

Reflective visual journaling during art therapy and counselling internships: a qualitative study

Sarah P. Deaver^{a*} and Garrett McAuliffe^b

^aGraduate Art Therapy and Counseling Program, Eastern Virginia Medical School, Lewis Hall, Suite 1135, 700 W. Olney Road, Norfolk, VA 23507, USA; ^bDepartment of Educational Leadership and Counseling, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, USA

This qualitative multiple case study explored four art therapy students' and four counselling students' responses to visual journaling during their internships. They maintained their journals throughout one 15-week academic semester, and were interviewed four times over the course of the study. Data consisted of transcribed interviews and photographs of participants' journal imagery. Data analysis yielded three overarching patterns: *The Internship Experience Overall*, *The Visual Journal Experience*, and *Journaling Process*. The visual journal facilitated the process of reflection. Participants gained insights into aspects of their experience through making art, combining it with written text and reflecting upon their journal entries. In addition, they used their visual journals for case conceptualization, addressing countertransference and stress reduction. Whereas all of the participants deemed the visual journal valuable, counselling interns had initial difficulty with visual thinking. The participants considered the combination of artmaking and responsive writing to be a particularly effective aspect of their experience.

Keywords: art-based learning; reflective journaling; visual journaling; counsellor education; art therapy education

Introduction

Educating future counsellors and therapists involves launching students into the realm of face-to-face interactions with clients at internship sites. Because the complexity and ambiguity of such work requires much self-monitoring and decision making on the part of the student, instilling in students the capacity for reflection is both a challenge and a goal for educators of future professionals. This study examined one strategy, visual journaling, for developing student reflectivity. A visual journal is a notebook with unlined pages in which individuals record their experiences using both imagery and written text. Research supports the value of written journals as educational tools that encourage reflection, but the potential for visual journaling to facilitate reflection has not been explored through systematic inquiry until now.

This study was conceived from a constructivist perspective that emphasizes individuals actively constructing knowledge through engaging in experiences, reflecting upon them, and comparing their current experiences to pre-existing assumptions (Andresen, Boud, & Cohen, 2000). In contrast to traditional teaching practices of

*Corresponding author. Email: deaversp@evms.edu

transmitting knowledge, constructivism holds that individuals are always more or less instrumental in their own learning, and that they learn best through thinking about and subsequently integrating their own diverse experiences (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997; Kolb, 1984).

Constructivist teachers and supervisors consider the differing lenses through which individual students approach the learning environment (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2001). In a constructivist, student-centered, classroom, learning is to a great extent experiential and involves the whole person (senses, emotions, thoughts). In addition, reflection on experience is prized as the primary means to deepen learning (Kolb, 1984; National Research Council, 1999). The capacity for reflection is in fact considered to be the most important attribute contributing to counsellors' and therapists' professional growth (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Thus, instilling this capacity has become an important aim in educating professionals such as teachers (Reiman, 1999) and counsellors (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998).

One commonly used method to implement this process is directed reflective journal writing (Boud, 2001; Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983). Reflective journaling is strongly supported in the conceptual and research-based literature as an activity that facilitates students' integration of course content, construction of new knowledge, and application of new knowledge (Dart, Boulton-Lewis, Brownlee, & McCrindle, 1998). In addition to written reflective journaling, artmaking can be considered a reflective practice (Serig, 2006). Student-generated artwork has been used in both counselling and art therapy education and supervision, with the aims of clarifying case conceptualization (Ishiyama, 1988), understanding countertransference (Kielo, 1991), and improving counsellor and therapist well-being (Harter, 2007). Therefore, it follows that integrating art practice and reflective journaling can be potentially beneficial to internship students.

Focused artmaking and reflective journaling are combined in the practice of visual journaling, which is based on the two premises that imagery reveals inner feelings and that words can be used to make cognitive sense of the images (Ganim & Fox, 1999). Visual journaling is thought to promote students' critical reflection upon their previous learning, their current experiences, and their ongoing professional growth (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008). It can be considered a constructivist educational strategy in that the process of working in a visual journal is intrinsically reflective; it provides the journal keeper with a format for thinking through and responding to new experiences and then integrating them into his or her existing knowledge base.

The following research questions guided this inquiry: (a) how do trainees in graduate art therapy and counselling programs experience visual journaling during their internships? and (b) what are the differences, if any, between art therapy and counselling students' perceptions of the function and benefits of visual journaling during the internship?

