, clay, to reduce stress in college students. Previous research indicates that those who use three-dimensional media experience greater stress reduction than those who use two-dimensional media (Morrison, 2013). This research utilized the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, 1978) to measure baseline level of each participant’s perceived stress. This measure was taken again after participants completed either a two-dimensional or three-dimensional an art intervention. Qualitative data was also collected at the end of the study. The study demonstrated that those in the three-dimensional group experienced a significant reduction in stress, but there was not a significant difference between individuals in both groups for stress reduction. Information from this study increased this researcher’s understanding of specific materials and how they affect one’s level of perceived stress.

Keywords: Stress Relief, Perceived Stress, Colored Pencils, Clay, Two-dimensional Art, Three-Dimensional Art


This thesis was an evaluation of the Warrior Salute program in Webster, New York that used preexisting pre-treatment and post-treatment assessments. The Warrior Salute program (2014) is a multimodal day treatment program that specializes in the treatment of veterans diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Traumatic Brain Injury. During their six months in the Warrior Salute program (2014), veterans participate in a wide variety of therapeutic and rehabilitative interventions, as well complete a series of pre-treatment and post-treatment assessments. The aim of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the Warrior Salute program (2014) in decreasing symptoms of Major Depressive Disorder as evidenced by the aforementioned pre-treatment and post-treatment assessments. The primary assessment that was analyzed in this study was the Person Picking an Apple from a Tree art therapy assessment scored using the Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale, which yielded insignificant results. The secondary scales that were analyzed included the Mood Scale, which yielded insignificant results, and the Emotion Regulation Scale, which yielded significant results. Due to the inconclusive nature of the three assessments analyzed, the overall results for this program evaluation indicate that the hypothesis for this study is rejected.

Keywords: Veterans, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Person Picking an Apple from a Tree Art Therapy Assessment, FEATS


This research study sought to explore the experience of creative reflective journaling in a population of master’s level creative arts therapy students. The methodology was qualitative, phenomenological, and heuristic, as it included data from the primary researcher and author of this study. The participants were required to have previously completed a supervision course that
required the use of a creative reflective journal to process the experience of being in a 60-credit art therapy program. Data included entries from students’ journals as well as information collected during in-depth interviews, which was then processed and coded to explore the experiences of five participants including this researcher. The themes of the experience included positive feelings, helpful feelings, serious/complicated feelings, negative feelings, explanatory themes, researcher themes, and assessment themes.

**Keywords:** Journaling, Creative Reflective Journaling, Art Therapy, Phenomenological Heuristic Qualitative Methodology


This thesis describes the primary investigator’s experience with the intuitive painting process over a six-month period, and investigates if being involved in the intuitive painting process will decrease depression and anxiety, and improve self-esteem as measured by the BDI-II, STAI, and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Score. She dedicated six hours per week to the intuitive painting process, and sought to answer these questions: Are new coping and functioning skills obtained through the intuitive painting process? Is the intuitive painting process establishing a sense of purpose? Is the intuitive painting process enabling mindfulness? Does the intuitive painting process develop and/or induce calming visualization? Does the intuitive process induce the flow state? The results of her study supported her hypothesis, demonstrating a significant decrease in symptoms of anxiety and depression while improving self-esteem. The results of this study support that the primary investigator demonstrated that for her the intuitive painting process induces the flow state, develops or induces calming visualization, enables mindfulness, and establishes new coping skills.

**Keywords:** Mixed Method, Heuristic Phenomenological Qualitative Methodology, Intuitive Painting, Self-esteem, STAI, BDI


This thesis was designed to determine and identify potential indicators of psychopathology in criminal artwork as evaluated by the Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale (FEATS). This study demonstrated the value of formal and standardized assessment of artwork created by criminals in providing insight into criminal behavior. There has been little research concerning the use of formal art therapy assessments in forensic settings, and this study worked to expand upon the existing research. All artwork used in this study was created by one of three deceased serial killers. This researcher chose three criminal artists who each had a minimum of five images available in the public domain. Artwork was scored according to Gantt and Tabone’s (2012) FEATS Rating Manual and compared to diagnostic criteria related to major depression, bipolar disorder and mania, schizophrenia, and cognitive disorders as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV. The results of this study demonstrated that indicators of psychopathology can be found in the artwork of convicted serial killers.
This thesis describes research into the role of art therapy services in the development of an identity following stroke. The research problem explored in this study was the effect of serious illness or accidents, particularly stroke, on physical, emotional, and mental functioning and how art therapy services can serve as an effective intervention for this population. The methodology used for this research was a case study of one participant. The data included an interview and documentation of the participant’s experience in art therapy, including progress notes, artist statements, and intake, service, and assessment summaries. This data was analyzed using grounded theory coding. As a result of the coding process, it was found that themes related to identity emerged in the data, along with themes about stroke, the art process, and the therapeutic relationship.

In a phenomenological study of four LGBT+ young adults (ages 24–29) in the United States, the innovative research method and therapeutic tool of body mapping was used to explore the identities and experiences of LGBT+ individuals. The research question in this study was: What is the lived experience of LGBT+ individuals? Each of the four participants were able to create their own body maps as well as answer narrative questions. Through this process, six themes were drawn (1) Definitions/Labeling Conflict (2) The Bioecological Model (3) Process of Self-Identifying; (4) Stigma: Positive and Negative Levels of Attitude and Support; (5) Minority Stress: Risk factors; and (6) Minority Stress: Protective Factors. Body mapping revealed participants’ independent understanding of their identity, journey, health, and voice. The findings proposed that body mapping can provide the opportunity for LGBT+ individuals to gain self-awareness and for society to develop a better understanding of the LGBT+ population including their needs and experiences. In order to have meaningful change on all levels, it seems that a balanced collaboration among society and LGBT+ individuals is essential.

Keywords: LGBT+ Identity/Experience, Body Mapping

This thesis aims to discover if a relationship exists between color and emotion, if the relationship is universal in its associations, and aims to gain an understanding of the factors that may influence this relationship. This study investigates the common emotional associations to nine colors, when applied to two different color-altered photographs, through an anonymous online survey that included seventeen multiple-choice emotion responses, a series of questions about participants’ experience and relationship with color, as well as a series of demographic questions. Social media posts, emails to program directors, recruitment flyers, and verbal introductions to graduate classes were used to gain research participants. Results were analyzed for significant levels of agreement amongst participants, as well as translated into correlations to
gain an understanding of the factors that may influence emotional associations. The results indicate that a definitive conclusion cannot be made concerning the universality of the relationship that exists between color and emotion, but the results do indicate that some form of relationship does exist between specific colors and emotion.

Keywords: Color, Emotion, Associations, Art Therapy


This thesis describes the following research about the use of animal assisted therapy in an art therapy setting. Animal domestication began an estimated 15,000 ago and in the late 1800’s, Florence Nightingale witnessed the first notable discoveries regarding Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT). More recently, AAT has been utilized as an additional therapeutic treatment modality in Art Therapy (AT) clinical settings all over the world. The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceived benefits of using both therapies in conjunction with each other as well as to document the attitudes of mental health professionals regarding the use of both therapies in their practices. This is a mixed methods research study that utilizes the data collection strategies of a quantitative survey as well as phenomenological interviews. The findings of this study indicate that, among the populations that know about or practice the combination of these two treatment modalities, it has yielded constructive and meaningful results in treatment. For those who do not currently practice this treatment method, many professionals state that they would be more than willing and comfortable to refer their patients to a clinician who offers this service.


As adopted individuals age, interventions such as a life-review may have a positive impact on their view of the past and their self-image (Ando, 2003). The purpose of this heuristic research study was to examine self-created artwork in order to begin a self-inquiry that may increase the researcher’s insights of life as an adopted individual using a modified life-review process. This researcher used self-dialogue to examine and dialogue with 10 randomly selected pieces of artwork she created during ages 3-20, in order to search for themes and insights related to the experience of adoption. The process to review each work of art included a verbal and written dialogue with the art, asking the questions of the artwork and subsequently creating an artistic response from the point of view of the artwork. Grounded theory coding was used to systematically analyze the written responses to the artworks and six core themes were developed.

Keywords: Adoption, Heuristic Study, Life-review, Self-dialogue, Artwork


This quantitative research proposal looks to explore how integrating a regressive material into therapy, such as clay, can be beneficial in reducing anxiety. The purpose of this research is to determine what makes clay a regressive material and why it may be more successful than other
materials to reduce anxiety. In art therapy, mandalas have been frequently used to reduce anxiety. Yet, when it comes to reducing anxiety, the regressive material, clay, may be more successful in reducing symptoms than the controlled materials used to color mandalas. This research is a quasi-experimental design used on college students experiencing anxiety, with the intent of reducing their anxiety through using clay. Therefore, this research question became: Does using clay reduce anxiety as measured by STAI (Spielberger, 1997)? The hypothesis for this research was that using clay with adult participants will reduce their anxiety as measured by STAI (Spielberger, 1997). The results demonstrate that participants STAI scores reduced after working with clay, thus confirming the hypothesis and rejecting the null hypothesis. These results support previous research that clay has the ability to reduce anxiety.

Keywords: Anxiety, Clay, Art Therapy, Regressive Art Materials, Quantitative


This thesis describes a heuristic self-study that explores the graduate student researcher’s experience of creating a digital narrative concerning the environmental affects of substance and alcohol abuse. The graduate student researcher also investigated changes in stress, anxiety, and self-esteem as a result of participating in this study. The project presented the graduate student researcher an opportunity to tell her story from her perspective, reflect on her story and then create a narrative using images, text and music to construct a short digital movie. Through the investigation of qualitative data retrieved from a reflective journal and quantitative data resulting from the completion of the Cohen 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), the State and Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983), and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989). The graduate student researcher experienced a range of emotions throughout the project due to the recall of various memories. The project resulted in decreases in stress and anxiety as well as an increase in self-esteem. Moreover, the graduate student researcher experienced positive emotions that contributed to feeling a sense of self worth.

Keywords: Heuristic Self-Study, Digital Narrative, Substance Abuse, STAI, Cohen Perceived Stress Scale, Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

Kahl, Meredith. (2016). *Figure me out: An assessment of the artwork and journals of Kurt Cobain* (Unpublished master’s thesis). Nazareth College, Rochester, NY.

This thesis describes qualitative and quantitative analysis of the published artworks and writings of Kurt Cobain as presented in *Journals* (Cobain, 2002). The primary investigator sought to determine if clinical mental health issues are indicated within this text and the included artwork as demonstrated by content analysis and art therapy assessment. Gantt and Tabone’s (1998) Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale was utilized to assess graphic indicators within the artwork to determine if a diagnosis of major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar mania, or a cognitive disorder is warranted. Qualitative content coding was also applied to both written text and artwork to secure evidence of additional clinical themes, specifically depression, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, and/or identity discrepancy. The results of the study support the
hypothesis that clinical themes are indicated, and provide additional evidence of possible mania within the artist at the time of creation.

Keywords: Art Therapy Assessment, Bipolar disorder, Depression, Mania, Substance abuse, Suicide


This study examined the effectiveness of two different types of doodling activities in the reduction of anxiety. Four female graduate students from a Northeastern College campus were randomly assigned to a structured doodling activity or an unstructured doodling activity. The hypothesis was that the structured doodling activity would reduce anxiety more than the unstructured doodling activity. Results from the State Anxiety Inventory (SAI) measuring tool demonstrated that anxiety levels declined the same amount in both types of doodling activities. These findings suggest that doodling, as a generalized art activity, may induce a calming state that benefits college students dealing with anxiety. However, additional studies involving a greater number of participants that represent a wider range of ages within the college setting are needed to further validate the efficacy of these results.

Keywords: Structured doodling, Unstructured Doodling, Doodling, Anxiety, State Anxiety Inventory (SAI), College Students


This research paper explored the correlation between visualization, art making, and stress levels in collegiate swimmers. With the reduction of stress, collegiate level swimmers may be able to perform at their maximum potential. The research study examined the extent to which visualization and art making reduced stress levels in collegiate swimmers prior to a swim meet. Study participants took part in four sessions that each contained a pre Daily Stress Inventory (DSI), guided visualization, art making, and a post DSI. The findings illustrated that a majority of the measures on the pre and post DSIs did not display statistically significant decreases in stress following visualization and art making. However, important clinical significance was observed. While only one item on the DSI displayed a statistically significant decrease in stress, numerous items on the DSI displayed clinically significant decreases in stress levels among collegiate swimmers. These results warrant further research into the effects of guided visualization and art making on stress.


In evaluating the use of art therapy with veterans I conducted a case study that explored the experience a veteran has while receiving art therapy services. The data collection included the participant’s progress notes, artwork and a research journal. The researcher utilized a two-step coding process to analyze the data and review the participant’s experiences of the services provided. Themes and categories that emerged from the data provided insight into the potential
benefits of art therapy services with the veteran population. The data also illustrated ways veterans may use art therapy to gain coping skills and develop ways of self-expression. This study is important because it explores how art making can be utilized to help veterans acknowledge and express their feelings, while finding positive ways of coping with adverse situations.

Keywords: Soldiers, Emotional Distress, Deployment, Veterans, Art Therapy


This thesis describes the research conducted with a family containing a child diagnosed with ADHD. The first chapter explores literature pertaining to children diagnosed with ADHD or ASD and the importance of researching alternative therapeutic approaches for working with this population. It was hypothesized that if parent(s)/guardian(s) who have a child diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder participated in family art making then their stress levels would be reduced as measured by the Parenting Stress Index, Fourth Edition (Abidin, 2012). This study is a quantitative design utilizing a pre-inventory, a post-inventory, and a follow-up inventory. The Family participated in two, 90-minute art-making sessions. The first session focused on creating a family portrait. The second session, held one week later, focused on creating a gift for a family member. To analyze the data, the raw scores collected where translated into percentiles based on the information provided in the Parenting Stress Index Professional Manuel (Abidin, 2012). The percentiles were then used to compare the participant’s scores over time. The scores were also compared to the mean profile for parents of children with ADHD (Abidin, 2012, pg. 152). The results showed a decrease in stress levels of the parent after participation in two art making sessions with her child.


This thesis describes quantitative research that measures eating disorder symptoms among college students using the Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI-3), and the Draw-a-Person (DAP) art therapy assessment. This study aims to replicate a study completed in 2014 by Eleanor Poore (2014), and consisted of 25 graduate student participants from Nazareth College in Rochester, NY. The DAP assessment was scored using a checklist of positive self-esteem indicators, and was tested for inter-rater reliability. The scores for the EDI-3 and DAP were analyzed, and examined for correlations. A weak negative correlation that was not significant was found ($r (23) = -.114, p > .05$) between the adjusted DAP scores and the EDI-3 GPMC scores. A Pearson correlation was also computed to examine the relationship between the adjusted DAP scores and the EDI-3 EDRC scores. Another weak negative correlation that was not significant was found ($r (23) = -.024, p > .05$).

Keywords: Eating disorders, art therapy assessments, Draw a Person, Eating Disorder Inventory, self-esteem, body image

This thesis describes survey research on color association with emotion when comparing two different generations of women. The two generations of women represented in the study were college students with ages ranging from 18-35 and nuns residing in a motherhouse ranging in ages from 60-100. Surveys were used to collect the data and 30 responses were collected from each group. The results of the survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software program. The data was analyzed by using frequencies to compare the two different groups of women. The results of this research study illustrated that the colors red, yellow, green, blue, grey, black and white show similar associations with specific emotions among multiple generations of women.


This historical research study looks at the life and work of Donald (Don) L. Jones, ATR-BC, HLM, and his status as a pioneer in the field of art therapy. Particularly, on an examination of Don Jones’ impact on the field of art therapy, how he obtained the title of “The Father of Art Therapy,” art therapy methods that evolved from Don Jones’ work, and how working in the field impacted Don Jones’ life personally. Through this historical examination, it was found Don Jones worked tirelessly in an effort to help others, impacted countless practitioners, and was an innovator in the field. He became a pioneer in the field for these ideals, as well as for his involvement in the establishment of the American Art Therapy Association (AATA), among other organizations.

Keywords: Don Jones, art therapy, pioneer, “Father of Art Therapy,” AATA


As brain-injury affects millions of Americans as a leading cause of disability (BIAA, 2016), Kline (2016) expresses apprehension with the paucity of research in recent art therapy literature. Acquired changes in cognition, speech and mood, after brain-injury, make screening depression difficult (Heidenreich, 2017). Art therapy assessment has the potential to nonverbally inform clinical decisions, by screening for changes in mood and documenting brain plasticity across neurorehabilitation. This thesis discusses how type, severity and location of brain injury may affect art production, providing clarity to Gantt and Tabone’s (1998) category of the organic mental disorders. Twelve person picking an apple from a tree (PPAT) assessments were collected from adult brain-injured subjects at the Nazareth College Art Therapy Clinic, and analyzed using the Formal Elements of Art Therapy Scales (FEATS) and PPAT Content Tally Sheet (Gantt & Tabone, 1998). Mean scores were significantly low on scales 2, 4, 5, 8 and 10, indicating both common formal elements and depression. However, a preference for cool color, among other patterns, did not tie to the literature and may be additional indicators of depression after brain-injury. Where verbal assessments are partial, the patterns in formal elements
demonstrated the potential of art therapy assessments in informing diagnosis of brain-injury or depression, as well as in informing treatment decisions and documenting rehabilitation progress.


The research explored in this study is a phenomenological look at adolescent eating disorder patients and their lived experience in the pediatric setting. The lived experience of these patients is grounded through the cognitive behavioral theory. Participants in this study use the art therapy process of Photovoice to express their experience, as well as what is important to them during this time of recovery. The participants in this study are interviewed about the content of the images taken. The interviews are then coded through Moustakas’ research and procedural methods for common themes and categories, ending in the results of the study. The results included themes such as distraction, privileges, and positivity, with the overall common themes of motivation, support systems, and open-mindedness.

Keywords: Cognitive Behavioral Theory, Eating Disorders, Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, Adolescent, Inpatient Art Therapy, Photography, Photovoice, Phenomenology, Motivation, Support System, Open-mindedness.


This thesis describes the following phenomenological research on the experience of dreams for college students. Prior qualitative research neglects the role of art making in the dreaming process. This thesis explores the lived experience of college students creating artwork in a dream journal. The participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling at Nazareth College. Both participants were 21-year-old white females. Each participant recorded at least one dream in a journal, including an art piece and written reflection. They were asked to represent the dream, and reflect on its personal meaning. Each participant was then interviewed about her experience. The interviews were transcribed and coded for analysis, then paired with artwork for further analysis. Seven themes structured the dreaming experience: qualities of dreams, testing new solutions, content outside of the dreamer's awareness, continuity between dreams and real life, exploration of uncomfortable subjects, resolution of underlying feelings, and analyzing dreams for real life applications. This research supports the continuity hypothesis and Jungian theory, which regards dreams as expressions of unconscious material. There are possible implications for Art Therapy because, like dreams, individuals are able to layer unconscious material in art products. In future research, it may be productive to examine a larger group of art journals or larger number of dreams.

Keywords: Dream, Experience, College Students, Phenomenology, Art, Journal, Qualitative, Reflection, Interview


This thesis works to prove that a hole in the education of art therapists about the LGBT+ community exists. A survey was sent to 32 colleges and universities across the United States,
asking American Art Therapy Association (AATA)-approved programs to distribute it to their recently graduated art therapy alumni, or students graduating within the year. This survey consisted of 20 questions, some of which had multiple possible answers, and others with a space for a verbal response. The survey worked to test basic knowledge of these new and future art therapists about the LGBT+ community, collect data about their awareness of resources, and decide what level of preparedness these programs provided for these participants to work with clients who belong to the LGBT+ community. The results of this survey showed an inconsistency in the education and preparedness of art therapists, despite being similar programs under AATA. Due to these results, possible solutions include a higher consistency in the requirements of these programs in regard to the LGBT+ community, more easily available resources, or a higher focus on the LGBT+ community in multicultural competency courses within art therapy programs.

Keywords: art therapy, LGBT+ community, competency, education, American Art Therapy Association


This research study asked the question: Can coloring mandalas improve behavioral self-regulation, as measured by performance on a 3D maze challenge? The first hypothesis was that participants who colored mandalas would show improved behavioral self-regulation, indicated by improved performance on a 3D maze challenge. The second hypothesis was that the improvement in performance would be greater for participants who colored mandalas than for participants who engaged in free-drawing. In order to test these hypotheses an A-B-A design was used, in which participants were randomly selected into one of two groups. Each of the groups completed a hand-eye coordination task in the form of a 3D maze game, then engaged in an art activity, then attempted the maze again. The results of the study indicated that there was a significant decrease in the number of mistakes made by the mandala coloring group. The results also indicated that there was not a significant difference between the decreases in mistakes between intervention groups. The results of this study indicated that coloring mandalas may improve behavioral self-regulation, but not to a significantly greater degree than free drawing.

Keywords: Mandalas, Free Drawing, Behavioral Self-regulation, Hand-eye Coordination Task, Game


Because of current conflicts involving the U. S. military, service members and their families are experiencing long, frequent deployments and relocations during one’s career contributing to the uncertainty of military life, causing serious family problems, financial instability, and mental and behavioral health problems (National Military Family Association, 2014). Combat experiences also contribute to higher risk-taking and difficulty managing anger and hostility when exposed to violent combat, killing another person in action, or being in contact with high levels of human trauma (Elbogen et al., 2010; Killgore et al., 2008). Gender has been shown to contribute to the
different ways in which aggression is expressed and identified as a result of combat exposure (Berk, 2008). Researchers have studied the Draw a Story art assessment as a tool to identify risk for aggressive behavior, connecting low scores in emotional content, high scores in self-image, and the use of morbid humor as indicators of potential aggression (Earwood et al., 2004). As a response to the literature review, the current study examined eight male military members (n=8) between the ages of 18-60 years old, including current military members and veterans serving in the U.S. Navy, Army, and Air Force. Data revealed no significant correlation between the Buss-Perry Scale (AQ) and the Draw a Story art assessment to identify aggression in the adult military population. Examination of individual scales within the DAS support research from Earwood et al. (2004) and Silver (2005) that emotional content, self-image, and use of humor can be used to identify potential aggression risk.

Keywords: aggression, military, combat exposure, correlation, Draw a Story


This thesis describes the following research on color and emotion associations. Forty-five college students participated in two experimental tasks. Test A consisted of viewing nine color stimuli (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, white, grey and black) and answered questions about emotional associations as well as a person, object, place, or event. Test B consisted of viewing sixteen emotive word stimuli (passionate, frightened, indecisive, grief, vulnerable, optimistic, free, curious, bored, miserable, aggressive, secure, afflicted, glad, spirited, and calm) and answered questions about color associations as well as a person, object, place, or event. Test A found that orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple were predominately associated with positive emotions and red, white, grey and black were predominately associated with negative emotions. Test B concluded that positive emotions were predominately associated with the colors yellow, blue, red, and purple, negative emotions were predominately associated with the colors red, grey, black, white, and orange and yellow and grey were associated with neutral emotions. The results suggest that color-emotion associations could be predicted and may be bi-directional. It also suggests that there may be a sub-cultural impact on color-emotion associations.

Keywords: color, emotions, associations, bi-directional, relationship


This study investigated the question,” Will children who have experienced trauma as indicated in their personal records, exhibit aggressive tendencies and stress in the artwork of the Draw a Person in the Rain and as measured by the Youth Risk and Resilience Inventory?” The population sample consisted of adolescent males in a residential treatment center for sexually harmful and reactive behaviors (N = 6). All participants have experienced traumatic events ranging from exposure to domestic violence, exposure to violence and guns, physical abuse, sexual abuse as the victim, neglect, exposure to substance abuse and alcohol, loss of a parent by suicide, adoption and termination of parental rights as a child. A moderate relationship exists; there is a direct positive relationship between the level of aggression and stress seen in the artwork of the Draw a Person in the Rain and Silver’s Draw a Story (2007) and the risk scores of the Youth Risk and Resilience Inventory, but they are not significant. The
Pearson correlation for the Draw a Person in the Rain was ($r(4) = .417, p > .05$) and the Pearson correlation for Silver’s Draw a Story (2007) was ($r(4) = .503, p > .05$). The artwork of this population accurately depicts stress and aggressive tendencies.

Keywords: Juvenile Sex Offenders (JSO), Sexual Abuse, Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Risk, Resiliency, Draw a Person in the Rain, Rawley Silver’s Draw a Story (2007), Youth Risk and Resilience Inventory, Art Therapy, Quantitative, Qualitative, Correlations


This thesis studied the portrayal of mental illness in popular films in order to identify perceptions of mental illness presented in popular films. This research study analyzed the following five films to determine and identify themes related to mental illness: One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1975), Ordinary People (1980), Girl Interrupted (1999), A Beautiful Mind (2001), and Touched with Fire (2015). Using a qualitative research methodology this study focused on exploring how popular movies may influence the general public’s perceptions about mental illness. This was accomplished by establishing common themes among the five films analyzed. The subsequent themes highlighted messages the viewer receives regarding mental illness and in turn, has implications for how these messages may impact viewers’ perceptions of mental illness.


This quantitative research study asked the question: Will the implementation of the positive psychology principle of positive expression (focusing on a personal strength and illustrating it through art-making), while art-making, significantly increase mood, in comparison to open-ended art-making, as measured by the Profile of Mood States (POMS) scale and Visual Analogue Mood Scale (VAMS) (McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1971; Folstein & Luria, 1973)? The researcher recruited participants from a graduate class of 20 students, 16 of which participated in the research study. The participants were randomly assigned to the groups, positive expression or open expression, through random folder placement on the classroom desks. The researcher read the researcher script, which guided the participants through the consent and demographic forms. After the participants completed the forms, they completed the two pre-test measures, the Profile of Mood States scale (POMS) and Visual Analogue Mood Scale (VAMS). In the next part of the study, the participants did the art-making portion for 20 minutes, with prompts specific to each group. Following art-making, the participants filled out the same two measures, post-test. To conclude the study, the researcher read the debriefing form. To analyze the data, the researcher conducted a paired samples t-test and 2 x 2 ANOVA. Results indicated that art-making did significantly increase mood, from pre-test to post-test, however, it occurred regardless of the group. In conclusion, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Research has been found that supports art therapy as a tool in increasing self-esteem and performance. However, little research has explored the use of art therapy to impact sports performance. This research project investigated the use of art therapy with the athlete population, exploring the effectiveness of art therapy on hitting performance and self-efficacy among collegiate softball players. The art therapy intervention included a guided imagery script, which took the participants through a hitting situation, and art creation where the participants created what the perfect swing felt like. The research involved two participants who were on the Nazareth College softball team. The research study was a single subject, A-B-A design. The participants completed hitting sessions and self-efficacy surveys twice per week over the course of six weeks; time was equally divided among the baseline, intervention, and non-intervention periods. It was hypothesized that an art therapy intervention would increase hitting performance and self-efficacy with participants. Results indicated a positive increase in hitting performance, but no substantial growth in self-efficacy.

