

Art Based Inquiry: Exploring Metaphors and Felt Sensations
Through the Process of SoulCollage

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Abstract

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This arts based research paper explores the intersection of SoulCollage, metaphors, and felt sensations within an art therapy context. Art therapy is a “set of interpersonal and art-based skills used to help people come to terms with psychological, developmental, social, and behavioral stressors that impede their health and wellbeing” (Kapitan, 2014, p. 30). A primary aim of art therapy is image creation followed by reflective critique as a means to enhance insight and promote psychological wellbeing. SoulCollage is an artistic modality developed by Seena Frost (2001, 2010a); in brief, SoulCollage processes utilize the transformative power of collaging as a method for identifying and engaging aspects of one’s psyche.

This research examines the relationship between the images, felt sensations within the body, and the generation of metaphors within an art therapy context. This arts based research is founded on the creation of one hundred SoulCollage cards and written reflections. The data creation is the result of a systematic process of making SoulCollage cards, followed by identifying and documenting felt sensations within the body. The process of imaginal dialogue, free prose, and poetry served as a tool to foster the creation of verbal metaphors. SoulCollage fosters the creation of verbal metaphors through utilizing the Cognitive and Symbolic components of the Expressive Therapies Continuum. This paper focuses on contextualizing the SoulCollage process through the lens of the Expressive Therapies Continuum and arts-based research methodologies. In addition, it provides the author’s exploration of metaphor and felt sensations within the body and their application in art therapy.

Keywords: arts based research, collage, Expressive Therapies Continuum, felt sensations, metaphor, SoulCollage

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Art teaches, informs. It uncovers the soul. No doubt it also has the power to sort the chaos of the unconscious into an orderly cosmos. It leads from disorder, suffering and unbalance to stability, harmony and joy.

Ozias Leduc, 1943

Deep thanks to my advisor Maria Riccardi, I greatly appreciate your ongoing enthusiasm, encouragement and support. Special thanks to my love, family, and friends who have joined me on this and many an adventure. Thank you to my classmates and teachers both past and present, for accompanying me during this academic and heartfelt process of becoming an art therapist.

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Literature Review	2
Creating SoulCollage Cards	2
Collage and Art Therapy	3
Symbols	7
Metaphors and Art Therapy	8
Emotions	10
Felt Sensations	11
Art Therapy and the Felt Sense	12
Chapter Two: Arts-Based Research Methodology	13
Introduction to Arts-Based Methodologies	13
Why Arts-Based Research?	14
Data Creation	15
Ethical Considerations	17
Validity and Reliability	17
Chapter Three: Findings	19
Discussion	23
Limitations	30
Recommendations	31
Conclusion	32
Bibliography	34
Appendix A	40
Appendix B	41

List of Figures

- Figure 1 Amassing Chaotic Potential, collage, 5 in. x 8 in.
- Figure 2 The Messy Birth of Fragmented Form, collage, 5 in. x 8 in
- Figure 3 Speckled Feelings Filled Space and Time, collage, 5 in. x 8 in
- Figure 4 Word Wrapped Sensation of Thought and Form, collage, 5 in. x 8 in
- Figure 5 Visual Dialogue, collage, 5 in. x 8 in.

Introduction

Utilizing an arts based approach this research project examines the use of SoulCollage to facilitate the development of visual and verbal metaphors in art therapy. Art therapy is a “set of interpersonal and art-based skills used to help people come to terms with psychological, developmental, social, and behavioral stressors that impede their health and wellbeing” (Kapitan, 2014, p. 30). A primary therapeutic aim of art therapists is to activate creative and reflective processes (Kapitan, 2014). SoulCollage is an intuitive process of creating and reflecting on visual imagery actualized through the assemblage of 5 in. by 8 in. collage cards. Seena Frost developed this imaginative modality in the late 1980’s (Frost, 2010a). The therapeutic aspects of SoulCollage has gained interest from the art therapy community (Frost, 2010b). Within an art therapy context the word soul can be traced to the Greek word *therapeutics* which means “to attend to” (Moon, 2007, p. 93). According to Moon “the source meaning of psyche is soul” (2007, p. 93), therefore art therapy can be described as “attending to the soul through imagery” (2007, p. 93). Frost explains that SoulCollage is a multistep process for creating personal visual imagery, followed by reflective practice of dialoguing with the image as a means of ascertaining insight (2001). This research explores how the systematic process of creating and reflecting on metaphors developed through the SoulCollage process and corresponding written reflection pages facilitates the experience of felt sensations.