Method

The methodology of this qualitative case study involved the search for in-depth knowledge of research participants' lived experience within a specific, clearly defined context (Stake, 1995). In this study, the context was the participants' 15-week internships. This study was further conceptualized as a multiple case study since we explored the experiences of eight participants, or 'cases'.

Participants

Using purposeful, maximum variation sampling, participants were recruited from two academic institutions in the US. Criteria for participants included that they be counselling or art therapy masters degree students in their internship and between 23 and 60 years old. In addition, we sought half counselling and half art therapy interns, with at least one participant who was male. Furthermore, we wanted at least three of the counselling students to have had no experience with artmaking other than elementary and middle school art classes or adult engagement in crafts as a hobby.

At each institution, an introductory workshop was held, in which principles of reflection and visual journaling were explained, and attendees actively engaged in several art-based experiential exercises that were based upon the work of Ganim and Fox (1999) and Ishiyama (1988). After each workshop, interested volunteers who met the sampling criteria and consented to participate in the study signed consent forms and were issued materials, including a journal and media such as oil pastels, markers, and colored pencils.

All of the sampling criteria were met. Table 1 summarizes various participant characteristics.

Data sources

Data consisted of transcribed audiotapes of semi-structured interviews with participants and digital photographs of participants’ journal images. The interviews were conducted once at the onset of the internship, twice during the internship and once a few weeks after its conclusion. The interviews were semi-structured in that a set of standardized questions and probes were used as a framework; however, when the questions were exhausted, participants took the lead in guiding the discussion. This approach allowed us to gather the information necessary to answer the research questions, and allowed the participants the freedom to discuss additional topics of concern or interest to them, at a depth with which they were comfortable (Patton,

Table 1. Participant demographics.

Name	Age/Sex	Ethnicity	Program	Undergrad Major	Additional Masters	Previous Art Experience
Sallie	26, F	Caucasian American	Counseling	Psychology	No	None
April	29, F	Caucasian American	Counseling	Special Education	No	None
Madigan	52, M	Caucasian American	Counseling	History	No	1 Design class
Beatrice	53, F	African American	Counseling	Political Science	No	Poetry Workshops
Monet	48, F	Caucasian American	Art Therapy	Fine Arts – Textiles	Clinical Psychology	Professional Artist
Rachel	25, F	Caucasian American	Art Therapy	Psychology	No	Extensive
Sonya	30, F	Caucasian American	Art Therapy	Creative Arts Therapy	No	Extensive
Karen	31, F	Asian	Art Therapy	Fine Arts	MFA Painting	Extensive

2002). The goal of the initial interview was to gain a sense of what drew participants to their field of graduate study, and to understand their thoughts and feelings about embarking upon the internship. The second and third interviews were designed to elicit information about participants' interactions with clients at the internship setting, their general responses to their experiences at internship, and their use of the visual journal in the context of the internship. The final interview focused on participants' reflections on their internship experiences and the function of the journal within the internship context. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Participants were requested to make at least two journal entries consisting of both imagery and responsive writing each week of the internship, and to choose two entries to discuss during interviews.

Ethical considerations

The nature of qualitative research presents specific ethical considerations. For example, both Merriam (1998) and Patton (2002) cautioned that interviewing might evoke emotionally loaded responses; in responding to questions designed to open them up, research participants may reveal material of a highly sensitive nature. Thus it is important for the researcher to be prepared to address or manage such situations. However, 'the purpose of a research interview is first and foremost to gather data, not to change people' (Patton, p. 405) and therefore the researcher cannot take on the role of rescuer or counsellor in highly charged situations. Since this study included not only interviews but also an opportunity for researchers to observe personal artwork and writing in journals, ethical concerns were discussed with program directors at both academic settings, and a plan was developed to address any situations in which matters of clinical concern might have arisen either through the interviews or in the observation of journal imagery and text. Fortunately, no such matters arose.

English (2001) discussed the ethical concerns arising from evaluation of student journals, and suggested several guidelines for faculty assessing students' journals, guidelines that are also useful in a research context. In addition to principles typically included in ethical standards such as respect, justice and beneficence, she added two guidelines particularly applicable to working with counselling and art therapy students: self-awareness and caring. English asserted that educators, if they expect their students to maintain reflective journals to increase self-awareness, must have the integrity to do so themselves. In addition, she suggested that faculty demonstrate their care and concern for their students by clearly delineating and defining purposes and expectations for student journaling, including clarity regarding what journal entries will be read by faculty. In congruence with these suggestions, the first author continued to maintain her own visual journal throughout the study, explained the study in depth at the time of recruitment and provided each participant a copy of the signed consent form, and left the choice of journal entries to be used in the study up to the participants.