Keywords: Art therapy, sports performance, self-efficacy


There is limited research on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) population (Stratton Smith, 2011). Research that has been conducted focuses on etiology and pathology (Hofman, 2004; Stratton Smith, 2011). Further, there is limited art therapy research that identifies LGBT participants or concentrates on the needs of this population. The LGBT community tends to encounter issues that other populations do not such as hate crimes, bullying, and homophobia (Dank, Lachman, Zweig, & Yahner, 2014). Thus, there is a need for research with LGBT individuals that consider these issues. A research study was developed for an all day group art therapy workshop for LGBT individuals. Due to lack of response to recruitment attempts, the researcher utilized the knowledge gaining from the literature review to construct a 7-week group art therapy protocol with LGBT adolescents. The protocol includes art interventions, implementation instructions, and sample questions for group processing. Based on the proposal, art therapists have the ability to use the information to address identity, barriers, and isolation issues amongst this population.

Keywords: LGBT, Art Therapy, Group Art Therapy, Adolescents


This thesis is intended to contribute as well as expand the current knowledge of coloring and anxiety reduction. The quantitative study examined the effects of using coloring as an intervention for the reduction of graduate student anxiety levels. The researcher addressed two specific research questions: “Does coloring in pre-structured coloring book pages reduce anxiety as measured by the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1983a)?” and “Does coloring in pre-structured coloring book pages reduce anxiety as measured by a physiological indicator, change in blood pressure?” All of the graduate student participants’ anxiety levels were measured twice, once prior ($T_1$) to the coloring phase and once after ($T_2$). State Trait Anxiety Inventories (STAI) as well as blood pressure readings, separated into systolic (SBP) and diastolic (DBP) blood pressure readings, were gathered. The change scores, from $T_1$ to $T_2$, were
analyzed using Paired-samples $t$ tests to determine whether or not the scores represented no change, statistically significant, or clinically significant change. The results found that there was no significant difference ($p > .05$) in state anxiety (SAI), SBP, and DBP from $T_1$ to $T_2$. However, the mean score for state anxiety did drop considerably, thus it is clinically significant.

Additionally, there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) in trait anxiety (TAI) from $T_1$ to $T_2$. Thus, both of the proposed hypotheses, $H_1$ and $H_2$, were rejected. The null hypotheses, $H_{01}$ and $H_{02}$, were accepted, as there was no significant decrease in anxiety.

Keywords: Quantitative, Anxiety, STAI, Blood Pressure, Self-care, Burnout, Art, Coloring, Art Therapy
This case study focuses on the role of art therapy in channeling enactments for self-growth, trauma recovery, resilience and coping. Molly (Pseudonym) was an 11-year-old preadolescent female receiving psychiatric and educational services at a residential treatment facility. She had a history of sexual and physical trauma and ongoing self-mutilation and suicidal ideation. Through the various lenses of attachment theory, trauma theory, developmental theory and object relations, Molly’s interactions with the therapist and her treatment towards her artworks were examined. By providing safety and adequate support, Molly gradually expressed content related to her psychic world and increased her problem solving and frustration tolerance skills. Receiving long-term individual art therapy supported Molly’s abilities to utilize art making for emotional regulation, increased her coping skills and promoted self-expression.


This case study explores the efficacy of art making and a client-centered approach in art therapy over the course of twelve sessions with a female, adolescent client diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder who has experienced multiple unexpected deaths. Abnormal thought processing and anxiety were suggested in the client’s initial attempts to communicate emotions and cognitions. Impairments in her social and emotional functioning, also characteristic of her diagnosis appeared to hinder her relational interpretations and emotional regulation. Art making, structured interventions and discussions facilitated the client’s emotional processing and reflection on interpersonal relationships whilst serving as a safe container for the organization and communication of unresolved feelings directly related to attachment and grief. Grief processing began to be integrated into her present life in the aid of effective mourning thus, creating foundations for emotional regulation as well as deeper psychoanalytic considerations and self-awareness.


This case study examines the art therapy process of a 31-year-old female Puerto Rican American Woman diagnosed with paranoid Schizophrenia. Frida (pseudonym) used art therapy, specifically collage, assemblage, and mask making, to integrate her dissociated self-states. Frida presented as agitated and aggressive, with symptoms of disorganization, paranoia and hyper-vigilance. Frida experienced her illness as traumatic, leading to further psychic and bodily disintegration. In Art Therapy, Frida was able to author and narrate her experience, using the art
process to integrate dissociated self-states. This paper raises questions about the future use of art therapy to externalize and symbolize experience for those who may have a history of relational trauma and are diagnosed with a severe mental illness.


This study aims to understand the therapeutic value of stop-motion animation making to a client, who was separated from her family residing in a homeless shelter, with diagnosis of Schizoaffective Disorder Depressive type. A sense of secure and autonomy, some indications of dissociation, and the potential to reconnect the dissociation between actual and representational motor cognition could be identified through the observation of the three animation-making sessions in art therapy. The concept of internal anticipation system in human perception of space and the neurological researches on the patients with Schizophrenia are reviewed to support this study's discussion and conclusion.


Through Marionette project, which need some skills to control the movement, and often give unpredictable movement, client who suffers from Parkinson’s disease, glaucoma, depression, dementia and other elderly related diseases, showed positive change in self-esteem. Through art making, client spoke about his emotions, and opinions that related to his need. Moreover, making Marionette doll allowed him to cognitively, emotionally, and physically stimulate his senses. Through clay, which used for marionette making, he physically stimulated his touch senses. Through continuous project, he was cognitively aware about the project. Lastly, through art making and playing with Marionette, he was able to stimulate his emotional senses. Throughout the project, client also built strong therapeutic relationship with art therapy intern, and this relationship allowed him to trust intern to be his third hand for art making.


This case study explores the spontaneous imagery created in art therapy sessions specifically with Madonna (Pseudonym), a 51-year-old mother as she cared for Felicity (Pseudonym) her acutely ill 11-year-old daughter. Madonna lived with Felicity as her caregiver in a pediatric medical hospital before and after Felicity’s heart transplant. Madonna had a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder; her struggle to self regulate affected Felicity’s emotional regulation, which often resulted in relational conflict. Art therapy was used to facilitate coping to hospitalization, and to promote emotional regulation and effective communication. Therapeutic interactions were examined through the varied lenses of mental health illness and psychosocial implications, caregiver stress, trauma theory, and the symbolism behind the spontaneous imagery Madonna’s created.

This case study explores the potential benefits of offering art therapy to a group of migrant construction workers in the Middle East. The artmaking processes of two males; Mustafa (age 27) and Bilal (age 30) are discussed in this study. The research draws from literature on trauma, self-psychology, and symbology, while simultaneously considering the cultural and societal factors that affect this population. Although the trauma of the displacement tells different narratives, Mustafa and Bilal were able to positively utilize the art therapy experience. The workers seem to have developed means to gain insight onto their mental and emotional states, find safety, and attribute meaning to their experiences. Further, they were noticeably able to enhance their coping styles and recognize their true self-capacities.


A qualitative research approach was used to develop an art therapy intervention in Israel in the summer of 2014, during a time of prolonged terror attacks. The researcher guided Jewish Israelis toward solo art making in their shelters under the attacks. The functionality of the solo art making was examined in interviews and in a single two-hour art therapy group in the aftermath. A review of the existing literature was used to validate and explore these art therapy interventions. The findings suggest that solo art making during times of emotional distress assisted the participants in times of crisis and promoted their recovery. This early intervention has the potential to provide supportive containment for Israelis who are exposed to prolonged terrorism.


This case study explores the role of art therapy, with an emphasis on printmaking, in the treatment of a 14-year-old girl who engages in self-harming behavior. The subject was diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder and presented with variable affect from defensive to overwhelmed. A person-centered and dialectical behavior therapy influenced approach to art therapy aided the subject in finding alternative coping mechanisms and building confidence. By engaging in relief and monotype printmaking techniques the subject began to learn how to regulate her affect, sublimate unhealthy impulses into constructive creation, and ultimately increase her self-worth by gaining mastery over art materials.


This participant-observer case study investigates the role of art therapy in the acute inpatient treatment of a 17-year-old biracial male with childhood experiences of victimization. Examined through trauma-informed perspectives, attachment theory, and object relations, this late adolescent’s creative process helped to serve as: an alternative to harmful, maladaptive responses.
to internal dilemmas; a means to repair attachment disruptions; and a way to establish a more integrated sense of self.


This report analyzes the course of art therapy treatment by focusing on one preschool boy presenting physically violent behavior in the classroom. The eleven art therapy sessions for this case are examined using object relations, attachment, and developmental theories. Art therapy coupled with play therapy allow for a multitude of interventions involving client-therapist mirroring, the development of role play through dolls, and the emergence of aggression using metaphors and symbols. Michael’s case progresses towards identification of emotions, increased verbalization, and the ability to channel aggression using art and play.


This thesis examines the challenges of establishing a safe therapeutic alliance in an elementary school in the face of numerous environmental stressors. The client was a 13-year-old adolescent male with a history of trauma who demonstrated an ambivalent attachment style due to abandonment by his mother. Despite the external challenges, the client was able to make significant gains through art therapy. The primary challenge the client had to overcome was re-traumatizing, recurrent damage of the client’s artworks by an unknown person. Another challenge was the dual role of the therapist as a disciplinarian as well as clinician initially required by the school administration. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the client was able to continue his progress in therapy and improve his behavioral regulation and peer relations. He also improved his ability for more secure attachment through the creation of self-objects with the support of therapist’s empathic mirroring.


Nowadays, thousands of people are on the move around the globe. Some want to reunite with their families, others are looking for better economic opportunities, and many are fleeing looking for safety. Unaccompanied refugee adolescents are a particularly vulnerable group of refugees, as they are without the protection of their parents or caretakers. Many have left their homes because of gang violence, abuse, abandonment or neglect. During the migration journey they are exposed to great risks, exploitation, violence and abuse. The thesis explores the graphic expression of the psychological states that unaccompanied refugees adolescents are portraying in an open and non-directive art therapy group at a short term residential facility.

This case study examines the creation and use of multiple modality containers in the Art Therapy treatment of a 6-year-old boy who experienced disrupted infant attachment and abuse. He was treated individually in an office setting once weekly for nine months. Examined through varied lenses of attachment theory and trauma theory, this child’s play and creative processes are examined to support overall emotional and physical functioning. The therapeutic treatment with his mother’s support helped him to make significant achievements at home, and in social and academic settings. Through the creation and use of multiple modality containers and play, he was able to develop emotion regulation, establish a foundation for secure attachment, and learn healthy coping skills during relational retraumatization.


This single case study examines the efficacy of using storytelling through collages with a thirty-eight-year-old Taiwanese woman who exhibited various acute stress symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The client attended a total of eight sessions over a period of three months, which were conducted once a week by appointment. Treatment was shaped in a client-centered manner in order to improve the client’s autonomy. This thesis explores the use of narrative and collage in short-term treatment that establish the client’s own sense of safety, enhance self-esteem, and help their stabilization. By managing social anxiety, this type of treatment can encourage a patient to create a future-oriented plan.


The following case study examines the use of Art Therapy and play in the treatment of Tyler, a 6-year-old boy who was born with a congenital condition called VACTERL Association and was hospitalized for two weeks as he recovered from urological and colorectal surgery. During this time, he utilized art making as a way to safely process his experience of medical trauma, explore his relationship to his body and begin to identify personal strengths and resources. This case was examined through the theoretical lenses of Childhood Development and Trauma Theory, with attention paid to the psychological implications of VACTERL Association. The trauma-informed therapeutic approach was humanistic and largely non-directive in nature.


The purpose of this thesis is to examine how the person-centered approach in art therapy was used to assist a homeless woman with a diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder and history of trauma. The data was collected during individual and group art therapy sessions while she was
hospitalized in an inpatient psychiatric unit in a large urban setting from February to April 2015. Sessions were held in directive and non-directive format, and the “safe place” directive was completed individually throughout the course of treatment. Using the elements of genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathetic understanding, the therapeutic relationship was built and provided for the patient’s basic needs, specifically that of safety. With those basic needs met, she was able to begin a journey of self-exploration, which fostered hope for the future and helped her have a sense of agency in her life.


When a child is unable to escape from the constant barrage of dismissive, frightening, or neglectful caregiver responses, the ego is susceptible to splitting into smaller, discontinuous fragments. Dissociating in this manner is the psyche's natural defense against such unbearable experiences of rejection and to maintain the child-caregiver attachment. According to Jung, these dissociated aspects of the self often reemerge in subconscious material (e.g. flashbacks and dreams) and are represented as internalized, autonomous being or archetypes. As archetypes, they remain similarly discontinuous and polarized whose mental image and affect are unable to be consciously linked to anything in particular within the child's immediate awareness and either cut off from affect or frozen within one. These archaic and typical objects often appear as opposing and one-dimensional affective pairs (e.g. good and bad, blissful versus terrifying, light and dark, the hero versus the villain, and so on). The presented case study follows the therapeutic intervention of a 6-year old Hispanic and African American boy who began to display disorganized behavior at his after school setting shortly after his parents' separation and the family's subsequent relocation. Through the lens of attachment and Jungian theories, a combination of one-on-one play and art modalities were implemented in his treatment to investigate how and if transitional objects could support reintegration of his disavowed self-states to work toward a more positive readjustment to a new family structure and living situation.


This case study explores the role of symbolic expression in the art therapy experience of an emotionally dysregulated Chinese-American 10-year-old girl. Stemming from impaired attachment, Li Jing’s emotional dysregulation manifested in selective mutism, controlled/regressed art making, and poor social relatedness. Through validation, group engagement, and symbolic expression of her needs, Li Jing was able to increasingly modulate her emotions, and engage less in withdrawn and regressed behaviors as a primitive means of self-regulation.

This case study explores the journey of an eight-year-old girl named Maya diagnosed with ADHD and ODD and her struggle with emotional and behavioral dysregulation. Through weekly individual art therapy sessions in a children’s psychiatric outpatient unit, Maya often became verbally and physically aggressive and projected previous identifications onto the therapist. Through the lens of attachment theory and art therapy, this study followed the emotional and behavioral regulation and reparation of previous insecure attachment relationship through the establishment of a therapeutic alliance. Throughout treatment, Maya began to accept all parts of self and express aggressive drives within the holding environment. Maya established coping skills, decreased impulsivity, and became goal oriented through the creation of a dollhouse as an on-going project.


The purpose of this case study is to examine the role of the creative process in art therapy treatment with a fourteen-year-old female recently diagnosed with cancer. Five individual art therapy sessions occurred over a four-month period in the pediatric inpatient and outpatient units at a hospital. During art therapy, the patient utilized her creativity as a mechanism for processing her diagnosis and coping with ongoing medical treatments. The person-centered approach to art therapy encouraged the patient to direct the sessions, providing an opportunity to experience control, mastery, agency, and increased self-esteem. The findings of this case study highlight the importance of further research into the beneficial nature of the creative process in art therapy with patients suffering from chronic medical illness.


The following case study examines a five and half year old Caucasian boy who presented rigidity, controlling behavior, and lack of peer relationship in kindergarten class in an immigrant neighborhood. A weekly-art therapy session was administered over three months at an in-school program. Through lenses of attachment theory and early childhood development, creative art making processes are seen as providing a safe space where he could express his authentic feelings and enhance frustration tolerance and affect regulation. Exploring his superhero and utilizing different types of art media allowed him to safely rehearse social situations and gain a sense of flexibility and achievement towards unexpected art making processes. Through a therapeutic relationship, he was able to work through collaboration.


This case study discusses Lance (pseudonym), a man living long-term in an inpatient, psychiatric unit while managing the realities of schizophrenia and impaired vision. Art therapy became a
space for Lance to strengthen his selfhood, assert his voice as an artist and to create meaning within the limitations of his lived experience. Further exploration about the perspective of persons experiencing schizophrenia and the impact of art making on perceived quality of life may be useful in supporting individuals living with dehumanizing diagnoses.


The present case study explores the role of the therapeutic relationship in facilitating the creative process for a 29 year old female survivor of multiple and severe relational traumas. “Sarah” suffered physical and emotional abuse in childhood as well as severe domestic violence as an adult and carries the diagnoses of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder. Sarah has struggled with affective self-regulation, loss of agency, guilt, self-blame, and a fractured self-representation. A review of attachment theory, trauma theory, and a client-centered approach highlight how the therapeutic relationship and the relational holding process aided Sarah in beginning to integrate a cohesive sense of self through the creative process.

Ryu, Angela Hyunji. (2017). *Oliver’s journey of freedom: Narrative theme in art therapy with a young adolescent on the autism spectrum with cognitive delay and mood disorder*

This case study follows narrative-themed art therapy experience of a 12-year old boy on the autism spectrum with significant cognitive delay and diagnosed with disruptive mood dysregulation disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. With past experience of trauma of loss, abuse and unstable attachment to primary caregiver, he struggled with aggressive and impulsive behavior and emotional dysregulation in the residential treatment setting and with his family at home. The process of exploring his compressed feelings toward his family dynamics, grief, and attachment and its visual manifestation through the narrative themes in art therapy is examined through the lenses of attachment and developmental theory. In the process of building his ego strength through the therapeutic bond and manifesting his compressed, intense emotions through visual expression, the subject was able to build opportunities to integrate his emotions, the idealizations, and the reality.


This case study explores the role client-centered art therapy plays in the experience of Kate; a 17-year-old adolescent girl diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar I Disorder with psychotic features and Unspecified Anxiety Disorder. This study asks (1) can client-centered art therapy aid in the positive identity development and the reparation of insecure attachments in a depressed and suicidal 17-year-old girl? Kate’s presenting problems are depression manifested by deep feelings of sadness, poor self-esteem, self-injurious behavior, low energy and excessive suicidal ideations. Through a theoretical lens, this thesis examines Kate’s art in relation to her identity formation, her insecure attachments with caregivers and her resulting depression.
Observable through her art-making and related discussions, Kate was able to identify and address her feelings of sadness and emptiness stemming from her lack of self-worth and identity. Examined further is Kate’s attempt at ego-building and development of self-concept through her artmaking and the use of the therapeutic relationship. Furthermore, this study examines Kate’s ability to use her art and journaling as sublimation in refraining from self-injurious behavior. Additional questions raised for further research include: (2) can client-centered art therapy provide those diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) the tools necessary to continue to self-regulate after termination? (3) can client-centered art therapy provide individuals with the skills needed to refrain from self-injurious behaviors after termination?


This case study highlights the role art therapy plays in the treatment of a 13-year-old boy in residential treatment. He experienced ambiguous loss through the removal of both parents from his life and presented as isolated, aggressive, and emotionally dysregulated with a high risk of self-harm. The case is examined through the lens of trauma and attachment theory, object relations, adolescent development; and the use of metaphor, symbolism, and narrative forms of treatment, which supported this youth in exploring feelings about his past and future and to gain some ability to self-regulate.


This case study examines the role of art therapy and storytelling in facilitating the grief process of a 9-year-old Chinese-American boy who lost his mother. Although he was cognitively and socially functioning on a normal level, he was unable to express his feelings and thoughts about his mother’s death, especially at home. He was seen in weekly individual art therapy at school for nine months. Through the symbols and metaphors embedded in the creative process of art-making and storytelling, he safely explored and expressed difficult emotions relating to the loss of his mother and his family environment, and creatively found an enduring connection with the deceased while moving on with life.


This case study examines the use of adjunctive Art Therapy Treatment of a 15-year-old adolescent unaccompanied male minor who experienced attachment disruptions during childhood and was exposed to trauma throughout his migration to the United States. He was provided individual art therapy treatment at a residential treatment facility once weekly for nine sessions. Through the use mask making and violent imagery, he was able to symbolically express trauma and develop coping skills to regulate affect. Further research on unaccompanied minors’ response to migration and the effects of transnational migration on children are needed in order
to understand attachment disruptions, the prevalence of trauma symptoms, and how art therapy can benefit unaccompanied refugee children who have crossed borders from the Americas.


This case study explores the role of journal making in the art therapy experience of an undocumented 18-year-old adolescent male undergoing outpatient hemodialysis for end-stage-renal disease. Examined through the theoretical lenses of the power of alliance, resiliency in therapy, the role of engagement using a native language, and attachment theory, this adolescent demonstrated the need for a safe and contained space to explore his identity and the uncertainties surrounding his life situation. His interactions with the art journal and his consistent efforts in creating and maintaining a strong therapeutic relationship proved of great benefit, allowing him to foster easier self-expression, as well as emotional and psychological resilience.


This case study explores the role of person-centered relational art therapy in the treatment of a homeless nineteen-year-old transgender male who was victim to significant relational trauma in the forms of verbal, sexual, and physical abuse. The effects of his trauma gave rise to marked aggressive behavior and an inability to maintain intimate relationships. These pervasive challenges resulted in his being diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, and Antisocial Personality Disorder. This study aims to illustrate how intermittent individual art therapy at a community center was a key factor in the evolution of the boy’s identity formation and allowed for relational regression in the service of learning to form consistent relationships rooted in nurturance and support.


This research explores the efficacy of art therapy as treatment for an adult female survivor of domestic violence. Encompassed in this case study is the broader research question, as to whether or not art therapy is an appropriate treatment for populations of traumatized adults in general. By examining how the art making process was able to indicate the developmental, cognitive, and neurobiological impacts of trauma on the client, and assessing the ways in which the art process the client engaged in appeared to foster emotional growth and improve cognitive and self-regulatory functions, a discussion of the efficacy of trauma-informed art therapy with adult populations is made.

This single case study explores the incorporation of filmmaking in individual art therapy sessions with a thirteen-year-old boy with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and how it fosters communicative growth. Art therapy treatment was given biweekly for seven months at a school for children with autism. By independently creating a film, Sam was offered the ability to learn how to effectively express highly symbolic messages. I investigated literature discussing art therapy with adolescents, ASD, DIR floortime, and video therapy. Through the process of drawing, writing, acting, and editing, Sam was able to take a leadership role in creating a self-expressive art medium, strengthen his narrative skills, and establish a more centralized sense of self.


This case study examines the therapeutic process of a 16-year-old adolescent boy, who is blind, using metaphor to further explore his sense of self in relation to his blindness. In efforts to conform to sighted culture, negative affective expressions regarding his blindness and identity exploration as a blind individual were inhibited prior to treatment. Through the combined use of metaphor in his artwork and storytelling within a client-centered approach to Art Therapy, the client was able to exercise agency and strengthen ego functions. Explored through the lenses of attachment and developmental theory, the work through a self-reflective metaphor is seen to aid the client in achieving an appropriate range of affect responses and a greater sense of identity as an individual, who is blind.


This case study examines social withdrawal, isolative behavioral tendency, and the significance of the self with Alice (pseudonym), a 16-year-old bi-racial female. By examining through the lenses of attachment theory, object relations theory, and self psychology, an understanding of her need for social withdrawal is achieved. Specifically, the schizoid defenses and the sense of self are observed in order to obtain a better understanding of the isolative behaviors. Additionally, the support in her journey of self-exploration and the process of recognizing her true self can be seen through the progression of the art therapy sessions.

This pioneer research study examined the cross-cultural validity of directional elements in the Bridge Drawing as an art-based assessment. Deriving from neuro-linguistic theories of language influences on depiction and interpretation of visual imagery and perception of time, the study focused on the role of language script directionality in Bridge Drawing interpretations. Using an online survey, art therapists (N = 103) in 12 countries were asked to score five Bridge Drawing stimuli with a rating instrument developed for this study. A mixed methods approach was applied to compare responses by native speakers of left-to-right script languages (predominantly English) with those of native speakers of right-to-left script languages (predominantly Hebrew). While quantitative analysis did not consistently yield significant differences between the two groups, qualitative analysis showed that left-to-right script language speakers displayed stronger directional bias than speakers of right-to-left script languages. These findings demonstrate the projective nature of the Bridge Drawing, and question the construct validity of this art directive as an assessment tool. By linking art therapy to theories of language-based scanning bias in nonlinguistic tasks, this cross-cultural study contributes to the growing field of multicultural approaches to art therapy assessment and practice. Findings from this research study highlight the need for clinicians to apply best practice methods by considering clients' narratives, and viewing therapeutic artwork in a culturo-linguistic context.


Research has shown that the transition from childhood to adolescence (pre-adolescence) is a period of time with increased psychological problems, especially for girls (Moksnes & Espnes, 2012). Self-esteem begins to drop in girls in pre-adolescence and further declines in adolescence (Hartz & Thick, 2005). Latina pre-adolescents face even more challenges to their self-esteem. Physical appearance is a major factor to self-esteem, especially for girls and women. Females in particular, who establish self-esteem evaluations solely on physical appearance are especially at risk for low self-esteem. Low self-esteem has been linked to a variety of psychological problems including eating disorders and body dissatisfaction. The purpose of this pilot study was to investigate if narrative art therapy in a group setting would increase the self-esteem of Latina pre-adolescent girls (ages 10-12). It was anticipated the process of creating art and sharing it with peers would empower participants, increase self-awareness, increase confidence, and foster growth and support. It was hypothesized that after five weeks of narrative art therapy in a group setting the self-esteem of a group of Latina pre-adolescent girls would increase as measured by the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 2012). Participant’s artwork and group discussions were also analyzed to show increased creativity and support amongst the group members.
Keywords: self-esteem, Latina pre-adolescent girls, body image, low self-esteem, art therapy, group therapy, narrative theory


This research examined the effects of art therapy on subjective well being over a three-week period. The researcher hypothesized that one hour art therapy sessions would increase subjective well-being in participants over a three-week period. In addition, the researcher believed that art therapy sessions could increase coping strength to buffer daily negative life-events. The researcher was interested in this because a high percentage of the population feels unhappy in his or her current life (Kessler, Petukova, Sampson, Wittchen & Zaslavsky, 2012). The idea that subjective well-being is malleable is supported by previous research, which suggests external events can influence subjective well-being (Diener, 2000). This current study looked for quantitative data, using the Satisfaction with Life Scale as a pre-test, and the Authentic Happiness Inventory as a post-test. Participants were both male (42.9%) and female (57.1%). All participants were in their mid twenties, and came from different ethnicities. Results showed that art therapy does not affect subjective well-being over a three-week period. Yet, some correlations between the pre-test and post-test suggest that subjective well-being remains consistence over-time.