Data analysis

Because one participant missed one of the four scheduled interviews, there were a total of 31 transcribed interviews, instead of 32. Working case-by-case, the first author

read and reread the transcribed interviews several times, and made notes on the pages of the transcripts of words, phrases and thematic content that appeared repeatedly. The interview data were further analyzed for trends that emerged sequentially over the course of the internship. The words, phrases and thematic content that appeared repeatedly were clustered into patterns for each case, and then checked against the interview transcripts for accuracy of fit. Subsequently, a cross-case analysis was conducted in which the eight separate cases were compared for common themes across the four interviews.

Strategies to increase credibility

Data were analyzed to the point of redundancy. All of the participants reviewed the transcribed interviews for accuracy, and four of them reviewed and approved a near-final draft of the results. Further, a peer reviewer carefully examined the transcriptions and concurred with the patterns, themes and sub-themes that had been identified through data analysis. Finally, the results were triangulated with the existing literature.

Results

The data analysis resulted in three overarching patterns: *The Internship Experience Overall*, *The Visual Journal Experience*, and *The Journaling Process*. To illustrate the first pattern, we have written a brief narrative on the participants' internship experience, in order to ground the reader in the challenges inherent in the internship and the way in which the participants experienced the internship over time, other than through visual journaling. Next, to illustrate the second pattern, the results of the analysis of the participants' use of visual journaling are presented, including themes and sub-themes that emerged from the transcribed interviews. Finally, to illustrate the third pattern, we describe participants' approaches to working with the journal, as well as their assessment of their visual journaling experience. Participants' verbatim quotes are used to exemplify the three patterns. Figure 1 summarizes the results.

Pattern 1: the internship experience overall

This overarching pattern relates to the way in which the participants experienced the internship, including their emotional reactions and specific ways in which they responded to the challenges of the internship other than through visual journaling.

All participants had anticipated their internships with a mixture of excitement and anxiety, but by the time of the second interview in mid-October, every participant was struggling with stress from external sources, in addition to stress associated with the internship experience. They were all concerned about time management and the challenge of balancing coursework, home life and internship responsibilities. In addition, at this time, all of the participants expressed significant anxiety associated with their novice status. For example, initially, Beatrice often felt inadequate to meet the needs of her clients. After referring out a case that required more sessions than allowed at her internship site, she said:

It's true that I didn't know what to do... I think that's what they needed, rather than a novice like me, [who was] trying to figure out what to do for each session.



Figure 1. Results: Patterns, themes, and sub-themes.

Most were daunted by their clients' extensive, serious and traumatic histories. Madigan clearly expressed his sense of being overwhelmed:

In intake session, where we have to do paperwork, often at that time I found out so much about their lives and it was kind of dizzying for me, kind of a cloud over my brain. Oh

my gosh, they have 6, 8, 10, 12 different issues ... and so trying to work within this to see what was most important ... There is just so much stuff!

Three participants were worried about being evaluated negatively by their supervisors, and several participants lost sight of or minimized what they had learned in graduate school, deeming their preparation for internship to be inadequate. Some participants felt somewhat guilty or exploitative regarding the impact of their lack of experience vs. the magnitude of their clients' problems. Sallie worried about actually harming her clients:

Instead of learning, I am having to do, and it is a really big shift ... You know, it is not like being a doctor, where you work on cadavers first. [Doctors] have to learn the process before [they] go in and do it. And it's like, with these clients, what if I'm really messing them up?

By the third interview, in early December, all of the interns were less anxious and more confident. Although the stress of balancing home, internship, work and classes was still present for most, all had been able to witness positive client change and were encouraged by their successes. Finally, most of the interns had reevaluated their roles at the internship site; they had relinquished their rescue fantasies and personal agendas for their clients and developed more realistic, appropriate and time-limited approaches to treatment. Madigan made such a shift and described it:

A particular client, she wasn't really moving according to what I thought should happen, and so it was a little frustrating for me. So ... I don't know if I can phrase it quite how she did, but [my supervisor] said, "The clients are kind of like a river; they will flow of their own accord. You don't need to try and push them". I thought, Oh ... It was so simple, but it awakened me. You know, this is about them; it's not about what I want to do.