Keywords: Subjective well-being, positive psychology, art therapy, coping mechanisms


The impact of birth order on attachment style was examined in emerging adults through the use of Kaiser’s bird nest drawing (1996); an art therapy assessment tool in conjunction with Simpson’s Attachment Index (1990). Due to the small sample size (n=45) distributed across three birth orders (oldest/only, middle, youngest) the findings were unable to yield statistical significance. The KBND when used in comparison with the AI was able to accurately determine attachment style. The drawings produced by each ordinal group exhibited traits that have been attributed to their ordinal position in the family constellation. The statistical trends found in previous bird’s nests studies in regards to themes, image elements, image situation, image composition, and image coloration was evident in this study.

Keywords: Attachment, Birth Order, Bird’s Nest Drawing, Art Therapy, Counseling


The aim of this study was to address the question: "does the creation of fan-based art-making affect the identity development of geek subculture fans?" To do so, a better understanding of the individuals' fan experiences and its impact on their overall identity status was obtained through the use of an online survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was open to adult users of the website redditcom, and its various geek subculture "subreddits". The survey included both open-ended qualitative questions addressing demographics and the nature of the participants' fandoms,
as well as the Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status, a quantitative questionnaire that employed the use of a likert-scale rating system to determine the identity status of each individual. The quantitative data supported the hypothesis with $x^2 = 4.0425$ and $p$ value of 0.044368. While the study did show a statistical significance between fan artists and having an active identity status, the qualitative findings suggest that all fans, not only those who create art, are focused on varying aspects of their individual identity through fandom experience. Fan artists, however, seem to focus much more on the social context of their identities. This information about motivations, practices, and outcomes of fan-based art-making may inform Art Therapists regarding therapeutic strategies appropriate to the needs of clients in media-saturated societies, and the benefits that art-making around aspects of one's personal identity and subculture can provide within a broader social context.

Bercovicz, Norit. (2016). Transgenerational Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: How transgenerational trauma has affected the stress hormone profile in descendants of Holocaust survivors and how ancestral collaging can help reduce stress (Unpublished master’s thesis). Notre Dame de Namur University, Belmont, CA.

Descendants of Holocaust survivors are known to have an altered stress hormone profile due to the transmission of trauma. The altered stress profile puts this population at a higher risk for developing stress related diseases. Studies have shown that even during traumatic events, using the creative process of art making can not only be transformative but also healing (Leclerc, 2011), suggesting that art can be used as a coping mechanism when confronted with stress. This research explored a method of stress reduction in third generation descendants of Holocaust survivors by acknowledging the pain and suffering their ancestors experienced to help descendants lead a more meaningful existence. The methodology included components of both art therapy and ancestral healing to perform an ancestral collage process. Stress was measured pre- and post-test with the Perceived Stress Scale to determine if a reduction in stress occurred. The results indicated that there was a reduction of stress when descendants of Holocaust survivors partook in an ancestral collage experience. This study showed that utilizing ancestral collaging could potentially be used as a coping mechanism for descendants of Holocaust survivors when attempting to reduce the negative symptoms of stress. However, this study implies that further work on descendants of Holocaust survivors is needed, especially in regards to stress and coping with stress.


The intent of this thesis grant proposal is to secure funding for Combat Paper Project (CPP) workshops for Post-9/11 veterans and their families in the northern California area to help with the transition from military to civilian life. CPP utilizes the military uniform through art making to transform the symbol of military life into handmade paper. The aim of this grant is to gather information related to veteran’s thoughts and feelings of the uniform before, during and after the papermaking process. CPP provides veterans a forum to discuss and share military experiences with each other and their families as the uniform moves from cloth to pulp to paper. These issues will be addressed by using a narrative therapy approach that includes a self-reporting
questionnaire, interviews and case studies. This paper presents current Veterans Administration approaches to the many issues that veterans face as they move back into civilian life and the current treatment models that are used, as well as the efficacy of therapeutic art making as a way of gaining understanding and insight into military service.


The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of art therapy with college athletes transitioning out of sport. The college years are impactful in the emerging adulthood’s identity development, especially for an athlete. An athletic identity may play a role in behaviors, attitudes, and the transition from athlete to non-athlete. In this study, the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale, the Athletes’ Retirement Decision Inventory, the Emotion and Mood Components of Anxiety Questionnaire, one demographic instrument, and two art therapy interventions were administered to student athletes from a small private liberal arts university who were currently concluding their final athletic season (N=11). Results indicated that anxiety levels were not impacted by art therapy interventions conducted during a one-time group session. The artwork produced by the student athletes displayed underlying themes and addressed a need for deeper exploration in future studies. Recommendations for further research on the use of art therapy with college athletes are also proposed.

Keywords: Anxiety, Transition, Athletic Identity, Emerging Adulthood, Art Therapy


The military asks members to be ready for action at any moment and go on deployments that separate them from their family for extended periods of time. While much attention has been paid to the mental health of those military members, little research focuses on the civilian spouse who is left to take care of family while they are away. This research aims to provide an art intervention that allows military spouses a chance to be mindful and present in the moment resulting in grounding and centering. This Internet based research design used subjective units of distress (SUDS) scale to measure self-reported levels of distress before making the mandala, after making the mandala, and after viewing the mandala for a period of 7 days. The results of this study confirmed the hypothesis that mindful mandala making and viewing will center and ground military spouses decreasing psychological distress and increasing present moment awareness and well-being. Acceptance and Commitment Theory Framework provided a lens for qualitative analysis of the follow-up questionnaire results. The mandala making and viewing intervention presented an easily accessible art therapy based stress reduction option for civilian military spouses.

Keywords: military spouses, SUDS scale, mandala, mindfulness, Internet, acceptance and commitment therapy, psychological distress, art therapy

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a Bowen Family Systems art therapy approach can be used with premarital couples in counseling. The hypothesis of the study stated that premarital couples who participated in the study would show an increase in satisfaction as measured by pre measures and analysis of the participants’ artwork and post-session questionnaire.


This pilot research study examined how sleep quality in individuals experiencing insomnia can improve through the practice of cognitive behavioral therapy in combination with art therapy. The project measured how routine behavioral practices of sleep hygiene joined with creating a daily entry in an art therapy journal can reduce insomnia symptoms in individuals to promote sleep quality. The outcome of this thirty-day pilot research study demonstrated that sleep quality improved and components of insomnia symptoms decreased as a result of the CBT practice in conjunction with utilizing art therapy journaling. Although the anticipated changes did not prove to be statistically significant in all parameters of the research; the insomnia distress score and total scores did show a statistically significant decrease in insomnia symptoms. Another parameter of the pilot research study did show a statistically significant increase in sleep quality after utilizing art therapy journaling. The increases in sleep quality and decrease in insomnia symptoms supports the individual’s psychological health and well-being. This pilot research study generates further inquiry into the benefits of utilizing art therapy journaling to improve the lives of those affected by sleep disturbances.

Keywords: Insomnia, Sleep Hygiene, Sleep Quality, Psychological Strain, Quality of Life


This research study utilized a mixed model, quasi-experimental research design to understand how art therapy may assist children and teens in the progression of bereavement after the death of parent or sibling. One in seven Americans will have experienced the death of a parent or sibling by the age of 20 (S.L. Murphy et. al, 2013). Eight school-aged children participated in an art therapy groups to reduce their bereavement symptoms. These sessions occurred once a week, every other week for a total of three sessions. At the end of the study four of the participants had a reduction in their bereavement symptoms with six out of the eleven bereavement symptoms being reduced. This research study has clinical implication for using art therapy with children who are grieving the loss of a family member.


This study examined LGBTQ perspectives of self-exploration through art by applying object relations theory to gender identification and sexual orientation development. A review of the
literature indicated that the intrapsychic and social layers of self and identity affect current LGBTQ mental health challenges and LGBTQ attitudes toward therapy. The relationship between the LGBTQ population and the arts provided additional insight into object relations art therapy applications. The main research question asked if the collective artwork of LGBTQ individual experiences would reflect the LGBTQ group experience as a vulnerable population. An art intervention (self-symbol) and the Art-Based Intervention (ABI) questionnaire generated data on attitudes toward the art and the elements in the art comparing ally and LGBTQ responses. The results supported that a global application of the self-symbol intervention resulted in positive attitudes toward the art process. In addition, there were significant differences between LGBTQ and ally art which supported that LGBTQ group experiences may affect the LGBTQ individual's experience. In conclusion, object relations art therapy has great potential to build positive therapeutic experiences while considering both the internal self and the social identity, especially in a population where identity is constantly evolving.


The population of adult women who have experienced incarceration or other forms of the criminal justice system is on the rise overall, and research indicates that this population is highly affected by issues of mental health, substance abuse, and trauma. Studies suggest that self-esteem and self-efficacy play a large role in how women approach reentry after release, and that art therapy can play a beneficial role in increasing these two concepts for the population. The study presented here focused on the population of justice-involved women and how narrative art therapy could impact their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Two scales were used to assess self-esteem and self-efficacy of four adult women who had experienced incarceration, with each scale used as a pretest and a posttest to measure if art therapy had a positive impact on these perceptions. Between the pretest and posttest, four art therapy interventions were given to the participants and narrative therapy techniques were used to facilitate a discussion after each directive was completed. Results indicated that narrative art therapy did positively impact the women overall, but additional studies are necessary to determine statistical significance. Implications for future studies are discussed.


This research examines how the healing process in chronic pain patients can improve through a practice of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in combination with a mindfulness activity. Specifically, the project measures how the cognitive restructuring of a negative thought into a positive thought followed by making or coloring a mandala, or writing a journal entry reduces pain and increases hope in people with chronic pain. The outcome of this thirty-day research study demonstrated that hopelessness and pain levels fell as a result of the CBT practice with mindfulness-art therapy or journal-writing. Although the anticipated changes did not prove to be statistically significant in all research scenarios, participants making more than the average amount of mandalas did experience a moderate statistically significant increase in hope.
Increased hope supports the healing process. This research sparks further inquiry into the beneficial nature of a daily practice of checking one's cognitions and switching these beliefs up for a more positive position coupled with the art therapy intervention of mandala-making.


Exploration of LGBQ individuals coming out process through the creation of animal self-portraits representing a specific coming out experience. Participants completed a questionnaire regarding the animals they chose and why as well as what experience they chose to represent. Thematic analysis provided qualitative data for discussion and comparison.


The purpose of this research study was to investigate whether specific art therapy interventions can change a person’s perspective and facilitate a forgiveness process as a way to resolve interpersonal conflict. There were 32 participants selected by the criteria of age and possession of interpersonal conflict. Participants ranged in age, gender, as well as in content and severity of the conflict experienced. Forgiveness is defined as (a), a reduction in negative thoughts, such as perceived injustice and anger, and (b), an increase in an individual’s degree of self-efficacy. There was a significant decrease in participant’s levels of anger and hurt between the pre-test and the post-test, indicating an increase in forgiveness. Levels of self-efficacy increased as expected, although the findings were not significant. The artwork displayed a participant’s ability to recognize their self-subjugating narratives through the art and his or her efforts to change them into new behavioral patterns. Keywords: Art therapy, conflict resolution, forgiveness, narrative therapy, anger, resentment, self efficacy, power, empathy


Statistics demonstrate that teaching remains one of the most stressful professions, with as many as twenty five to fifty percent of new professionals leaving before they have completed their first five years in the field. The amount of stress and anxiety that teachers face every day, from the various job demands often causes emotional drain leading to depression, isolating depersonalization and lack of a sense of professional and personal achievement. The culmination of these negative feelings is a primary reason for the high attrition rate of teachers and current shortages nationwide. The following pilot study concentrates on how to use art to address teacher stress and anxiety. The use of art mandala journaling is an opportunity for teachers to reflect and gain self-awareness while using the therapeutic nature of art to reduce daily stress. The results of the study show that art journaling can significantly lower long-term anxiety and may also positively impact daily stress though further research is needed. Keywords: teachers, stress, anxiety, self-awareness, mandala, art, journaling, burnout, education

The capability to assist human beings with nothing in return has become less prominent among developed communities around the globe; more social problems are occurring further often around our neighborhoods. This research study tried to explore the hypothesis of creating art making in order to increase empathy in adults through a five week long study. The study asked participants (n=23) to create three empathy focused art activities along with journal entries submitted online weekly between the first and last week of pre and post testing. The data was analyzed quantitative with the help of the Basic Empathy Scale (BSE) and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). The art was analyzed qualitative using inter-rater reliability. Results of the BSE scale were significant suggesting that creating art in a weekly basis helped increase empathy levels among the participants. In this study, insignificant results were found in the IRI scale. Inter-raters found common themes in the art and journal entries. Therefore shining light to the hypothesis that setting a time in a week to self-reflect through art making, contributed to individuals’ empathetic recognition for self and others. An individual’s interpersonal connections to others can become deeper through the use of creative art making; altering environmental factors that might restrict from contributing to society with an empathetic approach. This study contributes to the developing field of art therapy research and the importance art making can be to increase empathetic awareness for societies around the globe.

Keywords: Empathy, Art-making, Adults, Attachment, Art therapy


The hypothesis of this research study was that art therapy would help cross-cultural couples improve their communication skills through better understanding of each other’s cultural differences. Five cross-cultural couples were selected, composed of one partner from an individualistic culture and another partner from a collectivistic culture. Participant couples were married or in a committed relationship and have experienced conflicts and/or communication challenges. Each couple participated in one single art therapy session and the session lasted for two hours. Each partner was asked to complete the same art interventions individually and then encouraged to share his or her art piece and process with his or her partner. Demographic assessment, Pretest and repeated posttest questionnaires, and their artwork were used for quantitative and qualitative analysis. A Primary Communication Inventory (PCI) and a Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) were used for pretest and posttest to see potential changes after the art therapy session. Results indicated a statistically significant increase in communication and relationship satisfactions within the couples in the study. The research findings may provide support for art therapy as an alternative modality to help crosscultural couples experiencing challenges or issues in their relationship. The findings of this study may also be helpful to art therapists working with cross-cultural couples.

Keywords: Cross-cultural couples, communication, relationship satisfaction, PCI, DAS

This research examines how the acculturation process can be facilitated for East Asian international students through a practice of art therapy. The art interventions took place in a group, and they were designed to help the participants to become a bicultural by covering the process of grief and loss, identifying cultural identity, exploring aspects of Eastern culture and Western culture, and supporting the integration of both cultures. The outcome of this research study demonstrated that art therapy interventions facilitated participants’ acculturation process after four sessions. This research sparks further inquiry into the beneficial nature of art therapy for a culturally diverse population such as the international student population.

Keywords: Art therapy, Acculturation, International student


This research examines how Islamophobia affects Muslim American community. It suggests that American Muslims face racial microaggressions in their day to day lives that cause anger. For this research I used a Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS) and a demographic questionnaire to determine how American Muslims experienced discrimination. It also uses an Anger Scale as a pretest measure to understand the impact of racial microaggressions. As a therapeutic intervention I employ an Art Therapy technique – Anger Containment Box. To measure the effect of this technique I used the Anger Scale as a posttest. This research was conducted with 80 participants that varied in age. My research confirmed that American Muslims are experiencing racial microaggressions in their day to day lives. Contrary to my assumption the research findings indicated that the participants became angrier after the Art Therapy intervention.

Keywords: Islamophobia, American Muslims, Anger, Art Therapy


This mixed-methods research project exhumed the therapeutic benefits of random acts of kindness utilizing art in heightening social connectedness and sense of belonging in women. Life satisfaction, happiness, physical well-being and mental health become missing elements resulting in conditions where empathy and compassion are absent. Random act of kindness is of benefit in providing a social environment and can increase the feeling of belongingness. Researchers evaluated effects of three consecutive random acts of kindness within a week and incorporating art making to visualize the kind acts on increasing social connectedness. Pre and post-tests were given to measure change in the level of empathy and compassion; these results were not significant. The qualitative data including participants’ artwork and journals were analyzed through interpretive analysis to search for themes. Qualitative data revealed that opportunity to exhibit kind acts in action and depiction increased participants’ belongingness and social connectedness. Further research is suggested to develop more tools in art therapy related to kind acts and social connectedness.
Keywords: Belongingness, Social Connectedness, Empathy, Random Acts of Kindness, Mental and Physical Well-being


This study examined the effects of a brief mixed-media art therapy intervention in reducing the feelings of guilt experienced by working mothers. Seven mother-child dyads participated in the study, which took place in a private art studio. Out of the seven full-time working mothers, initially, six of them described themselves as guilty towards their children on PGI-S-M and their data were included in the study. One mother’s data were not included, as she described herself as not feeling guilty. After the intervention, all six participants mothers chose less guilty terms on PGI-S-M to describe their relationship with their child at that moment, and their non-guilt scores also showed an increase in the Guilt Questionnaire. A MCIRS was used to collect qualitative data about the interaction between the child and the mother during the intervention. This scale was not employed to collect quantitative data but to further understand the dynamics between the mother and child dyads. Qualitative results indicated, all mothers seemed to have culturally appropriate and good relationships with their children; moreover, this intervention seemed to help mothers to demonstrate that they were good mothers. Diminishing the discrepancy between their actual selves and idealized selves, this specific art making process might have helped mothers to feel less guilty towards their children. The overall results supported the hypothesis that a brief mixed-media intervention was effective in guilt reduction of working mothers.

Keywords: working mothers, mothers, guilt, art therapy, mixed-media art, art journaling, employment.


This pilot study explored bifurcated familial representation through metaphoric and symbolic content in art therapy projective drawings of latency-aged children of divorce. The study asked participants (n=13) to create three drawings: the Bird’s Nest Drawing (BND) modified House-Tree-Person (HTP), and a free drawing. The data was analyzed qualitatively with the use of the Kaiser BND Checklist, the Formal Elements of Art Therapy Scale (FEATS), and Jungian picture interpretation quadrant schema. In this pilot study, insignificant results were found in the representation of bifurcated symbol or metaphor within the art assessments. Results of the study suggest insignificant findings in the bifurcated metaphor of the family unit within the BND, with possible limited significance for future studies. Results of the modified H-T-P and free draw indicated a lack of significance. Additional qualitative findings noted in the art are included. Complications within the pilot study are acknowledged, with suggestions for re-trial. Considerations for further research to the field of Art Therapy are discussed.

Keywords: Art therapy, Divorce, Attachment, Metaphor, Projective Drawing

College student athletes, as an underserved clinical population with documented barriers and stigma attached to seeking mental health treatment, might present as a suitable group to expose to art therapy as a treatment modality. To gauge interest in art therapy, this student researcher recruited student athletes in college at a private university to take a survey examining attitudes towards art therapy, stigma from their social group and barriers to seeking mental health treatment. This student researcher hypothesized (1) student athletes will show positive attitudes towards art therapy, (2) those with more art therapy exposure will have higher positive feelings towards art therapy, (3) student athletes experience stigmatization by others for seeking help, and (4) student athletes consider a lack of time their biggest barrier to seeking help. The data showed initial positive support for further exploration of art therapy as a treatment modality in working with student athletes, but found conflicting and similar results to previous studies in the literature concerning stigma and barriers to seeking mental health treatment in student athletes.

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Keywords: Student Athletes, Athletes, College Students, University Students, College, University, Art Therapy, Stigma, Barriers to Seeking Help


Mental health among university students represents a growing concern, particularly in relation to stress caused by procrastination. The student researcher hypothesized graduate and doctoral students would show increased productivity and decreased procrastination on thesis related work following a tactile-based art intervention. The student researcher utilized a clay-based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) art intervention on graduate and doctoral students to study its effectiveness on reducing procrastination and stress on thesis related tasks. The art directive specifically targeted the concepts of experiential avoidance and haptic perception in clay. This pretest-posttest study yielded twenty-one participants and found approaching significance in the use of tactile art to increase empathy in one’s thesis work. The study also examined current stress levels, procrastination ratings, and methods for procrastination amongst this population. The current study provides insightful information that may spark future research in the field of art therapy, tactile art, procrastination, and empathy in the graduate and doctoral student population.

Keywords: graduate students, procrastination, tactile art, art therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy


This research examines how art therapy can better assist recovering individuals through their process of recovery from alcoholism or alcohol use using a 12-step recovery model. The researcher utilized a self-made 12-step art guideline and principles of existential theory to assist in this process. The population studied included fifteen adults in the greater San Francisco Bay area who were currently in recovery from alcoholism or alcohol use disorder. The study, which was conducted entirely online, measured how art directives assist the recovering individual in
their progression through a 12-step recovery model. The outcome of this two month research study revealed that individuals in the first and last steps were more likely to progress to the next step, and felt that the art therapy experience gave them self-awareness and empowerment.

Keywords: Art Therapy, 12-Step, Alcoholism


This pilot study investigated if using art therapy helped to shift emotional states towards positivity among adolescent girls currently residing in the California Juvenile Justice System (JJS). The researcher worked directly with the Art of Yoga Project (AYP) while conducting art therapy research. This pilot study gave participants the opportunity to explore and foster self-awareness, increase self-esteem and optimism. This research demonstrates the benefits art therapy can have on one’s emotional state and sense of well-being.

Keywords: art therapy, adolescents, Juvenile Justice System, JJS


This research focuses on restaurant employees and how two mechanisms and art can help maintain equilibrium with emotional regulation, happiness, and stress tolerance. This is a randomized control study to understand the differences between two art presentations: coloring a mandala and watching a digital animation of a mandala being colored. Participants were 30 staff members of restaurants in the Bay Area. The results yielded data regarding happiness level and changes in emotion in response to both art directives. There was statistical significance in the decrease in anxiety. Although there was no significance in the digital mandalas, there was measureable change. The findings suggest various art modalities can be implemented for stress reduction and observing the digital creation of a mandala has potential for use with therapy clients as a stress reduction tool that is available immediately through digital access.

Keywords: Digital mandalas, mandalas, stress maintenance, art as therapy.


The objective of this research study is to understand the impact of viewing The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt on the empathic attitudes and behaviors and motivation for social advocacy towards people living with AIDS. 41 participants independently viewed a 12 feet by 12 feet block of The Quilt displayed in Gellert Library at Notre Dame de Namur. Participants completed surveys, created a piece of response art and responded to reflection questions about the viewing experience. Results of the study found a statistically significant increase in participants' attitudes and behaviors and motivation for social advocacy towards people living with AIDS after viewing The Quilt and creating response art. Qualitative interpretive phenomenological analysis of participants' reflection questions reported themes such as self,
death, AIDS knowledge/awareness, remembrance/memorial, empathy and aesthetics. Analysis of participants' response art revealed thematic imagery including graphic empathy, hearts, rainbows, relationships, nature, animals and red ribbons. Results from this study may be helpful for art therapist clinicians working with individuals or communities affected by AIDS-related issues.


Interactions with individuals in the mental health field can have a significant effect on how someone with a substance use disorder (SUD) perceives himself or herself. With research representing the harmful influence of stigma toward individuals with SUD, while in a time where there are various social, mental, legal, and political connotations associated with illicit drug use, this research attempts to decrease the stigmatization and increase the understanding toward individuals with SUD through combining psycho education and art interventions. A combination of questionnaires, written responses to reflection questions, and art-based analysis were utilized with mental health professionals and students to assess their attitudes toward individuals with SUD. There were two groups of participants: the control group, which participated in the written responses through journal reflections, and the experimental group, which participated in the written responses and art-based analyses. Results show that, while there were not enough participants to run comparative statistics, there is a trend in the desired direction of the hypothesis, as seen in both narrative responses and art directives. An individual’s level of stigmatization and empathy toward individuals with SUD can be better understood when given the opportunity to use art as a way to reflect. This study contributes to the growing field of art therapy as well as the field of substance use.


The hypothesis for this study was that using art therapy techniques would improve communication within couples. Five couples participated in the study and they completed four one hour sessions. Each session introduced a new art directive for each participant to complete and share with their partner. At the beginning of the first session and the end of the last session the couples were given a Primary Communication Inventory (PCI) and a Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). Results indicated a statistically significant increase in communication within couples. The findings of this study may be helpful to art therapists working with couples.


The objective of this study was to better understand the self-care attitudes and habits of graduate Art Therapy graduate students. Seventy participants completed an online survey on these topics. The survey included quantitative and qualitative questions about a wide range of self-care techniques. Participants were also asked about their experience with their graduate programs integration of self-care topics in the curriculum. The results of the study found a high correlation between the belief that participants need to improve their self-care habits and their opinion that
self-care habits are not adequately integrated into graduate curriculum. Results also revealed that participants were not engaging in personal art making as often as they perceived they should. No significant difference was found between the frequencies of engagement in highly valued self-care techniques and the amount of milestones completed in the graduate program. The findings of this study suggest the data may be helpful for both graduate students to become more aware of the issues and risks related to poor self-care and for educational institutes to consider increased self-care integration in programmatic materials and coursework.


This research study investigated the role of art therapy in promoting a positive birth experience and looked at how the use of art therapy during pregnancy influenced a woman’s level of anxiety, depression, stress, fear of childbirth, and satisfaction with their childbirth experience. The Childbirth Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) was used to determine the participants’ level of satisfaction with her first childbirth experience. The levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and fear of childbirth were determined using a 5-point likert scale. Of the total 102 participants (N = 102), 59 participants (n = 59) were women who did not use art therapeutically during their first pregnancy and 23 participants (n = 23) were women who engaged in art therapeutically during their first pregnancy. This study found that although women who used art therapeutically during pregnancy scored lower in levels of depression and fear of childbirth the difference between the two groups was not significant enough. The research hypothesis predicting that women who use art therapeutically during pregnancy experience a more positive birth experience was not supported from the data collected. Using art therapeutically to promote positive birth experience could still be effective but the methods used were not successful at detecting the effectiveness. Keywords: Childbirth experience, first pregnancy, art therapy, feminist art therapy, anxiety during pregnancy, depression during pregnancy, stress during pregnancy, fear of childbirth, childbirth interventions, Childbirth Experience Questionnaire


The intent of this thesis grant proposal is to secure funding for a six week art psychotherapy bereavement program incorporating nature-based art making for families who have recently experienced loss of a family member. The proposed ecopsychology art therapy group will serve as an adjunct to an existing hospice bereavement program through VITAS hospice services. The goal of this study is to identify individual grief reactions, level of existential well-being and connectedness to nature as it relates to the grief process before and after nature-based art directives in a family group setting. The program will be evaluated for decrease in grief reaction symptoms, increase in existential well-being, and connectedness to nature using the Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist, the Existential Well-Being Scale, and the Connectedness to Nature Scale.