By the final interview, all the participants were self-assured. Of the eight, three finished or paused their internships by semester's end. Two of these graduated and secured jobs. The third took a leave of absence from her program due to her spouse's work-related move to another city. By January, these three participants were calm and relieved. Each had made significant gains in professional identity development, in confidence built through success and achievement in the internship, and in understanding important aspects of their experience that contributed to their growth.

The five participants who would be continuing at their same internship sites in the spring semester had also made significant gains. They, too, were more confident through having had successes with clients and through valuable supervision experiences. Karen expressed her relief that she had finally mastered a particular challenge at her site:

So actually all of the interns and supervisors were around me [and saw my intervention with the veteran], and when we had our supervision time, they all praised me. "Karen, you are really [doing a] good job. I saw you and I am really impressed by your reaction." ... Finally! So, finally actually a kind of turning point at my internship site.

Sonya, who had struggled most of the semester with a dysfunctional and upsetting relationship with her site supervisor, discussed the gains she had made:

I guess [the internship was] challenging but transformative. It changed a lot from beginning to end ... like my comfort level and especially my relationship with my supervisor.

I got more comfortable as the semester went on and took more responsibility. I had to kind of assert myself more, so I grew in that way.

Although the stresses associated with finding a balance between classes, personal life, and internship still existed, it appeared that all of these participants had developed strategies for succeeding in the internship, which included better time management, gaining support through contact with fellow interns in supervision group, accessing excellent individual supervision, and stress reduction techniques like meditation practice.

Pattern 2: the visual journal experience

Four major themes and related sub-themes pertaining to the use of the visual journals during internship emerged from the data analysis. These are related to both the function of the journals and the foci of journal entries. These themes and sub-themes are described next and are illustrated using verbatim quotes from the interviews.

Theme 1: insight through visual journaling

Insight can be defined as discernment about the underlying meaning of a situation, emotion or behaviour. All eight of the participants experienced this phenomenon of gaining insight. They gained clarity about aspects of their experience through the process of making art, combining it with written text, and reflecting upon their journal entries. The art therapy interns gained particular insights through the imagery in their journal entries. For example, when discussing a journal entry that seemed to capture the life dilemma of her client who was a Vietnam veteran with schizophrenia, Rachel revealed that she had gained insight not only about how the veteran was responding to group art therapy, but how his behaviour in the group reflected his adjustment in life in general:

This is how I think of this veteran experiencing the group, but also experiencing kind of the process of going through life ... it takes me a while to realize there are many ways in which he is so disconnected. [This journal entry] gives me a little bit more understanding ... that his primary need in being in the group is to become connected.

The counselling interns seemed to gain more generalized insights from the visual journaling experience. For example, April found that the visual journaling experience generally helped her come up with new solutions to clinical problems:

I have this process [visual journaling] that I can use when I have some kind of frustration or some kind of problem and I go through this process and at the end I come out with something, a solution, a way of looking at the situation that is helpful and makes it better ...

Sub-theme: surprises. This sub-theme emerged because the imagery that four participants had created revealed meanings in a surprising way. Monet described the surprises inherent in her journaling process:

...It wasn't until I stepped back and looked at [my drawing] that I realized that it was very much, it was a projection, it symbolized the table at the [internship site] and the people. That was a surprise ... I mean I was very surprised by having that discovery

through the art ... I guess overall that one of the joys of the work, from my point of view, is the surprise.

Theme 2: case conceptualization

Case conceptualization refers to the counsellor's or therapist's hypothesis about the causes, precipitating factors and maintaining influences of a client's psychological concerns. It includes consideration of therapeutic relationship dynamics and of clients' presenting problems, histories, ways of coping and overall responses to treatment.

All of the participants used the visual journaling process for case conceptualization. For example, Karen used a mixture of colours to represent her relationship with a client:

... The colour, the red, is me, and then the orange is the client, and they are just binding together ... therapist and client. I tried to make cut pieces like a puzzle, because ... the feelings were kind of complicated or puzzling.

Sub-theme: replicating client artwork. One method that five of the participants used to gain understanding of their clients was to replicate a piece of art that a client had made. For example, Beatrice was puzzled over her hunch that one of her child clients had been sexually molested, and she gained insight about the case by replicating a family drawing the client had made. In a second example, as a way of gaining understanding of the termination process and of her group therapy experience with veterans with schizophrenia, Monet created a collage in her journal that replicated the quilt that her group had created on her last day of internship.

Theme 3: countertransference

During internship the participants had strong and sometimes disturbing reactions to their clients. These were recognized as aspects of countertransference, which is the phenomenon that, 'encompasses the therapist's emotional reactions and conscious or unconscious responses' to the client (Kielo, 1991, p. 14). Participants used the visual journal to address two aspects of countertransference: identification with their clients, and the impact of personal thoughts and feelings upon their internship work.

Sub-theme 1: identification with clients. Five interns recognized their own struggles in the struggles of their clients. For example, Sallie worked with a man whose marital dysfunction triggered memories of traumatic conflict that she had experienced in the past. She was both physically and emotionally shaken by the session. In her visual journal, Sallie depicted the counselling session that had been so upsetting. In discussing her journal entry, she said:

I was able to disconnect the impact of the details on me personally and sort of focus on him and what he was saying ... but afterwards there were a couple of things that really hit me ... and after the session ... I went to see one of the [licensed counsellors] in my office and was physically shaking ... it reminded me of my experience that I had had earlier.

Sub-theme 2: processing personal thoughts and feelings. The interns became variously discouraged, angry, exhausted and frustrated at times during the semester. All

of the participants used the visual journal to sort through the feelings that arose in the internship setting, processing the feelings so they would not interfere with their work with clients. For example, Sonya struggled with the closeness in age of her young son to that of her boy clients, and she worried about allowing her internship work to interfere with her time at home with her son. She was deeply affected by a difficult session in which a 4-year-old client revealed having been sexually abused. She addressed her tumult of feelings in her journal. Discussing the imagery, she said:

I want to make sure I get out what I need to get out [in the journal] and then I can go home and enjoy my time with my son, but not have it affect our relationship as much. I definitely think it makes me value him more, like cherish him ... It makes me think about how tender being that young is, but I don't want to bring any of my [stuff home].

Theme 4: stress reduction

The fourth theme in the overarching pattern of *The Visual Journal Experience* is the use of the journal for stress reduction. As described above, much of the internship was characterized by marked stress. In an effort to reduce it, six participants focused their journal entries on their stress.

As April neared the end of her internship, she was overwhelmed with anxiety about what the future held for her. She used her journaling to implement a specific stress reduction technique (Ganim & Fox, 1999). She created two images that are related to each other, one depicting her stress and a second imagining her stress in a different form. In discussing her journal entry, she said:

It's just a bunch of lines all tangled up, and so I did this to kind of calm myself ... It's like a necklace that's tangled or something else, it can be smoothed out, and you can take [the tangles] out. And ... I realized all these things that can be separated, they have a beginning, they have an end. I can separate them out and realizing I need to just tackle one thing at a time and get it separated out and organized instead of worrying about it all at once ... I can't do that but I can do one thing kind of at a time and tease them out and deal [with them separately]. So that was what came from that, and it worked.

Pattern 3: journaling process

This third broad pattern summarizes participants' responses to working with the visual journal. The first theme in this pattern encompasses the details of participants' approaches to journaling such as locations where journal entries were made and their choice of media. The second theme in this pattern includes participants' conclusions about the visual journaling experience, and consists of four sub-themes.

Theme 1: approaches to process

Only one participant worked on his journal at the internship site; all of the others made their entries at home. Most made imagery first, followed by responsive writing. Some included poetry or quotations from books. The participants used a variety of media including pencils and felt pens, collage materials and oil pastels.

Theme 2: assessment of process

There were four sub-themes under the theme *Assessment of Process*. First, three participants were particularly daunted by thinking visually. Six participants thought that the combination of artmaking and writing was particularly useful. Third, all of the participants had a problem with fitting visual journaling into their already packed schedules. Nevertheless, all enjoyed the experience of visual journaling.

Sub-theme 1: problems with visual thinking. Three of the four counselling interns struggled with visual thinking. It was very difficult for them to imagine their thoughts and feelings as images. However, each developed a method for coming up with imagery for their journal entries. For example, April said:

I wouldn't let myself go straight to the words ... because you know, I knew how to do that, and knew I could do that, so what I would do was tend to make myself sit there and just kind of focus more on the feeling that I was having, just kind of the emotion and close my eyes and just try to collect whatever images came into my head, however that translated itself for me in my head, and then I would go to the paper and put on the paper whatever kinds of images I would see.