This study tested the use of mindfulness based art therapy through the theoretical approach of Focusing Oriented Art Therapy, to reduce stress for elementary school teachers. Nineteen teachers were recruited from an elementary school located in the Bay Area, for a two-week take home exercise that included a pre and posttest using the Teacher Concerns Inventory to assess levels of stress. The intervention included a mindfulness exercise and mandala making while focusing on a positive experience within the week. Qualitative data was collected from teacher responses to the artwork and artwork was assessed using the Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale (FEATS). Quantitative data was collected from the Teacher Concerns Inventory and results from a one-tail paired samples t-test showed a statistically significant reduction in reported stress levels. These results support the hypothesis that a two-week mindfulness based art therapy exercise support stress reduction for teachers.


The intent of this thesis grant is to secure funding for a transpersonal art therapy group with young adults aging out of the foster care system. The grant proposes to integrate Tedeschi & Calhoun's (2004) concept of posttraumatic growth with the modality of group art therapy in a transpersonal framework, in the hopes of instilling a sense of permanence and connectedness to ultimately reduce symptoms associated with trauma. The author reviews current research relating to the prevalence and treatments available to those suffering common effects of complex trauma and posttraumatic stress in the foster care population, as well as the additional complications accompanying the emancipation process upon coming of age. The group will serve as an adjunct to recruiting and support services offered for at-risk transitional young adults associated with an established foster care organization. This paper provides the overall progression of foster care while exploring the efficacy of transpersonal psychology and group art therapy as methods of healing.


This pilot study investigates the influence of cultural empathy as a way to address the problems caused by multiculturalism. By applying an art intervention, the collective portrait, it is hypothesized that empathy levels will increase and help establish a collective identity. The instruments used (Feeling & Thinking and Read the Mind in the Eyes Test) give us two different perspectives from which to evaluate empathy: the recognition of emotion in oneself and the recognition of emotions in others, through their facial expressions. In this study 18 children, between ages 8 and 11, were recruited from a South Bay school district. Only 12 children completed the tests. Given the small sample size, the results of this study are not statistically significant. However, this study highlights important recommendations regarding the appropriateness of the instruments, methods and materials to be used in a follow up study. Keywords: cultural empathy, multiculturalism, collective portrait

The purpose of this research is to measure the effect that photography as therapy had on chronic stress reduction in women experiencing role-overload. This project discusses stress, role-overload, art therapy, internet based research, and using photography as therapy within the perspectives of feminist and solution focused theories. A mixed method design was used to gather qualitative and quantitative results for increased reliability and validity. Questionnaires were administered in person, pre and post test, in order to measure role-overload, perceived stress levels, and feedback. The research spanned four weeks consecutively, via the internet, as an attempt to test if the use of photography can help an individual experience stress reduction, personal insight, and personal stress reducing skills. The artwork and reflections were also evaluated thematically regarding the process, content, and emotions. Quantitative results determined significant differences in stress levels pre and post test. Qualitative analysis has determined common themes that indicate positive results in personal insight, leisure time, and the willingness and ability for participants to utilize these techniques in the future. This research has significant results that contribute to current research in photography as therapy, art therapy, stress reduction, and using the internet for research purposes.


The first hypothesis for this study was that stressful moments being experienced would correlate to an individual participating in the activity of doodling. The second hypothesis for this study was that the activity of doodling would have a correlational relationship with stress reduction. 76 individuals participated in this study and completed an online survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire utilized a Likert scale to test for a correlational relationship between stress and doodling as well as between doodling and stress reduction. Results did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between heightened levels of stress and the activity of doodling. Results indicated a statistically significant positive correlational relationship between doodling and stress reduction. The findings of this study may be helpful to art therapist, social workers, and educators working with individuals that experience heightened levels of stress.

Key Words: Doodling, Art Therapy, Stress, Stress Reduction


Traditional therapy emphasizes verbal communication between the client and therapist. Art therapy may be appropriate for patients with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. The purpose of the Alzheimer's disease and dementia research study was to determine if art therapy would improve reminiscing and decrease anxiety in individuals with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed using the Formals Elements of Art Therapy Scale (FEATS), a demographic questionnaire, and Geriatric Anxiety Inventory (GAI).
The findings of the study reported that the anxiety of the participants seemed to be low. The report did not show signs of anxiety according to the Geriatric Anxiety Inventory (GAT). The researcher found inconclusive results if art therapy reduces anxiety. Future research using a pre-test and post-test inventory relating to anxiety needs to be evaluated further. The art therapy improved reminiscing for three out of the four participants in the study. The conclusion of the Alzheimer's disease and dementia research study was that the use of art therapy does improve reminiscing. Findings support that hypothesis that art making allows older adults with Alzheimer's disease and dementia an opportunity for reminiscing through art.


The objective of this study is to understand the attitudes of pediatric nurses regarding Self-Care practices to cope efficiently with inherent work stressors. The online survey gave 73 participants a platform to indicate what kind of Self-Care practices they currently employ and if there was interest in participating in an Art Therapy with Mindfulness workshop for Self-Care practices. The survey asked participants quantitative information such as demographic, viewpoint, intentionality and frequency of Self-Care. Qualitative information was used to identify specific Self-Care practices pediatric nurses are utilizing. Results of the study found pediatric nurses value Self-Care and participating in a Self-Care workshop. Pediatric nurses' attitudes towards Art Therapy and Mindfulness are positive overall. The findings of this study would help Mental Health professionals in advising a workshop catering to the specific practices of pediatric nurses as well as providing insight into the current Self-Care practices of pediatric nurses.


The subject of this research is the problem of sexual addiction (SA) also called Hypersexuality, and compulsive sexual disorder (CSD) as a crisis in the marriage relationship. The interpersonal difficulties that ensue when the marriage bond is betrayed due to sexual addiction produced a lack of trust in the partner and usually results in the loss of the relationship. When pornography coupled with masturbation and/or sexual infidelity competes for the marriage relationship, the partner can develop a trauma response. The use of art therapy in the field of trauma reduction has proven to be effective in helping people deal with pent up emotions such as anger, guilt, fear, sadness, and understanding and expressing feelings verbally. The rebuilding of a marriage is challenging, but both partners must be willing to take the actions required to recover trust. As Christians, marriage is a special union with God at the center and betrayal by a partner brings heightened feelings of despair and loss. The issue of rebuilding trust and eventually restoring intimacy in the relationship after betrayal is the primary issue in couples experiencing sexual addiction. This research investigated the process of using mandala art therapy while identifying a couple’s level of dyadic coping skills as a factor leading to increased trust in couples experiencing sexual addiction in their relationship.
Families who live with chronic stress due to their low socio-economic status (SES) can develop tools to build resiliency in order to cope with stress. The goals of the study were to examine how stress impacts the family system, determine the needs of low SES families, and develop a program to increase resiliency within the family system in order to manage stress. The eight-week program design is based off on narrative family therapy and art therapy principles to build resiliency, which was backed by research. The program addresses the needs of each family by giving each member an opportunity to express their needs and highlight their strengths as well.


This literature review and program design utilizes a narrative therapy lens and art therapy interventions to help a parental dyad move towards a more accepting view of their child’s gender nonconformity. The ten-week, mixed methods program is designed to help the parents integrate their experiences with their trans identifying child into a new preferred self-narrative of understanding and acceptance. Grief and loss art therapy interventions and psychotherapy are used to help parents make sense of the changes going on in their lives and move towards a new understanding of their child. When children break away from the cultural norms of gender expression, their parents may have a difficult time adjusting to the new transition that has entered their life. While adjusting to their child’s physical and mental transition, they are confronted with a transition of their own. This professional research paper explores topics such as family relationships, secondary stigma, ambiguous loss, and narrative and art therapy interventions that are helpful for this population.
The purpose of this thesis is to explore the benefits of Art Therapy for non-verbal expression by promoting self-awareness and personal growth. I will be completing three different directives to investigate myself internally. My goal is to determine whether or not more information about the self can be communicated through imagery as opposed to verbally. My hope is that the new found information will increase self-awareness, which will boost personal growth. I found that themes of growth and internal boundaries subconsciously arose through the completion of these non-verbal Art Therapy directives. Seeing that information about the self could be communicated through image making inspired me to continue trying to learn more about myself by starting a visual journal.


This thesis aims to explore focus on the art-making process versus focus on the product of art-making, as experienced by a small group of creative art therapy graduate students, and how their experiences might translate into therapeutic treatment with their clients. This qualitative, phenomenological and arts-based study takes a personal look at the authentic experiences of participants through private art-journaling and group art-making. By extracting natural meaning units (NMU’s) from their artwork and written responses, the researcher was able to examine certain thought patterns and behaviors expressed. Much of the study looked to attachment and object relations theories to interpret their meaning. In this study, the researcher learned resistance of group members in the process of art making impacted feeling around the product, whereas resistance did not occur for participants in individual art-making, allowing for full expression. Implications for the field include how one’s establishment of autonomy, or lack thereof, influences expression and resistance in groups and how that can be processed through therapy. Further research would benefit from implementing a longitudinal study to further explore how group processing of resistance might change group members’ experiences with focus on the process versus focus on the product.


This thesis aims to explore the art therapist’s professional development and to learn how they experience success and support. This qualitative, phenomenological study takes a personal look at the professional development of four experienced art therapists requiring them to reflect on their past experiences through journaling and art making. By extracting natural meaning units (NMU’s) from their artwork and written responses, the researcher was able to examine certain thought patterns and behaviors expressed. Much of the study looked to attachment and object relations theories to interpret their meaning. In this study, this researcher learned the art
therapist’s perspective on what success means is less about monetary value but more about providing therapeutic relationships and progress in their work with clients. Implications for the field include how one develops a strong sense of self and identifying resources that provide external supports. Further research would benefit from implementing a longitudinal study to further explore professional development.


This thesis is a self-study exploring whether process art enables a deeper and faster understanding of countertransference issues. By studying the therapist-client relationship over a period of four weeks with two clients at a drop in treatment center for youth, I was able to assess how to best be aware of my countertransference and how to provide objective treatment within a therapeutic space. The literature review elucidates concepts and theory that apply to my experience throughout this study, which include psychoanalytic theory and humanistic theory. The study itself contains both an objective account of the sessions followed by a subjective interpretation, and process art which was used every other week in order to evaluate whether process art provides a deeper lens into a therapist’s own countertransference issues.


In this study I wish to research and analyze the juxtapositions between Art Therapy and Therapeutic Photography for personal and professional exploration. My intention is to enhance and expound upon my understanding and knowledge of Art Therapy and Therapeutic Photography. This thesis will coincide between theories and ideas based upon Art, Photography, Art Therapy, and Psychotherapy. I hope to show others that these modalities are significant forms of coping and healing. Art Therapy allows communication between the conscious and unconscious through the reflective and creative process. In this study, I will explore the value of Art Therapy, Therapeutic Photography, counseling and/or self-care. These aspects may help encourage a positive shift in an individual’s lifestyle and overall health and well-being.

“Courage may be one of the master keys to life or psychotherapy in the sense that when you do what you’re afraid of, as opposed to avoiding what you are afraid of, that may be the heart of anything that’s empowering at all.” (Hatcher, 2014, pg. 13) I feel that self-care is crucial to one’s mental and physical health and if feasible should always be a priority. It is also important to note that Art Therapy and Therapeutic Photography can be cathartic but also can stimulate a pleasurable form of release and joy. This study will also explore in depth how art therapy can benefit those with mental health disorders such as Anxiety and Depression, as well as various emotional or behavioral problems, family dysfunction, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive disorder, Addiction and Self-Medication. Art Therapy, particularly Therapeutic Photography, can be a self-soothing coping mechanism and assist with the process of self-care, mindfulness and healing.

The intention of this study was to develop an understanding of personal anxiety levels and whether or not they would change and ultimately improve through mandala creation, yoga, and journal entries. The self-study was performed over a five-week period during which two mandalas were made during a day twice a week, and each mandala was accompanied by a journal entry. “I am” statements were also integrated into the journal entries as a way to give more personal reflections and personifications to the mandalas. The source of the anxiety was discovered and explored, and the original creative techniques proved to be useful in coping and managing anxiety. The study was completed with results showing positive changes in anxiety.


The practice of mindfulness in conjunction with the creation of a mandala allowed this researcher to diversify the arts interventions offered to the adolescents in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy at GenPsych in Bridgewater, NJ. The organization that: Realizes the importance of keeping people in their lives and homes while providing them with convenient and effective psychological services and support, offer psychiatric evaluations, medication protocols, substance abuse treatment, group therapy, individual therapy, and family therapy at all our locations. Participants of our program will have the opportunity to attend cognitive, psychodynamic, art, educational, and relaxation groups. Weekly individual therapy sessions, family meetings, and medication monitoring are also offered (GenPsych, 2014). The participants involved in this study were not limited by gender, but needed to be enrolled in the Dialectical Behavioral Therapy treatment program at GenPsych and to have self-identified a reason for enrolling. Upon obtaining signed consent forms, a group of four study participants were interviewed and asked about their experiences in treatment and how they defined mindfulness, mandalas, and art therapy. Interviews were handwritten and took place over two weeks with ten minutes allotted for each interview. The participants each received pre and post-study questions, which they completed individually. After the group sessions, the researcher interviews the participants to validate their experience. These interviews took ten minutes.


This thesis aimed to explore the use of the Bird’s Nest Drawing with the at-risk youth population. The Phenomenological study closely observed the participating adolescent’s experiences in a group setting through art making, an adolescent-parent attachment questionnaire, and an in-depth interview. By extracting natural meaning units (NMU’s) from their artwork and written responses, this researcher was able to examine certain patterns and behaviors the participants expressed. This study utilized attachment theory, attachment styles, and the internal working model to help interpret the meaning of the results. In this study, this researcher gained important knowledge of resiliency and its relation to attachment styles. Implications for the field include the importance of encouraging children to be self-expressive about the process of their identity development. Further research would benefit from longitudinal
exploration of projective art assessments with at-risk adolescents, and the impact it may have on the adolescents’ school preformation.


In attempt to bolster the insufficient body of existing research on abused women, this study explored clinical applications of art therapy that facilitate healing, growth, and autonomy. Survivors are often falsely accused, discredited, and re-victimized because of society’s tenuous unwillingness to examine the universal issue of domestic violence and the stigma attached. Art helps those in emergency shelters find their voices and tell their stories without being reprimanded. In telling one’s personal journey through shoe altering, participants developed capacities to lower ego defenses, regulate affect states, and gain personal insight. By reintegrating cut off experiences and internalized grief through art making, they were able to increase motivation for self-efficacy. Instead of doubtfully questioning why she left her abuser, now she can ask herself, “What beauty will I create in the space they no longer occupy?”


Through the following literature, the researcher will present information on the importance of emotionally processing a diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes. The text outlines the process and results of a research study, which gathered medical data from participants on blood-glucose testing frequency, Hemoglobin A1c scores and perception of adherence to a medical regimen. The study also gathered emotional data from participants through self-reported answers to questionnaires, which focused on the participants’ happiness prior to and post diagnosis and their perception of how much their diagnosis influences current happiness. The participants completed six weeks of directives, which were titled as follows: Intake, Self Exploration, Trauma Awareness, Support, Effects and Debriefing. The directives took participants back to the time leading up to diagnosis and directly following diagnosis in order to help them better process any lingering emotions surrounding diagnosis, which may be holding them back from fully investing in their medical health. Through analysis of answers to group discussion board questions, in addition to participant artwork, the results have shown increased awareness and acknowledgement of the influence of diabetes on daily life and emotions.


Grief is a complex human experience that is seen universally. Art therapy aims to improve or restore a person’s functioning and their sense of personal well-being. Phototherapy is a holistic process used in the Creative Arts Therapy community to treat various psychological conditions through the medium of photography. This study investigates the use of phototherapy techniques to aid in the coping of grief. This is a self-study exploring my experience with the grieving process after the death of my father. I used photography as a means of producing a grounded art
making experience. This procedure aided in my processing of the extreme emotions in the
grieving process.

Institute, Brooklyn, NY.

The present study researched the relationship between introversion-extroversion and artistic
style. 28 participants were recruited, and seven dropped out, leaving 21 participants total. There
were six males and fifteen females, with a mean age of 32. Participants rated themselves on a
scale of 1-5 for introversion-extroversion and created two art pieces—one tree image and one
free art piece. The researcher then observed patterns in the following art qualities: color, line,
density, materials, content, edging, paper size, and several more. Patterns in the art
characteristics were found within the five groups, and in many cases between the opposite poles.
Results bring awareness to indicators of personality types that could be useful to art therapists in
the field, however further study with a larger and more diverse population is recommended.

inquiry of a journey through foster care using narrative and art-based methodology*
(Unpublished master's thesis). Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY.

This thesis is a heuristic self-study that explores the use of personal narrative and art-based
methods to explore the affects of traumatic memories as a result of being in the foster care
system. The influence of my professional development as an art therapist was also considered in
this exploration. Significantly suppressed traumatic memories can be brought to awareness and
regulated through non-verbal interventions such as art-based methods and personal narratives.
While trauma could be defined and experienced in various ways, the focus of this study is on
complex trauma, a term that represents five domains of impairment as a result of trauma:
attachment, biology, affect regulation, dissociation, behavioral control, cognition, and self-
concept. I identify with three domains within complex trauma: attachment, affect regulation and
self-concept and have made connections to these aspects with those found in the analysis of my
art and personal narrative. Overall, evidence from both methods and my knowledge as an art
therapist provided significant insight about the positive aspect of my outcome post-foster care as
well as self awareness of affects through aspects of post traumatic growth primarily through
identification with new possibilities and relating to others.

Hernandez, Jazz S. (2016). *Processing photographic film to examine attachment styles and the

The thesis examines the self through a heuristic research to explore the experience of processing
film by recognizing characteristics of attachment styles and the self. The thesis explores
attachment theories, attachment styles and parenting as well as phototherapy. The research dives
into a self-discovery that provides a better understanding of the self through awareness of
personal issues that emerged through the literature review and data collection. The following
themes were explored: resistance, personal meaning of freedom and control, avoidance, photos
as transitional objects, abandonment, lack of boundaries, understanding of anxiety as well as
limitation. This heuristic research can serve clinicians and therapists to better understand the use
of processing film to explore attachment styles and the self while reflecting on the past using photos as instrument to reach unconscious memories.


This art-based self-study explores my journey through the decade of my career as a high school art teacher and how my experiences led me to transition into a second career as an art therapist. In this study, I have examined my relationships with specific students that impacted my life and my career, the artwork they produced in my art classes, my relationship to the ever-changing dynamics of the larger institution of the high school, artwork I created at the time of these relationships and events, as well as current artwork I created while writing this study in response to my explorations. My research questions for this study are “What would be the experience of conducting an arts-based self study on my experiences as an arts educator?” and “How might this exploration inform my developing identity as an art therapist?” Through this study, I have gained a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics of my students’ experiences, my relationships with my students, and my identity as both an art teacher and an art therapist. Some of the themes that emerged include: boundaries and embeddedness, transference and countertransference, family dynamics and attachment. Additionally, I have gained a clearer picture of what led me to pursue art therapy, the ways in which my experiences as an art teacher have influenced my work as an art therapist, and the connections between the fields of art education and art therapy, specifically in my analysis of the teacher-student dyad through the theoretical perspectives of the therapist-client dyad. This study provides both art therapists and art educators with insight into the overlapping qualities of the two fields in hopes that these two fields can see the benefits of more mutual support, collaboration and cross-discipline education.


This research explores the relationship between displaying art and self-esteem and happiness in the present moment, addressing these two questions: (1) Does displaying art affect self-esteem? And, (2) does displaying art affect happiness in the present moment? The study observed an art group of foster care youth, ages 5-25, over a period of four consecutive weeks. During the first three weeks, participants created art, and the last week participants had the opportunity to display their art and have it be viewed. Each week, participants completed one of Silver’s Draw A Story assessments and two Rosenberg self-esteem evaluations, one before making art and one after. Participant’s self-esteem was measured by Rosenberg’s self-esteem evaluation, and happiness was measured by observing elements of the Draw A Story Assessment. Data were analyzed by comparing participant’s self-esteem and happiness scores the day of the art show with participant’s scores prior to displaying art. A short interview provided additional insight into the subjective experiences of each participant.

The purpose of this study is to research the impact that working outside with earth art has on preschooler’s ability to relate to each other and whether there is a change in their abilities to show more empathy toward one another. Through the development of an empathic connection to nature, it is to be determined whether this facilitates children’s abilities to relate to one another. In this study that took place over the course of two sessions, seven children participated in the study by initially creating a clay face on their own individual tree. During the second session, the children each created their own clay face on one large tree together. Arts-based research methods will be utilized in order to analyze the results of the study. The children appeared liberated during the first session in which they created their own individual clay face on a tree. Each child shared an imaginative story about the clay face being the face of an animal. During the second, the children created their own clay face by sharing one large tree with each other. The children explained their clay faces with short explanations of their clay face and/or similar explanations in relation to their peers. The children connected to one another during both sessions as a result of creating a clay face on a tree.


This study explores the different ways Black women utilize art as a medium through which to externalize and claim their personal and generational experiences and explore questions they have about their own identities. The interpretation and analysis of both the participant’s artwork and my own artwork supports the theory that every Black woman’s experience is different, but is likely affected by the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Consideration of the subject matter, the aesthetic of the artwork, the medium used by the artist, the artistic process, and the artist’s relationship to those things is essential to this study. The results provide some support for the importance of designating spaces for Black women to engage in critical and self-reflective dialogue about their experiences and suggests the importance of the viewers continued engagement with “experience validating” work created by Black women.


The self-study research topic for this qualitative study is to look further into the question of does a male therapist develop a countertransference of being a father figure or not, with a fatherless client? working primarily with children, one-on-one, that are assigned to me due to my sex and their absence of a male figure in their life has allowed me to look deeper in the role that I play as a male therapist. This study allows me to look into if whether or not I feel a countertransference from the client that I have being a male figure to their absence father, in being a father. Connections will be made to the ideas of attachment theory by Bowlby and how the father compares to the father at a young age, and also the identity theory developed by Erikson. The results from the self-study will be art based and produced by myself. Working with two individuals that have an absence father or male figure in their life, I will create a mandala to process my reflections on the session. The mandala provides containment and structure for which
I can easily create art. The mandalas are compared to one another to notice similar characteristics that are up for interpretation whether or not I have a countertransference of being a father figure to the two clients.


Through two qualitative approaches—phenomenology and art-based—this study attempts to discover how adolescents who have survived childhood cancer perceive their illness, make meaning, move on, and thrive. The significance of creativity within the healing process was also explored. The literature provides information on the biopsychosocial model of health, the interrelationship of these factors, and the importance of treating an individual as a whole person, not just for their illness. The literature also examines short-term and late affects, which in turn can influence the survivor’s healing process. Three participants were recruited for this pilot study. All three participants are childhood cancer survivors, and volunteer at a camp in upstate Connecticut for children who have cancer or have survived cancer. All three participants are eighteen years old, were diagnosed between the ages of two and six, and have been in remission for over ten years. The data was retrieved over a three-week period, and consisted of three individual sessions: a verbal interview and two art directives followed by processing. Upon reviewing the findings, themes were extracted that pertain to perceptions of illness. Results from the artwork indicated residuals in response to their illness, as well as patterns of behaviors.

Kim, Esther D. (2015). *Comings and goings: Utilizing travel time from home to internship as potential space to examine different states of mind through music listening and art making* (Unpublished master’s thesis). Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY.

The purpose of this art-based self-study is to gather insight on the environment’s impact on my state of mind while traveling to and from internship through art making and music listening. Transitions are difficult for many people, including myself, and leaving one space to be in another space can induce anxiety. Rather than avoiding anxiety, the combination of art and music helped me tolerate and work through it. As a result of this study, in addition to decreasing my anxiety, I also developed an increase in empathy towards the patients I work with since I could imagine how they might experience transitions as I became increasingly more conscious of what it means to get from here to there.


Following the methods of phenomenology and art based inquiry, this study aimed to explore the influences of language barriers and cultural differences in cross-cultural art therapy with first-generation Chinese population in the United States. The literature review included past studies on the characteristics of self-expression in Chinese culture, common stressors for Chinese immigrants, established theories of art therapy, precautions to take in cross-cultural settings, and
art therapy practices in Asia. The study was conducted with five Chinese participants residing in New York and a non-Chinese co-researcher who acted as the leader in an art therapy session. The findings revealed that the influences of language and cultural differences could be subtle enough to escape conscious awareness. Furthermore, misinterpretations of both verbal and non-verbal expressions could arise in cross-cultural art therapy, leading to transference and countertransference that might hinder the accuracy of clinical assessment and the establishment of therapeutic rapport. The findings also suggested that the therapeutic functions of art therapy could transcend some impediments of cultural differences and language barriers, facilitating emotional release, neutralizing negative affects, and promoting self-reflection. To further the exploration of cross-cultural art therapy with the Chinese population in America, in-depth studies on the impact of differences in communication styles between a non-Chinese art therapist and the Chinese clients may be invaluable.


This thesis is an arts-based heuristic self-study intended to examine the overarching themes of space and permission. The idea of space will be explored through reflections on personal space in group settings, and the idea of permission explored through reflections on feelings of needing permission to take up space in group settings. The creation of a series of three dimensional sculptures uses aspects of the open studio approach to further explore the theme of space. Secondary themes that are also explored are: connection and disconnection to self and other, the desire to be seen by others, self-advocacy and self-confidence. Through the use of arts-based and heuristic methodologies, the artist attempts to find deeper meaning of the self and identifies new ways of addressing these themes as they arise.


The way one functions in the world is based on the intimate attachments we develop from infancy. The mother (or primary caregiver) is the first relationship we have, and the pattern we define through that relationship becomes the basis for how we operate and interact with others. The goal is to have, or develop, a secure base from which we can safely explore the world. I was fortunate enough to have had a secure and firm attachment to my mother who was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer when I was twenty-eight years old. For the first quarter of my life, I lived at home and I never had to feel the pangs of separation from my parents, let alone the death of my perfect mother. It is often said that we idealize those close to us who have passed. The truth remains, however, that she was everything I ever needed in a mother and all that I ever aspired to be as a person. When my mother passed just one year after diagnosis, I completely lost my sense of security and was enveloped by the trauma of her suffering. My family fell apart, and I became stuck in a place of regression. I was newly married, and attempting to function with my trauma while nurturing my newest and most important adult relationship. In trying to compartmentalize my mother’s death in an attempt to graduate and be a wife, I became completely overwhelmed and found myself wedged between trauma and what felt like a futile effort to individuate. I admittedly wanted to go back in time, and be a little girl: to a life untouched by cancer. Holding on to that fantasy, however, was only taking away from my ability
to be present both with my spouse and myself. I couldn’t conceptualize a life without my mother. I didn’t want to. In beginning this study nine months after my mother’s death, I was seeking relief from the pain and trauma that was keeping me from being present in my life. I needed to find a way to live with the new facts of my reality so that I could pursue my goals and integrate my experience. I wanted to imagine a future that wasn’t just bearable, but fruitful and rich. None of these things seemed possible before preforming this study. Through painting, I exercised my trauma and relearned what it means to be present. After the paintings were complete, I reflected on the symbols my unconscious was relaying to me. By engaging in my own personal art therapy, I was able to peel back the layers of despair. Painting helped alleviate my grief, understand myself better, and facilitated the restoration of my secure base. Ultimately, I found the mother I had wanted to bring back to life in myself.