Sub-theme 2: combination of writing and artmaking. Three counselling interns and three art therapy interns noted that the combination of image making and writing was particularly useful and effective for them. As Karen said:

I used to do just the visual journal or just the writing journal, but this combination between two things, it is really facilitating, it organized ... my thoughts.

Sub-theme 3: problems finding time for journaling. All of the participants said that difficulty finding time for the journal was not an intrinsically negative aspect of their experience, but rather a product of their extremely demanding schedules. Monet expressed the problem well:

... The negative might be, but that's my own negative, would be that there is a sense of fighting it sometimes, like, I've got to do this, I've got to find time to do this ... It's kind of like [making yourself] exercise. I always was very appreciative, I mean with this [the journal], it's like once I get going, it's good, this feels good, and also it seems just really kind of obvious for this kind of work.

Sub-theme 4: a positive experience overall. The participants reported positive experiences with visual journaling. These included ease of expression, gaining clarity about clients, release of emotions, learning a new way of thinking, and self-exploration. Sonya summarized the positive value of her visual journaling experience:

Every time I made time for it, I found it helpful ... It was like that space, it became like a therapeutic space for me that I knew I had to go to, like a container ... If something really were going on in my mind and I was upset about it or felt the need to process, I [thought], okay, I can do that in my journal.

Discussion of findings

With regard to the participants' experience of the internship overall, the results of the study are congruent with Ronnestad and Skovholt's (2003) descriptions of the first

three phases of counsellor and therapist professional development, as well as with Skovholt and Ronnestad's (2003) descriptions of struggles common to beginning counsellors and therapists. In general, the counselling and art therapy interns responded in similar fashion to internship challenges, with one exception. Art therapy and counselling interns had differential responses to fear and anxiety about clinical work and stress over not knowing what to do in sessions. All of the counselling interns went immediately to the Internet and library to seek resources and information about client problems and counselling strategies to address them. In contrast, none of the art therapy interns took this approach, instead relying on supervision and information exchange among peers to address their concerns. This difference may be due to the art therapy interns' conviction, based on their personal artmaking experiences, that thoughtfully facilitated art processes would suffice as the therapeutic and healing factor in their work with clients.

Through their visual journal work, all of the participants used reflection as a way of making sense of experiences, particularly the tensions, frustrations, and complexities that arose in connection with their internship experience. Such reflection potentiated deeper learning (Kolb, 1984; National Research Council, 1999). This tendency to use reflection to process experience became clear through their descriptions of how they used their journals. For example, participants did not work in their journals at their internship sites; instead they worked at home after they had had an opportunity to take a perspective on their day or week at internship. The entries they made at these times are examples of reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983, 1987), which is the thinking that occurs after an unsettling or disturbing event has happened. Such reflection frequently leads to a changed perspective of the event, and an alternate approach to dealing with similar events in the future (Boyd & Fales, 1983; Schön, 1983, 1987). All of the participants reported that they gained such new perspectives through the visual journaling experience. All used those insights to modify their approaches to working with clients and to mitigate their stress and anxiety. Participants gained insights not only through thinking about their experiences before recording them in their journals, but also through the perspective-altering process of making the journal entries.

It is worth asking how the process of visual journaling facilitated reflection on the complicated, often ambiguous, work of counselling and art therapy. One explanation lies in the complex nature of artmaking. Through making an image, an abstract idea is made concrete. As Hickman (2007) stated, "Visual art can reify the ineffable" (p. 315). Described by some as a *way of knowing* (Allen, 1995; Harter, 2007), that is, a "way of understanding the world that goes beyond language" (Hickman, 2007, p. 315), artmaking results in an object external to ourselves that can then become a focus of reflection (Dahlman, 2007). This occurred when the study participants engaged in visual journaling.

In fact, the literature suggests that focused and mindful artmaking is an inherently reflective endeavour (Serig, 2006; Sullivan, 2006). As Dahlman (2007) said in describing the activity of drawing:

Through this act, the world is being articulated in new shapes. Such a process entails that when the world is accepted in a new articulation, knowledge has grown and the relation to the world has changed. (p. 275)

There is a connection between the physical act of artmaking and the cognitive act of deriving meaning and insights from the imagery (Arnheim, 1980; Marshall,

2007). Therefore, such artmaking can be an intentional vehicle for maximizing learning.