In this art-based, heuristic self-study, I engaged in a mindfulness-based art-making process, modeled after the intention and witness process (Allen, 1995; Allen, 2005) and active imagination (Jung, 1997; Jung, 1961; Edwards, 2001). I sought to discover resisted parts of my self and gain insight into the relationship between preoccupied attachment and the struggle to be mindful (Wallin, 2007). The findings revealed my self as a difficult-to-hold child who struggled to be contained and to self-sooth, and a desire to walk away from and also remain attached to critical parental introjects. The resisted feminine, intuitive side of my self surfaced and a new understanding of and identification with my mother was established.


The purpose of this study is to determine if rapport during an art therapy session can be established more easily with the assistance of a therapy dog when working in an acute, pediatric hospital. The first phase of my project was to try and enlist participants to engage in art therapy sessions. It was only after I mentioned the possibility of a therapy dog being present that 18 out of 20 participants committed to the study. We began our art therapy sessions after the participants opened an envelope, which determined if they would be in the group with or without the therapy dog then selected the materials they wanted to use. During the next stage of the therapeutic involvement, I began to notice how the participants were using Tilly (the therapy dog) as a source of comfort either through their ability to maintain object relations, object permanence, or utilizing her as a secure base. Through this research, I have established that the incorporation of a nonjudgmental animal that has been specially trained to provide safety, warmth, and unconditional love without a need or want for anything in return can facilitate a more therapeutic relationship for the participants to engage in and reduce signs of stress and discomfort which are synonymous within the hospital environment.

This thesis is a deep look into a subject that is often kept private; journaling. While plenty of literature and examples have been found in favor of journaling itself, very little has been published on the benefits and effects journaling has within the art therapy community. This art-based study was conducted with the researcher as the sole participant, which allowed the artwork to share and aid in the presentation of collected data. Multiple concepts, techniques, and themes were discussed in order to provide a greater understanding and the material presented within this thesis. The research was conducted to experience the data first hand. This allowed the research to incorporate the artwork, psychic space, and process allowing for a well-rounded and safe exploration of an important and extremely sensitive subject.


This thesis focuses on the therapeutic effects of using abstract art with at-risk children living in poverty. Developmental theorists such as Lowenfeld and Piaget have speculated that children between the ages of seven to nine are in a concrete stage of development, and do not have the capacities to grasp theoretical or metaphysical ideas such as abstraction. However, using a qualitative, phenomenological and art-based methodology, this study explores if children in middle childhood can in fact respond to and benefit from abstract art directives. Affect regulation, cathartic relief, regression in the service of the ego, and changes in mood and self-esteem were all evaluated through behavioral observations and the artworks. The results found that children on the whole were able to connect personal experiences and emotions to their abstract works; the participants enjoyed the freedom and spontaneity of abstraction, and were able to overcome anxieties and relieve stress in the art-making process. Abstraction proved to be highly therapeutic, challenging the children in frustration tolerance and providing them the space for safe regression in the service of the ego. While abstraction was initially considered too advanced for children, Art therapists should reconsider the use of abstract art, as it can aid in overcoming resistances and anxieties. The spontaneous, kinesthetic nature of abstraction can also offer cathartic relief, a sense of pride in individuality, and promote resiliency in at-risk children living in poverty.


This five-week study sought to determine whether the cooperative art making process could increase the attachment security of four four-year-old girls. The methodology was qualitative and art-based. It looked at the behaviors and art created during sessions to determine if the participants were forming an attachment to the researcher. The Bird’s Nest Drawing (BND) Assessment was administered before the start of sessions and at the conclusion of sessions (Sheller, 2007). Three out of the four participants had significant changes in their BND outcomes. The researcher also related the participant’s behaviors to attachment theory and Mahler’s (1975) theory of child development (particularly the Practicing and Rapprochement subphases) in order to better understand how relationships were forming. The researcher began sessions with planned directives but offered participants the flexibility to engage in activities they found meaningful. This led to other types of cooperative activities such as play. All of the
participants began to attach to the researcher and a correlation between cooperative activities and the participant’s desire to form a relationship to the researcher was found.


The purpose of the proposed self-study is to explore how a hands-on creative process such as papermaking can stimulate internal change and, in turn, promote a deeper understanding of the self. By using myself as a guide and subject of the study, I will be measuring the effectiveness of this experience’s reparative qualities as a tool in the practice of art therapy. The results indicate that engaging in an immersive sensory and emotional experience such as papermaking does in fact support a higher sense of self-awareness and, although initially struggling with resistance towards the transformative process, once I opened up and surrendered to the unknown, I found that I was able to repair feelings of loss and abandonment stemming from my childhood, and better understand how these feelings manifest themselves in my life. In doing so, I could accept the power that they held and in turn release it. In this study, paper became the agent for personal change and helped to open the door to a higher willingness to explore my emotional defaults. When physically absorbed in an experience, it is difficult to disregard the feelings that are stimulated as they are being mirrored in the material and your process. By integrating heuristic research with an art-based approach, I was able to make clear through the use of materials and creativity that which could not be communicated through verbal expression.


This thesis is a heuristic art-based self-study on the relationship between creating art amongst others and the development of the capacity to be alone. This study applies research on open studio approaches, elements of humor, belonging, and theories of developmental theory and creativity, to the process of creating collages in response to the author’s earliest artistic experiences. The study reveals the importance of space for creativity in one’s development, and the relevance of visual communication when developing a therapeutic connection.
Within the time frame of the current generation, two historical circumstances are converging. First, the art therapy profession is evolving and, secondly, immigration and refugee numbers have been increasing daily. With respect to this correlation, the present study will involve an internet survey to be completed by professional art therapists. The purpose of this study is to find what therapeutic settings, theoretical orientations, materials, and therapeutic techniques have been successfully utilized in art therapy with immigrants and refugees. The study employs a qualitative methodology using an internet survey with objective questions and comment/essay box (write in) questions. The results suggest that immigrants/refugees struggle with issues of acculturation and that a variety of art therapy materials and techniques will prove effective in helping them cope with these challenges. The resulting data might then be taken into account by art therapists to further improve services in this area. Thus, this study will add to the current body of literature surrounding immigrants and refugees.


To date there is little research about art-based life review programs to promote integration of life experiences and changes unique to later life. A personal identity built on roles fulfilled or factors such as one’s appearance, home, or belongings may be at-risk for crisis if these factors change or are removed. Unresolved personal conflicts and an inability to integrate life experiences may result in emotional distress and negatively impact quality of life. This distress may manifest as depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, or diminished physical functioning. This pilot research study used semi-structured interviews, artwork created during sessions, the Geriatric Depression Scale: Short Form, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to examine the effect of an art-based life review. It was anticipated that by examining the data gathered during the art-based life review program, results would show the program had a beneficial impact on the participants’ perceived quality of life.


This paper explores the potential of adapting concepts applied in Fair Trade and artisan cooperatives in the developing world for social action art therapy. Impoverished regions of the United States, such as Appalachia, experience extreme poverty, but also encounter several barriers to accessing individual therapy. Additionally, poverty impacts women uniquely and research shows high need and low resources are a consistent pattern for women in these underdeveloped areas. The researcher highlights similarities between Appalachia and Bolivia, a
region in the developing world where artisan cooperatives have been successful, as well as the
economic growth of the Fair Trade and handmade markets to make a case for the application of
similar methods to address similar issues. Furthermore, the researcher discusses the therapeutic
benefits of artisan cooperative participation demonstrating these strategies are appropriate for
adaptation into a therapeutic modality such as social action art therapy.


To date, there is little research or evidence of the effectiveness of Mandala usage to reduce stress and anxiety amongst healthcare professionals. Many published studies with the usage of Mandalas have been implemented with college students. According to Smith (2014), drawing conclusions about stress and anxiety reduction techniques with students may not be representative of healthcare professionals, as academic stressors and anxieties are comparatively different from practicing professionals. Twenty-one participants were recruited via advertisement and verbal recruitment from a small, Midwestern healthcare clinic that specializes in gastrointestinal examination, diagnosis, and treatment. Participants included facility staff, such as clerical, third-party coordinators, nursing staff, technicians, and doctors. The Stress-Arousal Checklist (SACL) (Mackay, Cox, Burrows, & Lazzarini, 1978) was administered and completed before and after participation in the Mandala coloring activity. The differences of pre and post inventories were evaluated via statistical analyses by use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.


Spirituality and religion can play an important part in an individual’s mental health, either positively or negatively. While a majority of Americans adhere to some form of religious belief and may desire to address spiritual issues in therapy, this area is often neglected by clinicians. An art therapy assessment of religious beliefs and tensions contributing to mental health difficulties may provide art therapists a way to address these issues more effectively. The big four religious dimensions of believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging give a framework for understanding religious functioning. Through a heuristic self-study, this researcher investigated her experience of spiritual struggle using the religious dimensions art therapy assessment. The protocol offered a “snapshot” perspective of the researcher’s cognitive and relational difficulties related to spiritual struggles. A model of the progression of chronic spiritual struggles was developed from the researcher’s self-study experience as well.


This study explored the role of personal art making in the professional development of art therapists. The researcher conducted a heuristic arts-based study, which investigated the process
of entering authentic, personal, sustained, and mindfulness-based approaches to art making. The study sought to establish that the art therapist who maintains a personal art making practice will keep the art therapist’s unique access to therapeutic art processes at the center of their professional practice of art therapy. It asserts that this special knowledge is critical for the development of mature empathy and attunement with clients. First-hand knowledge of expressive art processes allows art therapists to present authentic art experiences to clients. Using Moustakas’s six phases of heuristic inquiry, the researcher immersed herself in sustained, mindful, and open ended art making processes with an expected outcome of realizing personal experiences of creative flow, and meaningful creative expression. This study empowered the researcher in her personal practice of art therapy and continues to stimulate discussion about the inclusion of in-depth expressive art practices in art therapy education and on-going professional development.


The development of critical thinking skills in United States citizens was considered essential to the viability of American society and the country’s global economic, social and political empowerment. However, there are concerns that future leaders of the United States will not possess the evaluative and reasoning skills necessary to remain relevant in these areas. This two-part study included a survey of teachers to assess the perception of critical thinking skills in latency age children and reflective art responses to current literature related to critical thinking and creativity. Exploring creativity as an alternative means to enhance critical thinking may lead to the development of new and effective modalities of improving such skills in children. Results from this limited study indicated that, although there was higher than expected importance placed on creativity and critical thinking by teachers, utilizing creativity may still be effective means to further increase the skill.


Children diagnosed as emotionally disturbed were considered the most underserved in the special education population. Children with emotional disturbances displayed long-term deficits academically, socially, and behaviorally with higher propensities of unemployment and incarceration as well as academic, financial, and relational troubles. Emotionally disturbed children lacked coping skills and resources available to decrease stress. This mixed methods study employed the use of the art therapy directives focused on reducing stress through improved coping skills. The outcome of this study was assessed utilizing the projective drawing assessment of the Draw-a-Person-in-the-Rain, and pre- and post- assessments (the Children’s Coping Strategies Checklist, and the Perceived Stress Scale). The data from this limited study indicated that art therapy helped to increase coping skills and reduced stress. Further research was recommended.

Art-based and heuristic methods of inquiry were utilized to examine the experience of teaching two museum-based therapeutic arts classes with regards to environment, therapeutic processes, and expectations. This researcher combined art making with narrative to examine and help consolidate experiences of using the museum setting and resources as part of the therapeutic experience. The art-based research painting and heuristic inquiry methods helped this researcher reflect on the lived experience. The distilled insights that enhanced self and contextual knowledge for this researcher could help define and design a future pilot art therapy program for community art museum participants.


Identity flows from external patterns of negative behaviors utilized for coping with internal layered, but denied emotions. It is no wonder, then, that the effect of substances use alters a woman’s identity. The conducted arts-based heuristic inquiry allowed the researcher to investigate personally art therapy, substance abuse and the twelve steps of recovery in order to increase the benefits of a reconstructed identity. Through a creative synthesis of written narratives and visual art of altered puzzle pieces, the inquiry also revealed how spirituality influenced both. Utilizing the study as means to explore personal experiences within the topic of recovery from substance abuse has led to a contributing working model for the future of the art therapy profession and for those who labor in or for those who have an interest in the area of treatment for women in recovery for substance abuse.


Women with a history of sexual abuse have higher rates of depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress symptoms, as well as feelings of shame and guilt. The researcher wanted to create an art therapy directive to help the symptoms that this population of women experiences. This research study examined the effects of using narrative art therapy with an adult population of sexual abuse survivors. The aim of the narrative art therapy directive was to increase self-acceptance and reduce anxiety. The results were a decrease in individually reported anxiety, greater self-acceptance and a better understanding of the self. The results of this study adds to the body of literature on the benefits of narrative art therapy with this specific population.

The author explored the concept of art therapy interventions as an approach to decreasing aggressive behaviors and hostile attitudes in an inpatient setting. Improvement of interventions and approaches utilized are also noted. Aggression is the physical use of anger. Hostility includes negative emotions and judgments of self and others. An assumption was made that there would be enough existing research to conduct a meta-analysis to show statistical significance. The meta-analysis included studies that met the following criteria: (a) participants selected demonstrated elevated levels of hostility and aggression symptoms; (b) random assignment of participants to at least one active treatment group and at least one untreated, wait-list, or minimally treated control group; and (c) art therapy interventions intended by the investigators to target hostility and aggression symptoms. The Meta-Analysis was conducted in order to examine a pool of research to determine trends within the field. Thirty-nine peer-reviewed articles, books, dissertations, and studies met the criteria. The standard difference of the means indicated there was no significant difference between art therapy and other treatment modalities in the studies used in the analysis. Although art therapists report the existence of this phenomenon, much more quantitative research must be done to substantiate it.


The purpose of this pilot research study is to determine if art-making assists in decreasing the rate of degeneration in the brain associated with dementia of elderly patients in early to moderate stages of Alzheimer’s disease. The use of Cognitive, Perceptual or Kinesthetic Components from the ETC (Expressive Therapies Continuum) participants explored art materials, such as markers and play-dough, in a therapeutic manner (Hinz, 2009). To monitor any changes, the SLUMS (Saint Louis University Mental Status) exam was administered to the participants (Tariq, Tumosa, Chibnall, Perry III, & Morley, 2006). The exam measured the level of cognitive functioning of each subject. The results of this study were determined by the scores of the two SLUMS exams given to each subject. This study was conducted to assist in creating a program of art therapy directives to be instrumental in the reduction of degeneration in the brain while increasing memory function.


Cancer pain is a complex experience of physiological and psychological symptoms. Despite the availability of modern practice guidelines, effective pharmacological interventions, and new technologies for drug administration, the management of acute pain in people with cancer continues to remain undertreated and undermanaged. The aim of this study was to explore the effect of digital art therapy as a post-surgical pain management tool for outpatients diagnosed with cancer; the physiological outcome measure was only one component. Qualitative descriptive measures were used to explore the variations and themes of pain as they were experienced and expressed by individuals diagnosed with cancer. Participants also received a 30-minute digital art making intervention that used quantitative measures for assessing pain. The five participants were interviewed individually and received a non-pharmacological, 30-
minute art therapy pain management intervention utilizing a digital tablet and mandala drawing application or ‘app’ as the art media. Prior to and immediately following the art therapy intervention, participant pain level was measured using a standardized instrument: a combination form of the Numeric Pain Rating Scale (NPRS) and the Wong-Baker FACES Pain Rating Scale. The results found evidence of pain reduction following the art therapy intervention and may help direct future research regarding the application of alternative pain management techniques.


Art-based and heuristic methods of inquiry were engaged to examine whether art making could build long term coping skills with an adult survivor of childhood complex trauma associated with diagnosis and treatment. This researcher used art making, time and reflection to examine a chronological timeline of traumatic events. This method of research provided a flexible format to propel the researcher into creating, collecting, organizing and analyzing the data. A visual mapping tool provided a non-linear way of finding the overarching themes. The revelations that this research provided validated the use of art making to help build long term coping skills in response to complex trauma for this participant. The acquisition of new perspectives and self-awareness have provided knowledge for this researcher to provide a design for future art therapy programs for adult survivors of complex traumas.


This art therapy research study uses the cast drawing method, a 19th century drawing technique that was used to teach classical figure drawing and painting, as a psychoeducational art therapy intervention to reduce cognitive distortion. The use of metaphorical processing is incorporated into the cast drawing sessions to ensure the therapeutic content of this method is achieved. Cognitive distortions are intrusive and disruptive thought processes in which past and often traumatic memories cause inappropriate emotional reactions that often result in negative consequences in a person’s life. Results showed that using the cast drawing method reduces cognitive distortion by teaching individuals how to see what is “really there”, not what is “perceived”, to be there. They are then able to transfer this ability, to accurately perceive life circumstances so that intrapersonal and interpersonal health can be obtained.


Art therapy graduate students often have various aspects of their lives that they must balance while in school, including, but not limited to: work, interpersonal relationships, finances, and physical health. How can students manage stress from everyday life, in addition to academic pressure? It was often assumed that utilizing self-care was an effective method to manage stress
levels; however, there was minimal research to support that assumption. To date, no research has been found on stress levels, the use of self-care, or burnout rates among art therapy graduate students. A survey was conducted assessing perceived stress levels and self-care in art therapy graduate students. The survey was completed by 115 art therapy graduate students from various graduate programs across the United States. Various types of analysis were utilized to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Ethical implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research were explored.


This study aimed to examine the correlation between the person picking an apple from a tree (PPAT) assessment and the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) questionnaire. Three participating women, of various ages, completed the PPAT and the EPDS. The PPAT assessments were rated using the formal elements of art therapy scale (FEATS). The FEATS consisted of a fourteen scale rating system that focused on graphic indicators. For the purposes of this study, only four of the fourteen scales were used. The four scales used were details of objects, implied energy, prominence of color and space used. It was hypothesized that the FEATS would yield more accurate findings on depressive symptoms than the EPDS. The results of this study were inconclusive as to whether the PPAT along with the FEATS were reliable methods in screening for postpartum depression. This research study was unable to prove that the PPAT would yield more accurate results than the EPDS.


Little research is available pertaining to the use of clay in art therapy to help regulate emotions to improve the social and academic success of at-risk children. The following describes an experimental pilot study that compared the use of clay with the use of alternative art materials to help regulate emotions and improve behaviors of at-risk youth. While the limited study did not allow time to strengthen results to fully support the researcher’s hypotheses, some of the data collected supports the use of clay to help regulate emotions and improve behaviors. Subjects utilizing clay in art therapy showed a decrease in nine out of the ten negative behaviors evaluated and improvement in emotional regulation.


Art therapists who work with trauma populations are at great risk of developing vicarious traumatization due to supporting those coping with pain. There is a gap in the research on how to prevent, treat, and heal from the traumatization of their therapeutic work with others, causing the resiliency and longevity of this particular group of therapists in the field to be in jeopardy. This study will examine the effectiveness of using a visual journal as a processing tool of the lived experience of this researcher in working with a trauma population of clients. Results collected
confirm the ability of a visual journal to be an effective tool for resiliency, processing, and ethical boundaries between work and home. The study has shown that visual journaling is a powerful tool for all mental health professionals working with trauma populations in order to process vicarious traumatization and heal from it in an artistic form.


Attachment theories and research have brought new understanding regarding the bond between parents and their children for professional therapists and psychologists. Art-based assessments that elicit visual representations instead of words to symbolize emotional expression used in tandem with confidential interviews can be highly effective ways to communicate with children and evaluate and address their unique relationship concerns. One such assessment is the House-Tree-Person that was developed to look at an individual’s reaction to interpersonal relationships, their environment, and their inner psychological issues. This qualitative study documented and distilled themes that arose between nine child participants’ self-reported attachment styles, open-ended attachment interviews, and symbolic drawing elements in their individual House-Tree-Person drawings. Through phenomenological analysis, themes that correlated between the three assessment methods were identified. Though drawing elements were not found to indicate a specific attachment style, symbols did arise that seemed connected to the participant’s developmental age and attachment style. Three significant themes arose from the interviews: desires to be valued and protected by guardian, to be heard and validated, and to be like guardian or their special person. Through triangulation of the three data collection methods, verbal themes and drawing elements reflected secure and avoidant attachment styles self-identified by each child participant. A need for security is a theme that ran throughout all of the participants’ drawings and discussed experiences. This research underlined the importance of ongoing, fine-tuned therapeutic assessment approaches to children. Information regarding what children desire from their caregivers can provide guardians with answers and therapists with of the knowledge necessary to enhance parent-child bonding.


Humor can be a natural part of the art-making process. This pilot study was designed to intentionally combine art therapy with humor to create coping mechanisms that may offer the participants a humorous approach or a different perspective to life’s everyday stressors. The purpose of designing this pilot study was to discover the effectiveness of art therapy and humor interventions to teach coping skills to adults aged 18-55 with various emotional and psychosocial needs. Each session was designed to allow participants to safely incorporate coping mechanisms while also furthering cohesion within the group. The empirical data collected from the study was from the group participants, the researcher, and her art therapist supervisor. Designed as a qualitative study with a multiple baseline design, this research is intended to demonstrate that combining art therapy and humor is an effective problem-solving modality, adding to the limited body of professional literature regarding humor in the therapeutic setting.

Application of phenomenological methods allowed the investigator to research how art making impacted self-esteem and resiliency in homeless adults attending an urban resource center. The researcher interviewed eight long-term guests that engaged in art making at the urban resource center on a daily basis over a two-year period. This investigator utilized one-on-one interviews and documentation of personal stories. A thick description of how art therapy affected self-esteem and resiliency for participants resulted. The results of this study concretized how art therapy has increased self-esteem and resiliency in homeless adults and some themes distilled were art as therapy, accomplishments, socializing with others through art, art providing a positive outlook, and gaining knowledge from others. Because of the results of the study, individuals experiencing homelessness will be more inclined to engage in art and share their stories with others. The results of this research will encourage other resource centers to offer art therapy so individuals can benefit from the effects of sustained engagement in art.


This research allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of how doll making is a relevant technique and a valuable media in art therapy. The researcher interviewed four therapy practitioners who use doll making in their practice. This study synthesized the interviewee’s reflective practices, shared expertise, and perceptions regarding the techniques, materials, and therapeutic applications of doll making. Data from interviews were transcribed using a denaturalized transcription process. The transcripts were studied through repeated listening and reading in order to saturate and deconstruct the data into themes. The researcher discovered themes of treatment populations, media properties, process techniques, benefits and four distinct doll types. The researcher identified the steps necessary to assemble four dolls. The findings were organized into a written thesis and the doll making techniques were demonstrated in a video product. This instructional guide about doll making techniques and the use of this media will assist art therapists in using doll making in their practices. Future recommendations would include research into how doll making can be used with specific populations including children with attachment issues, family groups, adolescents in identity formation, clients with mental health diagnoses, and with male clients. Further interviews could be completed with other art therapists identified as using doll making in their practice.


Adolescents in the foster care system face severe challenges such as repeated trauma, loss of attachment, low self-esteem, and identity confusion. While art therapy and group work have been shown to be ideal treatment options for adolescents, to date there is a limited amount of research in art therapy literature regarding adolescent group art therapy within the foster care system.
Working with local social workers, the researcher invited teens between the ages of 13 and 17 to participate in a pilot research study focused on self-esteem and self-identity. Participants were selected based on interest and availability. Participants completed self-report surveys pre- and post-study, which were compared to determine the effects of art therapy on the participant’s view of self. This researcher expected that exploring self-identity through art and participating in group process would improve self-esteem as evidenced by the self-report surveys.


Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disease diagnosed in childhood or adolescence, characterized by delays in global functioning usually in social, cognitive, and emotional responses. In this research, the question asked whether two young boys with ASD could gain social skills when introduced to art therapy in a small group setting. A qualitative and phenomenological method was used to examine the use of social context within an interactive art therapy intervention. The participants were African American male siblings aged 5-8 who were diagnosed with ASD. Art processes as well as checklists completed by the children, their guardian, and the researcher were incorporated in the method. An outside rater and the researcher, acting as participant observer, witnessed the actions and behaviors of the participants and recorded the data. Thematic analysis was used to process the data. Findings suggested that siblings doing artwork in a therapeutic setting may have affected symptomology in a positive manner and decreased behavior patterns, but because there were only two sessions the conclusion was not definitive.


This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of art therapy in comparison to verbal therapy in improving the following patient symptoms: pain, tiredness, drowsiness, nausea, lack of appetite, shortness of breath, depression, anxiety, and general well-being. The methodology consisted of surveying 15 adults from a psychiatric facility in Ohio, who volunteered to complete an Edmonton Symptom Assessment Survey- Revised (ESAS-R), asking participants to rate the severity of their symptoms on a scale of “0” to “10” before and after Art Therapy Group (ATG) and before and after Psychotherapy Group (PTG), in order to compare the influence of PTG and ATG on symptom improvement. The percentage of individuals who rated symptoms as improved were then calculated and compared between ATG and PTG to assess whether or not the majority of symptoms would be improved equally as much or more after ATG as PTG. It was hypothesized before the survey that the majority of symptoms would be rated by participants as equally or more improved after ATG in comparison to PTG. The results indicated that the hypothesis was generally correct. However, questionable results were discovered amongst symptoms, such as the fact that ATG participants rated improvement in most symptoms, but rated “general well-being” as “worsened” after ATG. These discrepancies and related topics are discussed further in the conclusion. Potential implications of the data suggested that art therapy may be as effective as verbal therapy in improving patient symptoms, but that each field may offer varying benefits, and may be most effective when utilized together in an interdisciplinary
format. Implications for future studies suggest more limited and contained variables (such as surveying individuals on the same day rather than over several days), to improve the variability and reliability of the study in future attempts.


Art therapists and related mental health fields have long been operating under the assumption that graphic development and the mental development of children are linked (Malchiodi, 1998). To date, most of the research done in art therapy, psychology, and related fields was not specifically designed to establish a correlation between the graphic development and learning disabilities, but focuses on related ideas such as intelligence. This systematic literature review analyzes the existing research in order to synthesize related findings to create a comprehensive picture of the current state of knowledge in the area of graphic development and learning disabilities. Recommendations for further study are given.


This was a single person case study that utilized A-B-A design to research the development and benefits of a therapeutic relationship with an individual on the Autism Spectrum within a meta-verbal, art therapy context. Traditional therapeutic alliances rely on verbal communication and this research focused on adapting those ideas when working with individuals who have a verbal communication deficit. The eleven sessions were structured with a sequence of two informal assessment sessions, three nonverbal sessions, three verbal sessions and a final three nonverbal sessions. The research studied how and when broader communication formats informed and shaped the therapeutic relationship. Observation notes, therapist art responses, participant artwork, and videotapes were gathered and collected for the data analysis. The triangulated data sources were analyzed through methods of documentation, coding, and categorizing the meta-verbal communication exchanges including, body language, gestures and symbolization, affect, and art-work to look for relationships within meta-verbal communication and traditional verbal therapeutic approaches. This researcher found that using meta-verbal communication strategies with an individual on the Autism Spectrum could be beneficial in building a therapeutic relationship and as a meaningful approach to treatment.


Theories of adolescent identity development emphasize the struggle adolescents go through to form a clear identity. This six-week single-subject, strengths-based art therapy study supports adolescents’ identity exploration. Subjects include fifteen male and female high school students. Each subject completed preliminary and concluding Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale surveys,
drawings, and corresponding narratives to obtain and document perceived self-perception changes. The group setting supported adolescents’ development of a unified sense of self each week as they explored their self-perceptions through art interventions and had them confirmed by peers. The findings of the preliminary and concluding Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale survey support the hypothesized increase in adolescents’ perceived positive self-identity. Results of adolescents’ preceding and final drawings and narratives support the recognition of intrapersonal positive strengths and increased self-esteem. Limitations of the small sample size yield discussion and recommendations for future research.


Over the last twenty years, feminist culture has used zines as a way to express their perspective creatively and construct a community. However, there is very little research about the possible healing function of the use of zines in a therapeutic context. This literary review was intended to provide a understanding of the intent of zine making in feminist culture and how it might be utilized in art therapy. The researcher examined riot grrrl zines, Rookie Magazine, articles, studies, conducted interviews, and created an art response in order to find the underlying meaning of feminist zine culture. The desired outcome of this research was to understand the feminist zine culture and examine the potential efficacy for zine making as an art therapy directive, in hope of providing more information on identity formation and community building for adolescent girls to mental health professionals.


Research has shown that adoptees were more than twice as likely as non-adoptees to seek treatment, but the adult adoptee population has been largely unnoticed and undocumented in terms of art therapy and psychological research. The adult adoptee’s multiple trauma losses were identified through this arts-based heuristic inquiry by the researcher, an adult adoptee brought from Korea at the age of two. This heuristic study examined potentially healing exercises that utilized the therapeutic aspects of ritual and art therapy. Based on a review of the literature, directives were created for four common wounds of the adoptee: abandonment, attachment, identity, and loss of biological family. The results from this heuristic study will inform art interventions specifically tailored for adult adoptees.


Effective communication of thoughts and feelings plays a critical role in developing and maintaining the emotional intimacy that contributes to satisfying committed relationships. When one partner is affected by acquired hearing loss (AHL), verbal communication may no longer be
an effective means for intimate communication, resulting in deterioration of the relationship. This mixed methods case study explored the use of two shared art-making interventions as a means of communication focused on fostering emotional intimacy within a couple affected by AHL. Results from a quantitative instrument, the Couples Satisfaction Index-4 (CSI-4; Funk & Roggee, 2007), administered before and after the study showed a slight increase in the level of warmth and comfort of the relationship by both partners. A narrative analysis of the art and written work of the interventions, along with responses to the qualitative questionnaire, revealed themes of self-awareness, intimate sharing, and interest in creating new meaning within the relationship.


The adolescent and young adult population is an overlooked group when it comes to resources for coping with the distress of having and surviving cancer. Although the art therapy literature documents the value of art therapy for children and adults with cancer, few resources focus on the usefulness of art therapy in addressing the needs of survivors of adolescent and young adult cancers. Through an arts-based heuristic inquiry, the researcher, a survivor of adolescent cancer, re-envisioned and recreated a personal image that held great meaning in her experience of cancer survival. Following Moustakas’ (1990) six phases of heuristic inquiry, the researcher investigated the usefulness of personal art making for coping with the lasting effects of a cancer diagnosis. As a result, the researcher noted three major themes relating to body image and identity, interruption, and acceptance. The researcher discusses these themes and the implications they may have for other survivors of adolescent and young adult cancers. The researcher offers recommendations that may provide a starting point for the utilization of art therapy with this population.


There has been an increase among public school students at various grades, primarily at the high school level. By creating art and displaying it within the school setting young people will be improving in their academics and reducing aggressive behavior towards teachers, other students, and school administrators. This eight-week pilot study proposed to verify the hypothesis that adolescents with behavioral issues who create art in an educational setting will decrease behavioral problems. It also affirmed that art displayed in a school setting may increase good behavior and provide positive reinforcement for the adolescent. The adolescent is currently attending high school and is on a Behavioral Individual Plan (BIP) for aggressive behavior. The data obtained in this study resulted from the student’s work and participant observer form/comments.

This phenomenological study’s aim was to obtain qualitative evidence on how origami can improve cancer patients' level of hope and connection to community. Seven adult cancer survivors were recruited during a community event, Cancer Survivors Day, to participate in the study. They were instructed to write or draw a wish on origami paper and to fold it into their design of choice. Afterwards participants filled out a questionnaire regarding their experience during the project. The data was collected from the questionnaire, systematically organized and analyzed using thematic analysis. After the Survivors Day event, origami pieces were transferred to the Wish Tree, a large Japanese maple sculpture on display in the waiting room in the Compressive Cancer Center at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital. The public artwork, transformed into a symbol of hope and community with each origami addition, beautified the space and contributed to the healing potential of the Cancer Center.


This qualitative phenomenological research study investigates the potential of art therapy interventions that integrate positive psychology theory to instill contentment with the past, hope for the future, and happiness and well-being in the present in a geriatric population. The character strengths and virtues of gratitude, love, wisdom, hope, and courage are presented in a three-week single-subject art therapy group. The participants include five female residents of an assisted living and skilled nursing facility. Each participant participated in group discussions and individual interviews that reflected their personal experiences in the five group art therapy sessions. Thematic analysis is used to organize and analyze the qualitative data collected. The limitations of this study, namely the small self-selected sample size and the lack of quantitative measures, raise further questions and are the basis for recommendations for future research.


The aim of this pilot study was to examine if the act of doll-making in a group art therapy setting enhanced body image, increased self-esteem and reduced depressive symptoms with breast cancer patients and survivors. A one time, six-hour doll-making workshop was conducted with four breast cancer survivors ranging in age from 42 through 69 years of age. The researcher, a breast cancer survivor, created a response doll to increase her understanding of the doll-making experience. A narrative of both the participants and the researcher contributed to the qualitative evidence supporting the effect of doll-making with breast cancer survivor participants. The Beck Depression Inventory was used for evidence to support the efficacy of doll-making and depressive symptoms among the breast cancer survivor participants.

A major transition for married couples occurs through parenthood, yet for many infertile couples, this normative transition results in compounded stressors that may compromise dyadic communication. The American Art Therapy Association identified art-making as a facilitator for increased intra- and interpersonal communication of thoughts and feelings. Research studies exploring art-making as a communication tool for infertile couples have not been conducted. This mixed method single subject study investigated whether art-making facilitated communication regarding the crisis of infertility as well as increased satisfaction and cohesion within the relationship. This study explored communication patterns and content during four conjoint art-making sessions to report themes of infertility stressors discussed by a marital dyad. Six themes regarding psycho-social stressors due to the infertility crisis were identified through the communication facilitated by the art-making. The results of this study indicated that art-making may be an effective tool for improving communication between infertile marital dyads.


Open studios have grown in popularity as a way for art therapist to practice and meet the needs of clients in nonclinical settings. Factors such as state licensure, healthcare reform, and corporate and educational cutbacks may have contributed to the rise in this modality. Therapists looking to create stable jobs that are independent and more community based such as private practices and studios. Proponents of the studio movement have taken a positive approach, encouraging art therapists to reclaim their artistic roots instead of aligning with other fields to establish professional identities separate and apart from art therapy. While therapists are adapting to changing markets, what is still missing are strong business models to ensure that these new therapy environments are sustainable. Interviews with studios and their founders lead to conscious, structural, and dual clinical and business considerations for running studios that can withstand market and social pressures.


This is a case study with a United Nations combat veteran who witnessed the same atrocities of war that an active duty soldier would. The expressive arts provided him with the ability to cope with the traumas he suffered in his life. The benefits of art therapy are evident in this case study interview with the sole participant who has been diagnosed with PTSD, survived five TBIs, and survived two suicide attempts. Current approved treatment options for combat-related PTSD are limited to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Exposure Therapies (ET), and medication. Unfortunately, art therapy is not among the common treatment protocols for combat-related PTSD. This study demonstrated reasoning for it to be considered.

Graffiti is seen in the eyes of the general public, as illegal and/or an antisocial behavior. Often the benefits of graffiti as well as its potential to be utilized as an expressive arts form, a means of communication, as a way of working out or working on situations or conflicts, is not seen or understood. Art therapy and the use of graffiti can be beneficial to the resistant population of adolescents, and even more so with adjudicated adolescents. The use of art therapy alone can be seen as an effective treatment. This study uses phenomenological inquiry, utilizing interviews, observations and art making to address the question, will graffiti as an art modality help to increase and re-establish the identity of adjudicated adolescents? The data obtained will help to support the use of graffiti with adjudicated adolescents and to provide evidence that supports the hypothesis; the use of graffiti as an art therapy modality and intervention, will help to increase and re-establish adjudicated adolescents identity.


The following research documents the use of an art therapy intervention for entertainers who struggle with performance anxiety. Musical instrumentation, public speaking, and theatrical presentations are acknowledged. However, this study focuses primarily on art therapy and vocal performance anxiety. The researcher found a deficiency in studies surrounding coping strategies for vocalist who struggle with performance anxiety. The literature in this study revealed interventions which may have been harmful to a vocalist in various ways, as well as homeopathic strategies. A phenomenological method was applied to allow the researcher to observe participants in the natural environments in which performance anxiety occurs. Three adult participants were asked to create and design their own mandala, within a blank circle outline, directly prior to a vocalist performance. A self-reporting pretest/posttest body-map assessment was used to allow the participants to identify and describe where and how they experienced anxiety. The results from this study imply that utilizing art therapy as an intervention may aid in diminishing the presence of performance anxiety for vocal performers. Due to a small sample size of adult participants and researchers personal biases, further research is suggested to validate this study’s findings.


By providing individuals of the older adult population with a non-verbal expressive opportunity, it is hypothesized that expression of social prejudice might more easily be expressed. Older individuals have more to contribute to society than the stereotypical views that the particular age range may indicate. Societal views on these individual’s chronological age and not their capabilities promotes prejudicial outlooks such as ageism. This research seeks to test the hypothesis that actions of ageism negatively affect the self-worth and self-perception of older adult individuals. In this study the older adult participants were asked to complete two specific self-portraits, one of how the individual perceives him or herself and one of how the individual believes society perceives him or herself due to chronological age. Results are summarized.
showing a need for increased awareness of the effects of ageism on the perceptions of the older adult population in order to increase personal self-worth.


With its rich history, natural occurrence, functionality, and creative capabilities, clay has offered vast potential in the field of art therapy. This mixed methods study utilized art interventions with pre- and post-assessments, a questionnaire, and a personal reflection of the researcher’s experience of the interventions to investigate the therapeutic nature of clay and the pottery process within the framework of the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC). The clay-based interventions aimed to encourage functioning within each level of the ETC, a trusted framework for art therapy treatment, while following the pottery process. The results indicated that clay possesses the ability to elicit healing and emergent functions in each of these levels, which encouraged a broader application of clay-based art interventions in the field of art therapy. For adults with mental health issues, clay was used within each level of the ETC as an alternative form of treatment for their symptoms.


Multicultural competence is an important component of effective art therapy. Today, the term multicultural no longer refers only to race and ethnicity but also to gender identity and sexual orientation. Presently only a small amount of professional art therapy literature has been published regarding how art therapy may benefit sexual minority youth and alliance organizations. This systematic literature review was intended to raise multicultural awareness in the field of art therapy and to inform the development of a pilot participatory action research (PAR) study aimed at exploring and evaluating the effectiveness of zine making as a creative needs assessment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The desired outcome of this study is to identify the most current issues and needs in order to provide helpful information for LGBTQ alliance organizations and helping professionals.


This arts-based, hermeneutic study gathered and analyzed data utilizing survey and qualitative methods. Five mental health professionals explored their countertransferential situations via the research group process. Arts-based methods employed meditation, collage construction, writing imaginal dialog, poetry, presentation, and identification of themes. Pre- and post-surveys asked mixed Likert scale and open-ended questions to determine effect of countertransference on esteem, comfort, and therapeutic alliance. The study aimed to increase dialog, further normalize, and discover themes of countertransference; and assess the impact of processing countertransference on the therapist and therapeutic alliance. Participants identified need,
suspension, and journeying as themes of countertransference. Through art-based data processing that included poetry, improvisational hoop-dance, and word collages, the additional themes of perspective, water, and engagement became evident. Engagement in creative group process and open discussion of countertransference increased normalization, comfort, and esteem. No perceptible effect on the therapeutic alliance was found.


A group case study determining the beneficial impacts from short-term involvement in a process-driven, community arts project utilizing qualitative data derived from the phenomenological perspective of those involved. The group population was made up of four female employees of a Medical Center who volunteered and met for the first time for the three-hour meeting to produce a sculptural piece with donated supplies for installation on the community farm associated with their place of employment. Findings identified by the participants from their narratives after involvement included increased empathy identified as a pleasurable experience from collaborative creation, increased awareness of others and self, and the development of group cohesion. Unanticipated findings include impacts on the reintegration to the employees work dynamic, finding that the community arts project reinforced and increased appreciation of their current successful work relationships.


Ten years after Katrina, multiple communities throughout New Orleans continue to struggle with the prolonged effects of living in a post-disaster environment. In addition to the trauma associated with Katrina, many of these communities have a long history of multigenerational/trans-generational poverty and systemic racism, which have impacted not only the physical health but also mental health of those affected. This art therapy researcher facilitated an art-based focus group through a communal quilt-making process with four participants to collect and record their narratives and insights on how they have adapted and responded to living in post-Katrina New Orleans. This researcher discovered that continued inequities in Post Katrina New Orleans have exacerbated generational traumas therefore slowing recovery specifically those communities of African ancestry. Through art-based inquiry this researcher found that communal art making allowed for participants to identify and illuminate their generational history of continued resiliency by transforming their traumas into art. This researcher’s goals were to promote self-advocacy and healthy coping skills as well as explore possible outcomes for future research using community art-based projects as advocacy for policy change in disaster mental health care and response.


The lack of participatory arts-based studies in multi-cultural investigation overlooks the window of opportunity to use art making as a means to gain deeper insight from lesbian, gay, bisexual,
transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community. Without the ability to participate in the production of knowledge informing art therapy research, understanding of the LGBTQ community may be insufficient and superficial. This peer-led research gave participants a voice in the research process that helped them gain insight into their preliminary healing goals. The overarching themes throughout the study were relationship and sexuality related to (a) social and internal acceptance of sexual expression and identity, (b) discovery and change found in critical inquiry, and (c) effects of and resilience to heteronormativity. More participatory arts-based research was recommended to increase understanding and multicultural competency that comes from accurate information about the LGBTQ population.


To date, few art therapy research studies have reflected how treatment can support wellness identity development for an individual independent from his or her mental illness. The purpose of this study was to gain deeper insight into how art therapy can assist in identity formation and positive ego development for individuals specifically diagnosed with schizophrenia. A phenomenological study was used to collect data through an open discussion focus group. Research volunteers had previously participated in art therapy groups while receiving care at an acute inpatient psychiatric unit. The data collected during the focus group was categorized into themes and then synthesized into a graphic novel. The visual narrative was created to not only humanize the experience of schizophrenia but also to amplify nine volunteers’ lived experiences and perceptions related to wellness principles and their importance to treatment and recovery. Alongside the publication of this written thesis, the graphic novel was meant to serve as a source of education to the wider public regarding the stigma of psychiatric illness and the importance of community engagement in treatment.


Drawing assessments that relied on creative expression instead of verbalization have been considered less threatening than traditional psychological surveys. This study investigated correlations between the Bird’s Nest Drawing (BND), the Bird’s Nest Sculpture (BNS), the bird’s nest story, the bird’s nest questionnaire, and the results of the Attachment to Mother scale (ATM) to determine the accuracy of these attachment assessments. Twelve college students were engaged in a mixed method study that used quantitative analysis of the ATM scores and hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of the BND, BNS, the bird’s nest story, and the bird’s nest questionnaire. This form of analysis was critical to understanding the original meanings behind the data collected. The study’s results indicated correlations between these assessments, and indicated that BND and BNS were effective tools to determining attachment schema.

Open studio art therapy is an emerging tradition in the field of art therapy, and has grown in reputation as an option for art therapists looking to meet the needs of clients in a nonclinical setting (Manchester, 2014). Open studio art therapy is centered on an intentional, art-based art therapy practice (Moon, 2002). This qualitative, participatory study examined the emotional effects of open studio art therapy based the analysis of interviews, artwork, and the researcher’s observations of the participants involved (Creswell, 2014). Participants were selected from attendees who volunteered to be a part of the study within the six-week period. They included both men and women and ranged in age from 15 – 50. Themes, which came up during this research included positive benefits and changes in the emotional state that participants experienced during open studio art therapy. These results could help validate the open studio art therapy approach as an effective and valuable method for a diverse group of individuals in the field of art therapy.


Found object sculpture, as an art therapy technique, promotes thorough exploration, examination, and analysis of grief and loss. The heuristic methodology utilized for this study provided analytical and emotional immersion and focus on past and present experiences and themes related to grief and loss. Creating sculpture with found objects discovered in nature demonstrated how found object art and its healing can occur for this population. Photographing the found objects as well as the finished art response pieces contributed to the healing process. Identification of the outer world through the intrinsic nature of found objects encouraged internal meaning. A measurable grief inventory, an adapted version of The Complicated Grief Inventory (Prigerson, et al., 1995) was given before the research began as well as, upon the conclusion of the study. Additionally, weekly therapy sessions with another mental health professional were utilized for support to manage triggers of acute grief, sadness or other issues, concerns, and challenges throughout the entire process. This heuristic research study provided information demonstrating the therapeutic benefits of art therapy for the resolution of grief and loss.


A quantitative online survey study was conducted in the United States in an attempt to identify potential variables influencing the professional identity of art therapists. The goal of the study was to expand on previous research regarding the professional identity development of art therapists and to develop a basic understanding of the current and most essential aspects of the art therapist identity. The survey first measured participants on personal and professional demographics including the types of training and credentials art therapists seek, as well as participant’s general level of education and experience. Then, using a Likert-type rating scale, participants rated how strongly they agreed statements regarding formal training and professional experiences impacted how they identify themselves and conceptualize their profession. The researcher also sought to determine whether a more cohesive and unified professional identity was possible and/or desired. A link to an online questionnaire was emailed to AATA members and affiliate state chapters. This link was also advertised via social media sites Facebook,
LinkedIn, and on the AATA community boards to attract a continuum of art therapy professionals ranging from students to retired art therapists. The responses to the survey highlighted weaknesses in the research design and indicated that the answer to the question of what aspects are essential to the professional identity of art therapists was much more complicated than anticipated by the researcher. However the results were useful in helping the researcher to gain a better understanding of the profession of art therapy and may point to areas of study for further focus regarding art therapy professional identity.


A six-week pilot art therapy caregiver program was initiated to coincide with a previously established care-receiver art therapy program and analyzed. The program was evaluated for its efficacy to address four key areas: increased attention to personal health and self-care, success to reduce stress anxiety, the usefulness of a convenient program, and the benefits of group participation to reduce perceptions of social isolation. The art therapy program was designed to highlight strengths, based on positive psychology theory. The data indicated that there were improvements in all key areas. The program stimulated better health and self-care management, reduced stress, encouraged participation, and increased social interaction. Additional findings included a suspected correlation between stress reduction and the engagement of flow. The art therapy program significantly influenced caregiver’s perceptions of personal time from being considered a taxing and guilt-ridden chore, to a necessary and enjoyable means of self-care that enhanced well-being.


Occupational stress is a significant concern for acute care nurses. A nurse’s work environment consists of a fast-paced, competitive work day with a full spectrum of stressful situations. Leaving these occurrences unexamined can lead to emotional turmoil resulting in burnout, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious traumatization. These professional fatigues have a profound effect on those working as caregivers in the helping industry and the quality of care patients receive, often resulting in increased medical expenses. Considering the occupational stressors and time sensitivities of a nurse’s work schedule along with the critical need for daily self-care practices this study explored an alternative art making activity for nurse’s to help process daily interactions by looking at dreams and the content within them. The Art Therapy Dream Analysis (ATDA) is an art therapy assessment which promotes personal reflection and encourages one to process waking life experiences by analyzing dreams, nightmares or daydreams through an art driven directive. The use of ATDA provided insight about dreams and was considered a helpful tool for self-care among the participants. Examining personal reflections through the participant’s dreams, symptomatic descriptions related to BO, CF, STS and VT were identified. Participants provided feedback in surveys, questionnaires, and during the process of reflecting on their dreams. The participants recognized benefits for future
applications of ATDA as a self-care practice with positive feedback. The use of ATDA was favored by participants as a helpful tool for processing dream experiences.


The researcher created and completed a six-week visual journaling plan focused on processing traumatic 9/11-related memories resulting from indirect exposure to trauma via electronic media. Results of the study are based on the frequency of recurrent themes and symbols in the artwork and reflections, personal observations, and comparison of numerical scores from a mood inventory completed before and after each journaling session. Comparison of pre- and post-study artwork provided data on the overall effect of the study on emotional reactions to traumatic memories. Journaling sessions predominately produced short-term negative effects on mood, and comparison of mood inventory scores over time did not find a significant cumulative effect on mood. Recurrent themes/symbols identified issues through frequency of appearance but did not provide data related to improved mood or reduced posttraumatic stress symptoms. Comparison of pre- and post-study artwork revealed an overall positive effect on emotional reactions to 9/11-related stimuli.


The Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) dimension of Art Therapy focused on the ability to process cognitive and emotional information. To date there was limited research on the effectiveness of the ETC framework regarding attachment in the adolescent population. The primary purpose of this Quantitative/Qualitative study was to evaluate the ETC’s effectiveness to (a) reduce aggression in adolescents who are diagnosed with attachment disorders living in a residential psychiatric facility, and (b) aid the participant in identifying aggressive emotional states which may be measurable through a five point Likert scale and questionnaires. This research study will provide insight on how art, through the elements of the ETC, may impact the emotional understanding of self in residential adolescents with attachment disorders.


Numerous studies provided evidence to support the impact of art therapy with cancer survivors on quality of life themes during and after treatment. The use of qualitative and quantitative analysis suggested the presence of repetitive quality of life themes including exploration and expression of aspects of illness, learning something about self, focusing on experiences other than cancer, maintenance of self-identity, receiving social support, and gaining insight or revelation about the world. These themes previously identified by Zammit (2001), Borgmann (2002), Reynolds & Lim (2007) and others’ research would continue to appear in the art process of cancer survivors. Results from a one-time survey assessing participants’ art therapy
experiences and impact indicated that participants did believe that art therapy increased their QOL, and that all themes did continue to appear with the most prominent themes being learning something about self, focusing on experiences other than cancer, and receiving social support.


Few school districts in the United States employ art therapy in the curriculum (Loesl, 2010). Children spend half of their days in school and their safety and wellbeing are critical to their learning. Art therapists provide social, behavioral, academic, and emotional support to children in school settings, so why is school art therapy not more prevalent? This research study was intended to shed light on the perceived value of a current art therapy program by examining surveys completed by the stakeholders of said program that document their knowledge, opinions, and beliefs concerning the art therapy program. Results of this quantitative survey research showed the majority of stakeholders had prior knowledge of art therapy, noticed positive changes in behaviors of the children involved in art therapy, and desired a permanent place for art therapy in the curriculum. Lack of funding and knowledge of the benefits of art therapy in a school setting were the primary reasons selected for low prevalence. Trends noticed in this research alluded to lack of communication and education between stakeholders concerning the current program. This researcher held the assumption that through this study, a better understanding of how art therapy is valued or critiqued in a school setting by critical shareholders and what works for this particular program could be applied and used to influence the implementation of more art therapy programs in schools across the country.


Printmaking holds a rich diverse history that can be found throughout many cultures, but it has not been used or studied enough to determine if the printmaking medium has substantial therapeutic benefits in art therapy. This comparative research study was conducted in two-parts and included (a) interviews with therapists who use monotype in their practice and teachers familiar with the medium, and (b) immersion in monotype printmaking with personal art-making. Through interviewing individuals familiar with the printmaking medium, this study was able to elicit first hand experiences and find common themes to help support the premise that monotype printmaking possesses substantial therapeutic benefits. Through a reflective journal that documented personal art-making, the researcher was able to understand how printmaking may be adapted to various settings where space or printmaking materials may be limited. It was found that monotype does offer therapeutic benefits as well as provides the artists and client flexibility in materials and approach. However, several disadvantages were also expressed and discussed.

Countertransference is a normal part of the everyday personal experience in the therapeutic relationship. For almost a century, much discussion has taken place to determine its definition and presence within the mental health profession. However, few have studied countertransference management. The following arts-based heuristic study allowed the researcher to consider countertransference issues as she interned with a population with whom she has had prior shared experiences. The purpose of this study was to find an artistic means to assist the therapist in identifying and managing countertransference issues. Through reflection, immersion into response art, visual narrative and journaling, and a centering activity, the researcher encountered the countertransference phenomena. She experienced increased self-awareness and was able to manage countertransference. Practical implications of this study suggest using art as a way to produce clarity and professional processing of countertransference issues within the art therapist. The process is applicable to other mental health disciplines.