Including responsive writing in the visual journaling process seemed to maximize the potential of artmaking. Writing and artmaking potentiate each other, as imagery reveals inner feeling states, and words can be used to make cognitive sense of the images (Arnheim, 1980; Ganim & Fox, 1999; Hickman, 2007). Art may make tangible and concrete that which cannot be said in words, but, for the participants in this study, responding to imagery with words seems to have served an integrative purpose. The combination is the essence of visual journaling.

Implications

Since in this study both art therapy and counselling interns responded positively to visual journaling during their internships and made many gains through it, an implication for both types of graduate programs is to integrate this practice into both individual and group supervision. However, because of the difficulty some counselling students experienced with visual thinking, longer, more intensive training (beyond the three-hour workshop offered in this study) is suggested for counselling students embarking on their internships. That training would facilitate their capacity for developing visual metaphors and other imagery, and decrease their anxiety about artmaking itself.

In terms of using the visual journal as a supervision tool, the approach taken in this study, in which participants selected two entries to share and discuss with the first author three times in the semester, was both congruent with ethical guidelines (English, 2001) and effective. It gave control to the interns, allowing them to monitor what they shared.

A final implication relates to the evaluation of the visual journal. Because some of the participants worried about being evaluated by their supervisors, the visual journal should not be a graded component of internship requirements.

Limitations

The study's limitations, or constraints on generalizability, are characteristic of small, qualitative studies. The aim of this investigation was not to acquire extensive data from large numbers of anonymous participants in order to prove the efficacy of visual journaling for all counselling and art therapy interns. Instead, this small qualitative inquiry was aimed at discovering a preliminary understanding of specific participants' experience with journaling. However, because the demographics of the participants reflect the larger population of counselling and art therapy interns in the US, the results of this inquiry may be transferable to other educational programs that are similar to those the participants attended.

Suggestions for future research

Because the participants' experiences in their internships closely paralleled the characteristics and phases of professional growth described by Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003), future research might explore the connection between visual journaling and counsellor phases of development. In addition, phases of professional growth have not been documented before in the art therapy literature, and therefore further study of this topic is warranted.

Several additional suggestions for both quantitative and qualitative studies emerge from the current study's findings. In terms of quantitative studies, Kember *et al.* (2000) developed the Reflection Questionnaire (RQ), which measures four levels of thinking patterns: habitual action, understanding, reflection and critical reflection. The RQ would be appropriate for use in a study comparing development of reflective thought in two groups of interns: those who maintain a writing journal, and those who maintain a visual journal.

Continuing qualitative research into art therapy and counselling interns' perceptions of their process of making imagery and combining it with reflective writing may lead to more in-depth understandings of what happens cognitively during the visual journaling process. These research endeavours could expand the scope of the current study to include psychology residents and psychiatry interns as well as marriage and family therapy interns, whose curricula and training experiences would yield unique perspectives on visual journaling. In addition, student teachers and nursing students, about whose written journals so much has been written, could be introduced to visual journaling, and their responses explored.

Conclusion

We conclude with journal entries illustrating some of the study results and with a few final thoughts on our experience with this study. April's drawing (Figure 2) exemplifies the three themes of case conceptualization, countertransference and insight through visual journaling. April developed this image in response to her tensions and concerns about her client's tragic history, the counselling relationship, and the content of the counselling sessions. She visualized her difficult adolescent client as a lion cub and herself as the lioness whose responsibility was to nurture and protect her cub.

In response to her drawing, she wrote in her journal:

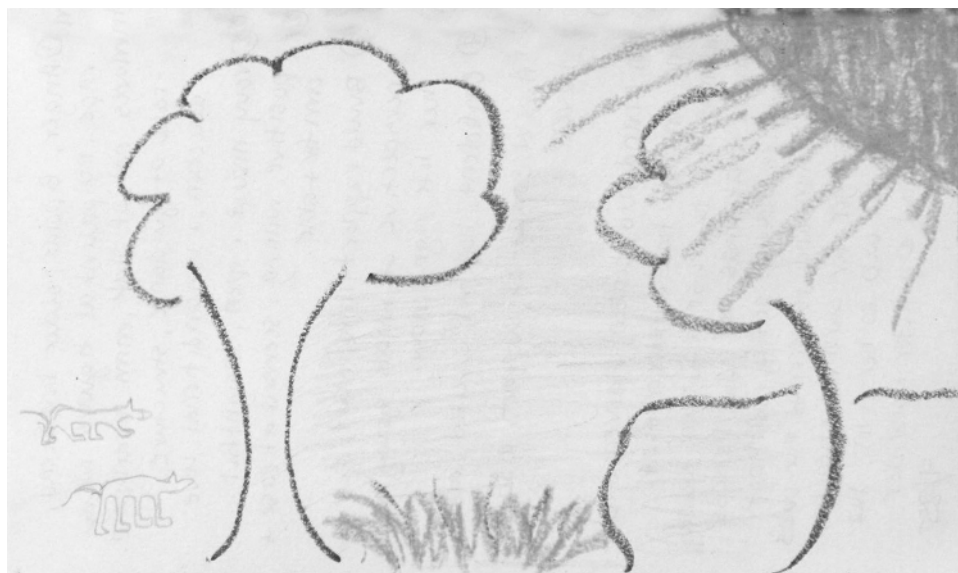


Figure 2. April's drawing, illustrating themes of case conceptualization, countertransference and insight.

[She is] an abandoned, beaten, starved cub who somehow has a hunger that allows her to trust a willing, hearty lioness. The lioness approaches slowly, gently, without intimidation and is open to the cub's thirst and hunger for survival and health, accepting the cub as her own. The cub has found a protector.

In discussing this journal entry, April said:

It felt like I was drawing a haven for her, where there is nourishment ... through the greenery, and the water, and the sun. All these things are in this place ... and that is when I realized ... I just need to lead her. I don't have to provide it for her ... It probably exists within her, but she needs to get to a place where she can get it ... She just needs someone who knows how to lead or guide her to this place and she will thrive.

While drawing the picture and simultaneously reflecting upon it, April was struck with the insight that she merely needed to guide her client to sources of nurturance and support, rather than provide that motherly succor herself. This journal experience proved pivotal to April's internship experience overall, because it was the catalyst leading to redefining her role as intern and embracing a more appropriate and successful approach to counselling at her site.

Karen's mixed media collage (Figure 3) illustrates the fourth theme that emerged about the visual journaling experience: stress reduction. The careful, planned application of media was soothing for her as she represented her efforts to contain, organize and balance her many responsibilities at school, home and internship.

Witnessing the participants' intense involvement in visual journaling alerted us to the great potential of this approach in counselling and art therapy education and



Figure 3. Karen's mixed media collage, illustrating theme of stress reduction.

supervision. In this study, the art therapy interns were familiar with personal artmaking and knew from their experience with clients that the *process* of making art was more important than the *product*. However, the counselling students had initial difficulty with visual thinking, and some awkwardness about their efforts at integrating artwork into their journals. Once they realized that making imagery – rather than the art product itself – was of immense value to them, they were able to trust in the process and invest themselves completely in visual journaling.

For both groups of participants, the combination of artmaking and responsive writing was a particularly effective aspect of their experience. Even for the art therapy interns, this was something new; they had drawn in sketchbooks for years, but the combination of artmaking and writing seemed to structure and contain their internship experiences. The focus on reflection made the visual journal a useful tool for integrating the study participants' internship experiences because they were able to express their emotional reactions through the imagery and to organize their thoughts about their experience through the responsive writing.

The visual journals became a record of the participants' internship experience, and during the interviews they facilitated discussion of important concerns. Rather than choosing just two entries, participants were excited about sharing many entries, and they often read their written words out loud. The imagery depicted emotional reactions to internship, complex and confusing situations, and imagined solutions to problems, and was an effective catalyst for in-depth discussion. Occasionally during these discussions, participants gained new insights merely by having a fresh look at their journal entries. Indeed, the journals themselves became catalysts for reflection.

Psychological interpretation of the words and imagery in the journals was beyond the scope of this study, and it is our view that such interpretation would also be beyond the purview of the clinical supervisor. However, rich journal content, no doubt indicative of the participants' inner lives, would be worthy of further exploration by the interns themselves; the availability of the visual journal for continuous processing, reflection, and knowledge construction is one of its greatest virtues.

Notes on contributors

Sarah Deaver, Associate Professor, School of Health Professions and Department of Psychiatry, Eastern Virginia Medical School, is an art therapy educator, researcher and clinician. Her professional interests include art therapy educational theory, constructivist educational practice, and art therapy assessment research. Clinically, she specializes in art therapy with adolescent girls.

Garrett J. McAuliffe is University Professor of Counseling at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, where he specializes in the teaching of counseling, culture, career counseling, adult development and constructivist thinking. He received his doctorate from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and has been a community college counselor.

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