Art law has direct implications on the practice of art therapy. Art law provides protection to artists in the art therapy process. If the art therapist was not aware of the protective elements provided by art law, he or she may violate the tenants of art law when managing their clients’ artwork. This research study explored the protective elements of art law while explaining how these elements applied to art therapy. This study also examined whether art therapists were knowledgeable about art law and how they use this information within their practice.

Art law, an aspect of civil law, has direct implications on the practice of art therapy. Less-known and with few legal practitioners, art law provides protection to artists, art therapists, and art images. Issues of attribution, integrity, storage, destruction and copying of art images have a direct bearing on therapeutic alliances (Malchiodi, 1995; Malchiodi & Johnson, 2013). With clear appreciation and understanding of moral rights regarding creative processes, artists, art therapists, and images can benefit from the protective elements of art law tenants and practices (Dunoff & King, 2006; Lazerow, 2015). The knowledge of art law as part of art therapy and therapeutic services may increase regulatory compliance and promotion of a positive ethical approach in management of client artwork (Simon, 2001). Examination of current art law knowledge and practice is addressed through survey data obtained as an outcome of a review of art therapy informed consent agreements and art therapist interviews.


This qualitative study is designed to determine if coloring mandalas can reduce work-related stress in healthcare professionals. Participants completed a series of response questions specifically designed for this study after coloring a pre-drawn mandala which allowed participants to reflect on the art-making process. Participants identified common stressors in their work environment and discussed current coping strategies used to reduce stress.
Although research has documented the value of art therapy in working with individuals suffering from bereavement, few resources focused on the lasting effects of grief. This arts-based heuristic study compared a series of self-portraits and reflective journal entries, created in response to the death of the researcher’s mother, to identify themes related to the cycle of grief. It investigated the usefulness of personal art making for coping with the lasting effects of grief. A thematic analysis noted major themes that may have implications for adolescents and adults suffering from grief symptoms. Results from this limited study may provide insight into how self-portraiture and reflective journaling in art therapy can be used with this population.


Although the art therapy literature documented the value of art therapy for abused children and adults, few resources focused on the usefulness of art therapy in addressing the needs of survivors of childhood physical and emotional abuse. Through an arts-based heuristic study, the researcher who was a survivor of physical and emotional abuse, recreated a life-sized, three dimensional self-portrait that held great meaning in her experience of childhood abuse. This heuristic study investigated the usefulness of personal art making for coping with the lasting effects of physical and emotional abuse. A thematic analysis noted major themes that may have implications for adults with a history of childhood physical and emotional abuse. Results from this limited study may provide insight into how self-portraiture and reflective journaling in art therapy can be used with this population.


Grief and loss are universal human experiences. For some, the pain of grief and loss can be experienced more intensely. When people have issues processing grief in a normal manner, complicated and unresolved grief issues may develop. Individuals who experience complicated and unresolved issues of grief and loss can develop serious mental health issues. This study examined how scrapbooking can be used to help individuals who were experiencing grief and loss in their lives using a cognitive-behavioral and narrative approach. This six-week study used scrapbooking to preserve memories and life events. The study utilized a pretest design, a discussion questionnaire, as well as reflections from the participants. Results indicated that scrapbooking was meaningful and cathartic for participants. This study contributes to the field of art therapy through an exploration of how scrapbooking can benefit individuals experiencing grief and loss.

The quasi-experimental research study investigated the use of mandalas to enhance the spirituality component in recovery from substance abuse. Carl Jung (as cited in Diaz, 1992) asserted the creation of a mandala serves as a healing process in which the individual is reflected amongst the divine. The investigator provided a series of three mandala art directives to clients in the experimental group with the intent of increasing connection to a Higher Power, improving self-worth, and increasing recovery perceptions. In addition, participants were given an educational tool to encourage the use of creative spiritual practices. The investigator utilized pre and post-questionnaire data to determine the impact of creating mandalas. Findings of the study indicated relevance in combining the spirituality component with art therapy to assist women in addictions treatment in connecting with a Higher Power, increasing self-worth, and encouraging the use of Creative Spiritual Practices.


Major deficits seen in children with autism include social interaction skills, such as little imitation skills, odd play patterns, and impaired joint attention (American Psychiatric Association, APA, 2013). To date, there was limited literature on enhancing mirroring ability, play interaction, and attention skills in autistic children. Art making has been shown to provide a safe and fun learning environment for these individuals as art engages the child in expressive freedom while promoting social skills (Gazeas, 2012). This two-week case study explored the effectiveness of art interventions to promote mirroring ability, play interaction, and attention skills for a three-year-old boy diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Pre- and post-art intervention questionnaires and observations were conducted to measure the child’s possible improvements. The results were mixed with a decline on the participant’s mirroring ability during peer interaction, but indicated an increase of imitation during art interventions, and improvements of play interaction and attention skills. Further research was recommended.
The use of art therapy with an individual living post stroke has the ability to create deep non-verbal connections. This qualitative study looks at how art therapy in a medical hospital setting can create a connection with an individual living post stroke and with stage four brain cancer. The creation of an environment that fosters support, connection with others, acceptance of his current state, and the reduction of frustration was developed through the use of art materials in a safe space. This individual’s life was affected by his stroke and brain cancer in the form of severe aphasia and body paralysis of his dominant side causing extreme isolation. Through the use of individual bi-weekly art therapy sessions and the relationship that was built between client and therapist the isolation began to be addressed and eased. The creative art process developed into non-verbal communication that was able to be used during this silent time in the wake of his multiple medical traumas.

Keywords: stroke, cancer, medical art therapy, aphasia, end of life, non-verbal communication

This study explores the utility of the Draw-a-Person-in-the-Rain (DAPR) art assessment with an adult inpatient psychiatric population. The DAPR purports to illustrate participants’ perceived stress level and the sufficiency of their coping skills – an especially important variable in the treatment of severe mental illness. Connecting the resulting images to patient demographics, diagnoses and scores on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS10), it contributes to the existing body of research on this assessment, as well as art assessments and art therapy in general. The study occurred in a large metropolitan hospital, over the course of several months, during which 14 individual, one-off sessions were conducted with 13 patients to collect the data presented in this thesis. The results suggest the promising nature of art assessments like the DAPR for gaining insight into patients’ clinical presentation and developing patterns that emerge in artwork from patients with different diagnoses.

Keywords: art assessments, art therapy, coping, Draw-a-Person-in-the-Rain, inpatient, Perceived Stress Scale, stress

This study was motivated by the research question, can six weeks of group art therapy effect the professional quality of life for staff members in care of children with severe emotional disturbances in a residential facility? By focusing on a single residential setting, 15 staff members ranging from the site director to junior counselors participated in six 90 minute
sessions of group art therapy once a week. The art therapy wellness program focused on fostering group cohesion and emotional expression, while also exploring mindfulness, self-care, professional identity, and on-the-job recognition. The participants completed assessments and questionnaires before and after the duration of the wellness program. The assessments included the ProQOL-V and the PSS-10. The hope was to evaluate the effect of the art therapy group on the participants level of perceived stress, compassion fatigue, and compassion satisfaction. Due to limitations of the study, no statistically significant findings were discovered. Through observations of the art therapist, components of emotional resilience were fostered in the group as well as their level of connection with each other was increased, both of which could protect against burnout and secondary trauma. Further research is required to corroborate these findings. Keywords: Art therapy, emotional resilience, professional quality of life, compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, burnout, secondary traumatic stress, perceived stress


An in-depth case study was conducted in order to find the effects of an open studio art group for young adults living with severe mental illness in a supportive housing facility. The facilitator of the group and writer of this study met with multiple individuals within their area of residence for four consecutive months. This study will investigate the benefits and challenges of the open studio group for two young Hispanic women. Both individuals have a history of developmental trauma, sexual abuse, substance abuse and homelessness and/or foster care history. Open studio art groups were held twice a week, completed artwork and group notes were evaluated after each session. The results of the open studio displayed both the benefits, as well as the challenges that can surface within the group therapy setting. The aspect of visual expression proved to be useful for both individuals, whose expression of trauma happened to be very dissimilar. The ability for the artists to choose their own material offered autonomy and allowed space for creativity. However, the open, less structured style of open studio did not always seem to foster felt safety or consistency, as often needed by survivors of trauma. This study takes a look at the different personality structures and attachment styles of both individuals and more importantly, the benefits and drawbacks of the open studio format in assisting them towards personal growth, self-efficacy, social inclusion, healthy coping skills and an overall reduction of trauma response symptoms.


Healing the Cracks seeks to examine the application of trauma-informed art therapy with youth who are in long-term residential care for sexual offending. The thesis is explored through the case study of two adolescent males living in a residential treatment center and receiving CBT treatment in conjunction with art therapy for a period of 5.5 months. This paper argues that it is the pairing of both treatments that creates a more well-rounded, holistic and integrative internalization of self-reflection and self-worth. It was found that trauma-informed art therapy, as
employed by the art therapist, allowed the youth to address their intrapsychic needs pertaining to their own traumas as well as that which they created for others.


Repetition is a universal phenomenon evident in universal rituals, nature, human anatomy, emotions, and instincts. Similarly, the circle is the oldest known graphic representation and earliest attempts at expression. Circular forms, or the mandala is a recognized symbol of wholeness and indivisibility. This qualitative, observational study investigated the role of repetitive art making within the structure of the mandala using sensory materials with children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). One of the core characteristics of ASD are restricted and repetitive behaviors (RRBs), which serves to self-soothe from anxiety and stress. There is minimal literature devoted to studies of repetitive behaviors though it is warranted. The purpose of this article is to discuss the potential usefulness of mandala making, and how this mindfulness-based intervention can be used to address high levels of stress and anxiety in individuals with ASD.


Jails are restrictive environments, isolated from larger society where significant attachments are difficult to build or maintain. This qualitative study examined the attachment and affect regulation of one incarcerated adolescent with a history of childhood trauma. This young man received individual art therapy sessions over five months, where he was given the opportunity to make choices in an environment which normally strips all choice-making away. The results indicated that making choices in art therapy empowered this teen to engage in a meaningful attachment with the therapist, ultimately contributing to his growing self-regulation.

**Keywords:** Attachment, affect regulation, incarceration, adolescents, choices.


This paper examines the impact of photography as an art therapy intervention by looking at its history as a communicative, artistic, and therapeutic medium. An examination of current literature and photography’s application in adjacent fields, such as the participatory research model of photovoice, reveal the potential of photography within treatment. Case examples from artists who have used photography as an exploratory and healing tool illustrate the many ways of using photography creatively and therapeutically. Ethics, current social practices of image sharing, and other implications for treatment are considered throughout. An autobiographical case study explores the emotional power and natural ability of photography to contain, elicit, and explore emotions surrounding grief.

**Keywords:** photography, art therapy, grief, photovoice

The externalization of self and other is a powerful tool to manage countertransference in the treatment relationship. The use of doll making as a method for self reflection in work with clients can provide an awareness of the therapist’s personal associations and the needs of the client. Through observation and reflective analysis of multiple clients in an addictions treatment facility, dolls were made as response art to manage the dynamics of the treatment, abrupt termination, and strong transferential responses. The use of fiber art materials in this experience also lends to process attachment styles and relationships that invoke sentiments of nurturance within the empathetic treatment relationship and working alliance. The results of this study appear to suggest that the material embodiment of the clients and the therapist-self help to organize and illuminate areas of discrepancy in perception and emotional-cognitive responses. Keywords: countertransference, self reflection, addictions treatment, response art, fiber art, attachment, working alliance


The following thesis will explore the process of treatment for substance abusers in a short-term hospital setting to develop a better understanding of the importance of art therapy with this population. It will study how art therapy can provide support and comfort for individuals in the early stages of substance abuse recovery. It will propose that coloring images and process based art interventions can be used to provide a mindful experience for patients undergoing medically assisted detox and will significantly decrease their observable anxiety.


This qualitative study explored the use of art therapy with children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes as a tool for uncovering underlying psychosocial issues which may be present and related to living with a chronic illness. There is extremely limited research examining the use of art therapy with children and adolescents living with type 1 diabetes, and during one-time individual art therapy sessions at an outpatient diabetes clinic, it was revealed that underlying psychosocial issues may be more easily expressed through art and verbally during art making. This information was found to be helpful for individual’s treatment teams and may result in a more emotionally and physically supported child. Keywords: art therapy, type 1 diabetes, medical art therapy, children and adolescents, chronic illness, single sessions


Through a qualitative, multi-case, thematic approach, this study explores the use of a socially-engaged group Art Therapy directive of gift-giving to oneself, each group member and the Community on the Unit with patients experiencing acute psychological distress during their stay
on a short-term Inpatient Psychiatric unit. This study examined the impact of a structured directive and communal art and their effectiveness with patients diagnosed with Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, Substance Abuse Disorder, trauma and psychosis. The findings from this work reveal that participants experienced the Corrective Emotional Experience found in group work, fostered self-authorship and an integrated sense of self, revealed the universality of the art of giving ritual and highlighted the need for transitional objects.

Keywords: corrective emotional experience, inpatient care, gift ritual, socially-engaged art, structured art therapy directive


As Art Therapy has progressed and grown as a field, so have the styles of approach and understanding of traditional mediums most commonly employed. However, this growth, and liberty, has seemingly not been afforded to “high risk” mediums such as wood, metal, or, the focus of this study, glass as a therapeutic medium. The purpose and goal of this study aims to challenge the biases and advocate for the usage of glassworking as a therapeutic material and medium. Quantitative and Qualitative data was gained to examine glass artists’ motivation/resiliency, frustration tolerance; trust, communication and interpersonal skills. As the results and discussion indicate, there is a growth in these areas of focus and a therapeutic parallel process through glassworking. With this preliminary analysis of this art form, a multitude of further areas can be examined within art therapy.


The purpose of this study is to explore the impact that art therapy has on the treatment of patients in a pediatric hospital setting. This study will further support the research that art therapy is a beneficial tool to use in a pediatric medical setting. The case studies focused on patients during their inpatient stays in a pediatric hospital. The patients diagnoses range from oncology and hematology, to general pediatrics. The major findings of the study reflect the major themes that arose during treatment. Themes of physical representations of illness, integration, family stressors, and medical play were all present throughout the case studies in this thesis.

Keywords: Medical Art Therapy, Pediatric Hospital, Cancer, Integration, Child Life


Previous research has focused on the usefulness of art therapy, anger management programs, and addictions treatment as separate entities. This research study aims to understand the impact of an anger management art therapy group for male clients in a residential facility for the treatment of addictions. This study used group discussion and artwork produced by 15 participants over the course of nine sessions to measure changes in client perceptions and expressions of anger. Many addicted clients, accustomed to using their substance of choice to manage difficult emotions,
lack appropriate coping strategies for tolerating and expressing anger, which may result in frustration, outbursts, and strain on relationships. Using the art making process and the knowledge base of the group participants, clients were able to develop a better understanding of the origins of their anger and learn strategies for more effectively relating to others and to themselves when angry. Significantly, clients further along in treatment and those who were more consistent participants in the anger management art therapy group were better able found to tolerate anger, understand their own anger triggers, and respond appropriately when angry. They were also able to support and challenge their peers in developing the same skills.


For many art therapists, response art acts as a central tool for developing insight into client treatment, such as exploring countertransference, containing material that arises in session, or building empathy. As an art therapist in training, it can be difficult to understand how to use response art and the benefits it has on their clinical work. Through the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, an art therapist in training within a private practice setting explored the use of creating response art through visual journaling. The results aim to inform other art therapists early in their career on the benefits of response art and how to incorporate it into their professional practice.

Keywords: art therapy, response art, visual journaling
Seton Hill University
Master of Arts in Art Therapy


A graduate art therapy student at Seton Hill University participated in an internship in a school district. Art therapy groups and individual therapy sessions were conducted in a shared space within the school with students ranging from first to twelfth grade. A review of related literature discusses the role of art therapy in schools, play therapy, storytelling and ethical issues concerning children in schools to showcase the experience of an intern paving their way into the public educational system. Two in-depth case studies are presented showing successful applications of art therapy in two separate settings and age groups. Case studies are followed by art therapist’s personal reactions and responses towards conducting art therapy in an educational setting.


Through the authors experience this paper discusses the beneficial properties of art therapy with a case study of a female adolescent client grieving the loss of her father. This paper reviews the process the author took to explore and accept the emotions brought up from herself as well as the client in each individual session. By providing a side-by-side teaching approach in each session helped both parties benefit from the artistic process. For the client this created an opportunity to explore her emotions and become more comfortable with the artistic process by working in an altered book. The art therapy intern was able to work through her countertransference and anxiety by creating art beside the client in each therapeutic session.


An art therapy intern within a home health care and hospice agency observed the discovery and re-discovery of a creative identity in older adults. A psychosocial perspective provided the lens through which to view the presence of a creative identity during this stage of development. Comparative examples of three patient case studies illustrate the process of cultivating an artistic identity through engagement in the art therapy process. The intern’s emotional experience of both witnessing the cultivation and abrupt cessation of her patients’ artistic identities will also be explored, as well as how she coped with these untimely losses through her own art making.

During the fall semester of 2016 and spring semester of 2017 an intern from Seton Hill University utilized art therapy at an outpatient treatment center for individuals with substance use disorders. Art therapy was implemented in an Intensive Outpatient therapy group and became a catalyst for self-awareness and growth in recovery. The agency, population, and program will be described. A review of the related literature describes different substance use disorder treatment approaches, the idea of empathy in treatment, and the controversial issue of countertransference. An in depth case study will be presented to show the success and barriers to using art therapy with an individual in recovery. The art therapist intern’s personal reactions to the art work and the client’s unique story will be addressed. Reproductions of client and therapist artwork are included.


The account of an art therapy intern’s identity formation while serving members of a hospice and homecare program. Therapeutic modality of choice identified as Existential Theory. A review of literature focuses on the tenets of Existential Theory, utilization of this theory with persons experiencing loss, and the importance of art making in self-exploration of client and art therapist. Case study is included to demonstrate parallel process for art therapist and client utilizing creative expression to aid in a search for purpose. Response art and client art are included.


A graduate art therapy intern began a journey to establish her theory of practice while completing her internship in a charter school for school-aged children in Southwestern Pennsylvania. One educational and three theories for therapy are explained and demonstrated based on case studies. Additionally, the intern’s exploration of self-awareness through her artistic processing and it’s connection to her personal and professional growth are discussed. A review of related literature correlates with the theories, approaches and personal art process discussed. The use of curriculum-based assessments to analyze students’ appropriateness and preparedness for therapy are explored. Three case examples describe the application of theory to practice with the students. The art therapist’s countertransference – the therapist’s emotional reaction to a client’s participation in session – and responses to working with the students in the form of art and mindfulness exercises are discussed in detail. Reproductions and original works of therapist artwork are included.


The purpose of this paper was to examine the therapeutic method of using humor and art in an educational setting among clients with conduct and mental health disorders. It was reflective of
my yearlong internship at a partial hospitalization program where students participated in both school and therapy environments surrounded by their peers. Themes in the paper included building therapeutic relationship with the clients, forms of communication or language used, benefits of group and individual therapy all within the realm of using humor and art. Art and humor also allowed non-verbal methods of communication or "language." This style was used in both group and individual settings and found to be very effective due to its non-verbal benefits. This provided an emotional "safety net” form of communication which provided "distance" for clients when they experienced difficulty coping or verbalizing with staff during stressful situations. The benefit of using therapeutic humor and art was discussed and the types of each explored further. Throughout this process, it was noted that students experienced greater self-awareness and an increased ability to communicate more effectively with staff and peers. Finally, the in-depth case study of one student took into consideration the above-mentioned themes and discussed their uses, successes and failures when put into practice


This paper describes an art therapy student’s internship experience that included individuals who suffered cognitive impairments, physical disabilities, and emotional distress; partially due to Dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, strokes, Parkinson’s disease, and bereavement. She explains in a review of related literature existential therapy, narrative therapy theory, social wellness theory, and the importance of art as therapy with these populations of people. The author describes how her unique therapeutic approach and style developed as a result of her personal grief history and application of theory into practice. She illustrates how this occurred through two case studies, one providing art therapy to a group of individuals in a nursing home facility, and two, providing in-home art therapy to a family experiencing bereavement. The art therapy intern describes how she drew from her personal experiences with grief and loss, believed in the importance of art as therapy, learned and emphasizes that the creative process alone can be beneficial to people. The author explored the use of art to bring people together and that community was an essential component to her work.


The aim of this paper is to explore an art therapy intern’s personal experience practicing the power of art therapy within a non-profit agency. The art therapy intern became interested in trying to recognize therapeutic moments in the artwork of individuals and through developing an inter-subjective relationship. This paper also identifies how art can act as a visual representation to stimulate different perspectives for therapeutic moments. The intern describes in this paper how working with different clients helped her to grow and to find her own therapy style.

The author of this paper describes her internship in an intensive behavioral health unit using a review of related literature and a case study. She aims to describe her professional working experience of what seemed like a parallel journey between a patient with schizophrenia searching for release from the stigma of his mental illness and her own personal journey to freedom of trusting the therapeutic process. Art informed her work and connection to her patient. She explores the identity of the art therapist, the role the therapist plays with the patient, and the way in which the therapeutic relationship is formed and altered throughout therapy. The literature review highlights art therapy work with individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia. Together, the literature review and case experience demonstrate that personal experience, educational training, and the clinical relationship inform one another on the rollercoaster ride to find freedom of self.


A graduate art therapy intern worked at a victims’ service agency, using art-making and play to facilitate trauma recovery in children. The agency and the services it provides are described. A review of related literature explains how children are impacted by trauma, how art therapy and play are used to address trauma symptoms, and how therapists know the therapy is working. Two case studies provide examples of the use of art therapy and play to plan and implement treatment. The art therapist’s personal responses to working with the clients are discussed. Reproductions of client artwork are included.
Art therapy can help caregivers maintain a positive mindset and overall quality of life by focusing on self-care and coping mechanisms. This research examined if art therapy has an effect on mood in family caregivers. A sample of 11 participants between the ages of 24 and 79 self-identifying as family caregivers participated in this study. These participants were administered the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS) as a pre-test, participated in an art therapy session, and then took a BMIS post-test. Significance was found in 4 mood range scales: pleasant/unpleasant, arousal/calm, positive/tired, negative/relaxed. Further research is needed on the effects of art therapy on mood for family caregivers.


This qualitative research study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of the Bird’s Nest Drawing (BND) assessment by using imagery to detect the absence or presence of attachment security amongst residential youth. Research was gathered by using qualitative research methodology to conduct eight structured art therapy assessments with the same directive. The participants were eight male youths residing in a residential treatment facility in Western Massachusetts. Each client fitting the criteria of duel diagnosed adolescents with poor attachments and past trauma. The participants were given the same assessment and the choice to partake in the BND assessment’s creative writing component. The participants were gathered from a small and purposeful sampling amongst a residential treatment facility serving trauma and behavioral diagnoses. The study was limited to one directive: “draw a bird’s nest.” Once each image was obtained, the research evaluated each participant’s assessment. The researcher determined consistencies through image and color omissions. In summary, participant imagery presented sparse bird’s nest drawings suggesting the absence of attachment security.


Gender and ethnic typicality in children’s drawings were analyzed from drawings of a person in an environment. Ethnicity was operationally defined by whether the participant was born in the United States or another country, and if their parents were born in the United States or another country. Students (n=56) ages 6-15 from two schools in Western Massachusetts, one private and one public charter school, were participants. Inclusion of vehicles, animals, weapons, sports, building, the sun, a ground line, and Lowenfeld’s (1947) stages of development were examined. The results indicated that boys born in the United States included images of weapons in their drawings ($\chi^2 (1, n = 56) = 4.303$) more than girls (p<.01), and more than boys in another country (p = .038). This study also found inconsistencies with Lowenfeld’s stages of development. The mean age of the stages was considerably higher in the schematic stage, the preschematic stage,
and the gang stage than Lowenfeld predicted in his theory. The data from this study adds information on what is typical in the art of children ages 6-15 regarding gender and ethnicity.


Based on interviews with registered art therapist participants in the New England region of the United States, the researcher intended to describe the benefits of using art therapy to treat Asperger’s clients with social anxiety. Participants consisted of four female art therapists who had knowledge in working with Asperger clients and responded to the interview questions based on their experiences of the therapy sessions with these clients. Interviews were administered via phone, and live field notes and audio recording were utilized and transcribed by the researcher. Rereading and reviewing the recorded data was an axial coding measure. The content of the interviews were conducted in approximately 30-45 minute sessions over a four to six week time period. All data was analyzed and compared for analysis.


The purpose of this study was to understand the effects of zentangling as an art therapy intervention for depression with older adults residing in an assisted living facility. Zentangling is a relaxing meditative method of drawing where complex images are built from the repetition of simple patterns. Currently there are no studies published about the use of zentangling as a modality for treatment of depression in older adults. The goal of this study was to examine the increase or decrease of depression, mood, levels of self-esteem, and self-expression after ten zentangling sessions. The study included six participants 65 years or older residing in an assisted living facility. Participant depression was measured using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS; Yesavage et al., 1983) pre and post intervention. The GDS was designed specifically for rating depression in the elderly (Yesavage et al., 1983). Paired dependent t-tests were conducted to compare GDS scores (Yesavage et al., 1988) pre and post intervention. SPSS version 22 was used for data analysis; the significance level was set at .05. No significant difference in the mean score of the pre and post GDS (Yesavage et al., 1998), t = -1.660910, p = 0.157623. Data from the art directives, field notes, and observations were analyzed beginning with broad open coding and then narrowing into more defined, condensed categories through axial coding (Merriam, 2009). Three themes emerged: 1. family, 2. death of loved ones and 3. meals. Four out of the six group members expressed that they had less worries and enjoyed the freedom of zentangling. The data reflected an increase in mood and group cohesiveness.


This qualitative study was designed to explore the experiences and treatment methods utilized by art therapists when working with adult clients who have trauma related diagnoses. Through semi-structured interviews the objective of this study was to better understand how the process of art therapy was an effective method for treating trauma. Six art therapists were interviewed either in person, by phone, by written responses to interview questions or a combination thereof. This
study confirms previous research of the efficacy of art therapy when treating trauma. The data was collected and analyzed through qualitative open and axial coding methods. The findings throughout the interviews revealed four main themes: Art Therapy with Mindfulness/Meditation, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Trauma Focused Cognitive Therapy were used most; Collaboration with a team of trauma informed professionals was the norm and determined most beneficial for clients; Art Therapy interventions were specifically tailored to meet the needs of clients; Processing of images with the art therapist through a narrative approach supported previous research bringing forth traumatic recollections from a client’s implicit memory to explicit memory, to be processed and integrated into their lives.


The aim of the present study was to explore the experiences of art therapists working with psychiatric inpatient populations utilizing visual journaling interventions. The implementations of art therapy interventions, such as visual journaling with individuals with severe mental health illness, do not have evidence-based research supporting their effectiveness. This study helps to understand the benefits of creative therapeutic modalities with this population by providing an in-depth qualitative research analysis collected from a sample of eight art therapists currently utilizing visual journaling interventions with clients. Research was obtained through the collection of a detailed questionnaire and analyzed using open and axial coding to highlight themes and common experiences. The findings revealed four main themes throughout the feedback: capacity for a positive interaction without judgment, encouragement of mastery and empowerment, self-reflection and concretization of feelings, and increased self-esteem.


Seasonal Affective Disorder is a growing diagnosis, which is in need of research in order to develop successful, preventative and cost effective treatments (Miller, 2005; Rosenthal, 2013). The intent of the researcher-participant was to determine if daily artistic expression through altered book making would decrease symptom length and severity. Daily journals recorded the experience of the researcher participant in regards to reflection before and after the altered book making process. Journal entries, the altered book and observations were analyzed using open and axial coding and triangulated and organized into themes. Daily depression symptoms in correlation with the DSM-V were also recorded, rated and graphed for descriptive statistical data. The research found that the altered book making did not decrease the symptom severity or length. However, the qualitative research emerged themes such as: healing through the art making process; self-awareness and personal growth; internal conflicts; and time and motivation.


The current research consists of case studies of four elderly individuals in advanced stages of dementia with a medical diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease or vascular dementia. Collage-based
interventions have shown to be an effective means of eliciting reminiscence for elderly individuals with dementia by focusing on the remaining capacities of an individual with dementia, including reminiscence functioning and creative processing. The current study compares the effectiveness of two collage modalities, Magazine Photo Collage (MPC) and Tissue Paper Collage (TPC), to explore how the underlying aesthetic properties of image-content and color/texture effect reminiscence processing for dementia patients. Participants engaged in two collage making sessions over a two week period. Pre- and post-interviews of a direct-care staff member were utilized to gain an understanding of the larger context of reminiscence functioning. Collages were collected and analyzed for content for triangulation of data. All collage-making sessions were transcribed. Open and axial coding was performed for emerging themes. Findings support previous research suggesting collage as an effective therapeutic modality to utilize with dementia patients due to the underlying organizing metaphor inherently involved in the process of making a collage, as well as the success of pre-structured stimuli in promoting reminiscence functioning. The current researcher found MPC to elicit more verbalizations, while a majority of memory recall consisted of false reminiscences. TPC was found to be a multisensory and predominantly tactile experience eliciting responses to the “here-and-now”. Both forms of collage suggested opportunities for individuals with dementia to piece together various materials, promoting an integrated sense of self.
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Master of Arts in Art Therapy Counseling


The purpose of this research project was to explore the use of portraiture as a form of therapists’ processing. This document included a review of the literature on creation of portraiture, its uses in art therapy counseling, and therapist processing and supervision. This art-based heuristic research examined how portraiture can be used for therapists’ processing of work with clients. The results were that a studio process of creating reflective portraiture could be a viable practice that assists therapists in witnessing trauma, finding emotional and physiological resonance with clients, and providing a tool for therapist self-supervision and professional processing.


This mixed methods research project was focused on gaining a greater understanding of the utilization of handmade artists’ books techniques in current art therapy practice. To begin, a brief survey was conducted of thirty practicing art therapists from the United States to assess their current utilization of specific bookmaking techniques. Upon analysis of the survey data, three interviews were performed in order to investigate the use of these techniques in greater detail. To complete the analysis of the project a grounded theory approach was implemented that compared themes from published literature, the survey data and the interview data. The results of this analysis led the researcher to generate a materials theory in three categories about the role of artists’ book techniques in art therapy practice: accessibility, therapeutic application, and limitations. The paper concludes with a discussion of art therapists furthering their skills in this area, limitations of this research study, and recommendations for further exploration of the integration of artists’ book techniques in a therapeutic arts setting.

Keywords: artists’ books, handmade books, altered books, book arts, art therapy, expressive arts therapy, hand papermaking, printmaking, bookbinding


The research project was an artistic inquiry of the intersections between food, cultural identity, and relationships and how those affected a developing art therapist. The researcher, a developing art therapist, served as the primary subject. Hervey’s Artistic Inquiry (2000) guided documentation and methods of assimilating data. Artistic inquiry focused on how food experiences shaped and influenced her relationships with others as well as her cultural identity, particularly while interning at an eating disorder treatment facility. The findings concluded that food was most often used as a symbol for care, control, comfort, and cultural identity, and as a
medium to aid in relationship formation and maintenance for individuals throughout various cultures.


This grant proposes the implementation of a new trauma-informed group and individual art therapy program, called the Art Therapy Connections program, at Queen of Peace Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Queen of Peace Center (2015) is a family-centered behavioral healthcare provider for women with addiction, their children and families. This gender focused recovery facility provides a variety of treatment options to women with co-occurring disorders and those affected by trauma. Research demonstrates how art therapy can be beneficial for individuals in substance abuse recovery and can facilitate healing for women with histories of trauma. Queen of Peace Center currently utilizes the evidence-based “Seeking Safety” manualized treatment for substance use and trauma-related symptoms (Najavits, 2002). The goals of the Art Therapy Connections program are to provide individual, short-term, and full-length group art therapy sessions focused on reducing trauma symptoms and substance use by integrating the Seeking Safety treatment model in the art therapy groups. This grant proposal will fund a new position for a full time art therapist who will be responsible for facilitating individual sessions and a closed group for women with histories of trauma. The total two-year proposed budget for the Art Therapy Connections program is $93,252.93.


The proposed grant program titled HEART will implement in-home family art therapy for individuals with Alzheimer's Disease, their caregivers, and their families in order to develop caregiving skills, to improve the mental health of the family and to assist in the decision process for nursing home placement. Financial support from the Lutheran Foundation will provide funding for in-home family art therapy services to support 12 families per year, for two years. The multidimensional approach of HEART will combine psychoeducational and counseling interventions that address the primary stressors often faced by families who have a loved one with AD and support decision-making about nursing home placement. The unique components of HEART include participation from the entire family and conducting the family art therapy sessions in their home to provide individualized and accessible care to families.


This meta-synthesis of group art therapy literature emphasized analysis on the mechanisms of change, and provided greater insight and understanding into the theories and applications of group art therapy. Within the field of art therapy no synthesis of group art therapy literature is available. Conducting this meta-synthesis not only provides a first review of its kind, but may
also note insights about future research needed regarding efficacy of group art therapy. Results revealed a unique set of therapeutic factors specific to group art therapy and an incongruence between the therapeutic factors identified in group art therapy literature and those in teaching/theoretical texts.


This research project used a combination of a self-study, using heuristic arts based research, with a brief survey to explore the primary researcher’s ethnic identity development as a Korean adoptee raised in Caucasian culture in the United States. Heuristic art inquiry was used as a tool to respond to literature related to Korean adoptees and to explore the primary researcher’s own identity development as a Korean American adoptee. The primary researcher also attended a conference held by the Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network in St. Louis, Missouri for Korean adoptees and used the survey responses collected as a comparison tool for her research. Results from the project were analyzed using qualitative coding to generate themes found in the data collected. The four major categories that emerged were Being “other,” Racism, Shared History, and Adoption as Identity. These four major categories were confirmed among all four data points: the artwork, the art journals, the literature, and the survey responses.


Children can have a difficult time verbally expressing and identifying affect/mood state and emotions. Kinesthetic art making and movement have been recognized to help identify mood and to allow for self-expression. The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to examine the effects of kinesthetic art-making on children’s mood state. The participants involved were children ages 7 to 12 who attended a summer arts camp. Pretest and posttest were used to identify the child participant’s mood state before and after the kinesthetic art making process. Overall, the results suggested that mood repair occurred post art making experience and the participants embodied a calmer and more pleasurable state of affect after the kinesthetic art making process. This research project also included personal reflections and experience from the researcher.


This paper describes and outlines the Dye Garden Project, a community-based art therapy initiative that was designed to build community capacity by integrating the creative process into an already-existing therapeutic horticulture program serving individuals experiencing homelessness at the City Seeds Farm in downtown St. Louis, Missouri. This paper articulates the research’s theoretical shift from a traditional clinical therapeutic model to a community-
based art therapy model that sought to build a garden and create art “with and not for” a community. This shift is explored by examining the literature surrounding the intersection of three central concepts: art therapy, nature and community arts. The work plan of the dye garden is then outlined, which sought to provide equalizing opportunities for all project participants, build creative capacity through art-making, and increase connections to the community within the working group on the farm and the St. Louis community at-large. Evaluations of these goals indicate the Dye Garden Project succeeded in building capacity within this community, although data also indicates limitations and recommendations for future projects.


This pilot project of Art and Eating Disorders was approved by The Emily Program Foundation (TEPF) a 501(c) (3) nonprofit working to eliminate eating disorders through advocacy, social outreach, and collaboration with community partners. Between July and August 2015, TEPF recruited five artists. Artists were interviewed by Sarah Pray and artwork digitally recorded at various locations, filmed and edited by videographer, Eve Daniels. Artists brought artwork and other creative work related to their recovery. The resulting videos were uploaded to the TEPF website weekly, between November 17 and December 15, 2015. The goal of the pilot project was to measure the project's ability to document stories of recovery from an eating disorder, to provide a supportive and creative environment to create film narratives of recovery, and to increase public awareness of eating disorders through its online platform. This proposal demonstrated the need for online resources that support recovery and promote advocacy for the treatment of eating disorders.


This community arts program was guided by the following question: Can the use of multisensory materials in art be used as a form of ability advocacy to expand thinking of normalcy? This community project aspired to create an inclusive environment where artists with disabilities have access to the same opportunities as artists who do not have disabilities in conjunction with Vision Strength Access Missouri, a statewide organization promoting access to the arts for people with disabilities. This community arts program recruited eight artists to participate in a series of two artist forums, an art exhibit, and an informal feedback meeting. For the creation of an inclusive environment surrounding the concept of ability, three of the artists self-identified as having a disability. During the first two art forums the artists collaborated to plan an art exhibit that featured their artwork that focused on accessibility, then put on an art exhibit created for public view and interaction. The informal program feedback was held after the art exhibit to gather feedback from the artists on the program. The success of the program was evaluated through the program’s ability to recruit artist and community members, and identify the impact in awareness of the artists and community members.

Homelessness is a troubling condition of society with the number of families experiencing homelessness on the rise, and many of the homeless population are children. Consequently, continuing research is important to better understand how homelessness affects children and what protective factors are in place to help these children survive and thrive. Thus far research supports the use of art therapy to reduce adverse psychological outcomes in homeless populations, yet the extent to which art therapy improves mood states of homeless children is largely unknown. Instead of focusing on pathological behavioral remedies, this study used a strengths-based approach to discuss art therapy and factors of resilience. This study used a quasi-experimental method to examine the function of art making as a component of resiliency in children experiencing homelessness aged 4-12 years of age attending a short-term shelter. Art making was explored in its function to affect areas of resiliency in children including: mood, self-efficacy, self-esteem and connection to an adult. The single-session of art therapy, though not significant, demonstrated an increase in children’s positive mood state.

This thesis is a pilot study program designed to increase the self-concept of parents experiencing homelessness. The pilot program was conducted in group format and utilized brief visualization and loving kindness meditation, along with art therapy interventions to increase a positive self-concept with this vulnerable population. The project took place over a 12-week period, with 3 separate groups of parents between the ages of 22 to 59 years old. There were a total of 13 racially diverse participants, the majority were female. From those that reported, over half reported moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and moderate to mild symptoms of depression, prior to beginning the study. Post test data showed reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Post session evaluations indicated an increased sense of well-being and that the groups were helpful in managing and reducing stress. In addition, participants formed new supportive relationships with individuals experiencing similar life challenges by participating in the groups. This helped increase the sense of community in the shelter.


This theoretical study highlights the unique experience of pediatric oncology patients and their parents. This study examines pediatric medical trauma as it pertains to pediatric oncology patients and their families, as the stress of diagnosis, illness, procedures, treatment and hospitalization frequently results in posttraumatic stress symptoms for both patient and parents (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2003, Pai, A.L.H. & Kazak, A.E., 2006). The continuous adaptation to the extreme stress of treatment, care, and hospitalization for pediatric oncology patients and their families requires an integration of patient and family focused care that is developmentally appropriate, nontreating, trauma focused and that fosters both coping skills and resilience (Clatworthy, Simon, & Tiedeman, 1999; Rudolph, Dennig, & Weisz; 1995; Steele & Malchiodi, 2012). However, current empirical research lacks a care model that is collaborative, integrated, and focuses on the patient and family experience of cancer diagnosis and care as it is occurring throughout hospitalization and treatment. Therefore, the purpose of this theoretical study is to present a medical art therapy based intervention framework that is applicable to a collaborative care model. This medical art therapy based intervention framework, consisting of a pre-assessment interview and five art therapy intervention tasks, effectively integrates neurobiological and trauma systems informed case along with a client-centered, family system focused, psychosocially based model to address pediatric medical trauma as it applies to pediatric cancer patients and their parents throughout their course of oncology treatment and care, with the ultimate goal of lowering the incidence of posttraumatic symptoms, posttraumatic stress disorder, and increasing resilience and posttraumatic growth.

The purpose of this thesis was to develop an understanding of how Eco-Art Therapy could affect adults in recovery from substance use disorders. A review of the literature provided information on substance use disorders. A review of the literature provided information on substance use disorders and the negative impact these disorders could have on an adult’s overall well-being. The literature review also provided an understanding of the need for holistic treatment modalities for adults in recovery, and discussed how Ecotherapy and Eco-Art therapy could be beneficial for this population. This student used a phenomenological research approach, and an Eco-Art therapy focus group followed by individual interviews were implemented in order to understand the participants’ stories of their experiences of the focus group, as well as the researcher’s story of the experience. The findings of this study showed that increased exposure to nature and creativity in a natural setting can be beneficial for adults in various stages of recovery, and can allow adults in recovery to experience a decrease in anxiety and an increased awareness of their immediate surroundings.


Psychological symptoms are extremely common among the cancer population; however, focus continues to remain on the physical symptoms and medical treatment of the cancer patient. This study was conducted to bring awareness to the prevalence of psychological symptoms among this population, and the fact that these symptoms must also be addressed when treating the cancer patient as a whole. This study used art therapy, as a complementary therapy to medical treatment, to treat the experienced psychological symptoms of eight patients with cancer. The purpose of this study was to determine if art therapy can be effective with decreasing psychological symptoms associated with a cancer diagnosis; specifically, symptoms that typically compose emotional distress, such as: tiredness, anxiety, depression, pain, and overall wellbeing. To investigate this theory, a single art therapy session was conducted with each participant individually. A pre and post evaluation was given to measure each symptom using a Likert scale. The results concluded that art therapy was effective in reducing symptoms associated with emotional distress. Participant responses also concluded that art therapy was beneficial to include as a complementary therapy to medical treatment. Overall, this study provides foundational evidence that art therapy, and/or other complementary therapies, should be incorporated into medical treatment for patients with cancer to provide beneficial comprehensive care.


This study redefines the role of single mothers through the eyes of their daughters and demonstrates the richness of experiencing single mothers can offer by instilling characteristics of resiliency and independence in their daughters. The life experiences of twelve adult female children, ages 21 to 47, from varied socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds whom
were all raised by a single mother are presented and examined. Using thematic content analysis from a feminist perspective, the study identified similarities in the participants’ experiences such as financial struggle, support systems, and personality traits as well as differences such as family structure and onset of single parenting. Art media portraits are also incorporated to aid participants in reflecting upon their relationships with their mothers. Thematic content analysis of written prompts found that being parented by a single mother fostered qualities such as resiliency, resourcefulness, drive, and independence for female children contrary to the negative societal portrayal of single mother parenting and additionally found that creating art helped relate the female child to her mother in the form of creating a portrait of her. Future research and implications for the field of Art Therapy and Counseling are discussed.


This research was conducted to better understand the effects of sexual trauma and explore how understanding generational patterns can contribute to posttraumatic growth (PTG) for adult women survivors of sexual trauma. In this study, posttraumatic growth was assessed using three modalities including in-depth interviews, creating family genograms, and visual art therapy. The willing participants of this research included three adult women survivors of sexual abuse. Epigenetic and environmental factors were explored and generational patterns and themes were evaluated as contributing factors of PTG. The participants engaged in therapeutic processing of the growth process post-trauma. This research indicated PTG can be attained for adult women survivors of sexual abuse through a journey of overcoming the struggles of trauma with confidence, awareness, acceptance, and willingness to change. Creative possibilities for integrating art therapy and family genograms into treatment for women coping with the effects of sexual trauma have been included.


The purpose of this phenomenological study explored the concept of death and coping mechanisms with patients and their family members in a hospice care setting. The study consisted of four participants from the Midwest. The aim of the phenomenology found significant themes that emerged from semi-structured interviews regarding one’s view of death both before and after an art therapy task. Thematic content analysis was used to determine themes within the collected data. These themes included the phenomenon of death in Western culture and how hand casting influenced individuals’ coping mechanisms regarding death. Research found that death is not a topic often discussed in families living within Western society. Similarly, when losing a significant person, Westerners may need a longer period of time to cope with the loss. Additionally, family members also reported experiencing unfavorable emotional symptoms due to the event. Living with a terminal illness or being a family member of an individual living in a hospice care setting appeared to prepare Westerners for death and the dying process. Findings also showed that hand casting did not influence the participants’ perceptions of death. However, participants reported feelings of enjoyment and connectedness during the creative process. Similarly, family members found the casting process and the outcome of the task to serve as forms of memorabilia. As the participants were familiarized with art therapy and
actively met with art therapists prior to the study, art therapy may increase Westerners’ coping skills and prepare individuals for the dying process.


This phenomenological inquiry used an organic feminist approach to explore various atypical symptom presentation of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in females, gathering information through ten interviews adult women who remained undiagnosed and untreated until age 18 or older. The participants were asked questions regarding their symptom presentation, comorbid mental health issues, the experience of receiving an accurate diagnosis, and asked to create an image prior to the interview portraying her experience of ADHD symptoms. Information was gathered to assess and compare with available literature as to why this population is often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, the impact of untreated symptoms, and how to more accurately recognize symptoms at an earlier age. A thematic content analysis revealed many patterns between the participants, including similar school experiences, social difficulties, significant self-esteem issues, comorbid mental health problems, and strengths seemingly related to or stemming from untreated ADHD symptoms. This thesis sought to explore and discuss these patterns as related to available research, as well as ways in which findings could be used to better educate and understand atypical and complicated symptom presentation and diagnosis the disorder earlier in life.


This study completed is about the experience of women who have been catcalled and the common threads contained in every experience of street harassment. For this study, the researcher interviewed 12 women who have experienced catcalling or street harassment about their most significant experience with street harassment. The main research question was to discern, what are the common threads that weave together individual experiences with catcalling or street harassment? Another important query of interest included distinguishing what the detrimental effects of catcalling or street harassment. Additionally, another research question was to conclude how and if feminist related social action art could be used to combat the effects of street harassment. The age range spanned from age 15 to age 53. While the majority of co-researchers were Caucasian, other ethnicities were also represented, including African American, Saudi-American, Puerto Rican, and multiracial. The majority of the co-researchers were between ages 24 to 28, but the age ranges of 15-18 and 50-55 were also represented in the study. The researcher found participants through social media and a mass university email. The methods used in the study consisted of qualitative methods that utilize story-telling, interviewing, and art making. The setting used for this information extraction included coffee shops, a space at the college center and through Skype for individuals who did not live in the Midwest. Keywords: Catcalling, street harassment, sexual harassment, art therapy, narrative interviewing.

It has been 67 years since the publication of Lowenfeld’s first graphic development book (Lowenfeld, 1957). This study examines the relevancy of Viktor Lowenfeld’s stages of development to art therapy and current youth. Previously made works of art were collected from individuals ranging from age 2-16. There were a total of 40 images of work gathered, with at least 3 images correlating to each hypothesized stage. The samples of art analyzed for this study stemmed from the North East, Ohio region. This examination of developmental stages of children reveals the appropriateness and relevancy of Lowenfeld’s stages of development and suggests whether educators or art therapists continue to utilize them as an effective evaluation tool.


This mixed methods research study aims to gain a better understanding of how changing family structures in the United States may affect gender roles. In the past 20 years, there have been many changes to the family system including marriage, divorce, fertility, same-sex union, cohabitation, children living arrangements, immigration, and aging (Cherlin, 2010). This research study compared actions of figures to Burns and Kaufman (1972) findings on common action of figures in the projective drawing of the Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD). The participants were from Northwest Ohio ranging from age 7 to 12 years old. Out of 34 participants, 20 were male and 14 were female. The participants were given directives relating to the KFD and his or her guardian completed a survey that asked specific information about the participant’s family household. The intended goal of this research was to help improve clinical practice in mental health settings by providing useful information on statistical findings of gender roles portrayed in images from the KFD.


This qualitative study used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach and through a feminist lens sought greater understanding of how children in their earliest years, birth to three, communicate what they feel and know to their parents and other primary caregivers. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with three mother-infant/toddler dyads. Interviews were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Detailed information about the child and his/her family were gathered including: the mother’s pregnancy and birth of the child, family backgrounds, typical daily activities, sleep arrangements, roles of the extended family, childcare situations, and a description of the child by the mother. The researcher explored with the mother, how the infant/toddler expressed a variety of feelings and needs, as well as things he/she knew, through non-verbal, preverbal and emerging linguistic skills. Auditory themes included: crying, laughing, vocalizations, babbling, and near-word utterances. Non-verbal themes explored were: facial expressions, gestures, body language, and behavior. To get a clearer picture of the mother-infant/toddler relationship, as well as a glimpse of the lived experience of the dyad, the researcher used art therapy methods in subsequent art sessions with the dyads, and through a series of art tasks saw first-hand the expressive communication of the
child with his/her mother. The art sessions are described in detail in this text. A review of relevant literature included the following topics: early childhood development, early childhood development stages in art, importance of early childhood experiences, uses of art in early childhood, and parent-infant art therapy.


This research study examines the benefits of equine-assisted experiential therapy in conjunction with art therapy to explore the impact on single mothers, between the ages of 44-54 years with at least two children, living in the Midwest. The thesis employed interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) measures, narrative stories, and thematic content analysis (TCA) to observe the results that occurred over a 6-week research period with three single mothers and six horses. The outcomes were then analyzed to determine the effects of the interventions and how this type of involvement could prove beneficial with other single mothers. In addition, past research with equine interactions and various populations were examined and similarities were drawn. Lastly, the advantages of using horses as well as art therapy were discussed, and what thoughts, behaviors, actions, and emotions were evoked by the participants as a direct result. It was determined that using equine-assisted experiential therapies and art therapy helped single mothers deal with presenting concerns, offered possible alternatives to dealing with problems, and created a sense of community and social support among the group members.
Wayne State University  
Master’s Art Therapy Programs


The following outlines a program proposal to provide art therapy services for runaway and homeless youth, ages 10-24 within a residential shelter setting. Youth homelessness is an ongoing issue of concern in the United States. The effects of being homeless as a younger person are widespread and can contribute to challenges in the realms of psychological, emotional, physical, behavioral and educational development for the affected youth. Existing interventions often focus on the use of traditional talk therapy, life skills training, and health care assistance. While these interventions are beneficial, art therapy is particularly useful in addressing the challenges of trauma, emotional regulation, and stress connected to youth homelessness. The overall goals of this proposed program include resilience and well-being in youth participants. Through a literature review, this proposal examines research on the effects of youth homelessness; existing interventions; examples of how art therapy has been used with this population; and how art therapy with homeless youth can improve resilience. The results of the research process indicate that the use of a strengths-based art therapy program increases efficacy and improves treatment outcomes. A detailed framework for a strengths-based art therapy program is described. Additionally, supplemental resources such as sample sessions, budget, assessments, and promotional materials are included.

Keywords: art therapy; homelessness; youth; positive psychology; at-risk youths; resilience


This program proposal is intended to develop and implement art therapy at The Ennis Center for Children’s Wayne County location. The existing Fostering Creativity program located at the Flint location of the Ennis Center has been used as a model for the proposed Wayne County program. The program will include both community-based arts classes and individual art therapy sessions. This proposal seeks to answer the questions, “How can art therapy provide a voice for children in the foster care system?” and “How can art therapy address needs which the current foster care programs have failed to adequately address?” Specifically, the proposed program is designed to encourage the development of positive identity, treat trauma, increase self-esteem, self-awareness and resilience. The benefits of community art and art therapy in each of these areas are presented through literature review and evaluation as being significant factors in creating a healthier, more effective means of treatment for children in foster care.


This study seeks to answer the question, “What are the effects of art therapy with clients reporting non-suicidal self-injury?” Secondarily, I have examined whether zine-making is an appropriate therapeutic tool in helping NSSI reporters to have better insight into their behaviors. Using an art-based narrative research methodology, I explored my personal history with the
behavior by investigating old journals, artworks, and past zines. In response, I created a new zine that thematically examines the thoughts and feelings of an adolescent girl who self-injures. This study shows a point-of-view that is rarely seen in academic writing about this topic.


Art therapy is an alternative form of therapy to address the psychological and physiological needs of cancer patients. The psychological needs of cancer patients are often addressed secondary to their physical disease, which can influence their quality of life and treatment success. This program proposal aims to introduce a successful art therapy program that uses a mind-body approach to meet the needs of patients in an oncology hospital setting. Provide an expressive outlet for patients to relive stress, learn coping skills, promote relaxation, and reduce pain (Gordon, 2008). Studies have shown that with the reduction of stress and having a positive outlook, patients have lived longer. This program proposal outlines the methodology, program criteria, assessments, and example interventions to meet the needs of adults diagnosed with cancer.

Keywords: art therapy; mind-body connection, stress, cancer, adults, mindfulness


This program proposal is designed for a particular community center, but may be adapted for other settings. The implementation of a trauma-informed art therapy program can help foster self-awareness, increase self-esteem and self-acceptance. The proposal also addresses how art therapy can help youth heal from trauma, manage stress, maintain and develop emotion regulation, practice healthy coping skills, build resiliency, provide a safe space for community engagement, and instill a sense of hope (Prescott, et al., 2011; Moon, 2009, p. 23). The proposal includes goals and objectives, measurable outcomes, a detailed budget, and art therapy experientials for a 6-month program meeting bi-weekly.