Image creation is the focal point of art therapy. Within the context of therapeutic relationships art therapy utilizes images in service of client needs. Broadly speaking therapeutic processes utilize images as a tool to develop insight, encourage reflection, foster cathartic release, and develop understanding between the client and the art therapist. Through image creation visual metaphors give rise to felt sensations in the body, which may further lead to the creation of verbal metaphors. Engaging clients in identifying both metaphorical and physiological processes serves as an additional avenue for ascertaining insight and deepening the relationship between clients, images, and therapeutic goals. The three questions comprising my research process are: how does SoulCollage facilitate the emergence of metaphor in art therapy? How does the creation of metaphors connect to the body? What insight is gained through the awareness of felt sensations in the body, and how does it contribute to the field of art therapy?

In this paper I review the SoulCollage method and its therapeutic application in art therapy, alongside the use of metaphor in psychotherapy and art therapy contexts. The ways in

which metaphors in art therapy contribute to the therapeutic process and are intimately connected to felt sensations within the body are also identified. The research methodology section will examine in detail the arts based steps employed to conduct this research investigation.

Chapter One: Literature Review

SoulCollage is an artistic modality developed by Seena Frost (2001), she describes SoulCollage as a “model for psychological and spiritual work” (p. xi), which invokes intuitive wisdom and innate creativity (Frost, 2010b). Broadly speaking the SoulCollage process can be conceptualized in two parts; first the collaging of personally meaningful and evocative images, followed by a Gestalt informed practice of dialoguing with the imaginal (Frost, 2010a). During the active reflection the creator of the card essentially speaks from the perspective of the imaginal, ascertaining intuitive wisdom and advice (Frost, 2001, 2010a). Frost’s approach is informed by her diverse background in marriage and family therapy, archetypal psychology, divinity studies, and private practice in psychotherapy (Frost, 2001). Frost attributes the roots of her artistic modality to her academic interest in myth and archetypal psychology, guided by Dr. Jean Houston in the late 1980’s (Frost, 2010a). In addition to her studies, Frost (2010a) reveals that the SoulCollage process evolved through exploration with therapy groups in her psychotherapy private practice.

Creating SoulCollage Cards

In *SoulCollage an Intuitive Collage Process for Individuals and Groups* (2001) and *SoulCollage Evolving an Intuitive Collage Process for Self-Discovery & Community* (2010a), Frost outlines a process of creating SoulCollage cards from concept to construction, to dialoguing with the imaginal. To begin, SoulCollage utilizes the artistic technique of collage. The following is the definition that Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) give for collage: “taken from the French verb, coller (to stick), is the process of using fragments of found images or materials and gluing them to a flat surface to portray phenomena” (p. 2). Buchalter (2009) describes collages as “visual artworks that are created by selecting magazine images, textured papers, or ephemera; cutting or altering these elements; and arranging and attaching them to a support such as paper or cardboard” (p. 107). SoulCollage cards can be assembled from an assortment of recycled magazine images, personal photography, picture books, postcards and Internet images (Frost, 2001). Using this method the aim of each collage card is to create meaningful images depicting a single aspect of one’s personality, which represents both positive

and negative aspects of the psyche (Frost, 2010a). Depicted on each SoulCollage card the images may reveal one's psychic guides, allies or challengers (Frost, 2010a).

In general the unique characters on the card are referred to as *neters*. The term *neter* can be a substitute for the word “*energy, presence, guide, ally, or challenger*” (Frost, 2010a, p. 5). *Neters* are never static or fixed identities; like most images, they often have more than one meaning (Frost, 2010a). Each SoulCollage deck organizes *neter* cards into four thematic suits, which represent aspects of human existence: psychological, archetypal, communal, and energetic. In brief, the Committee Suit represents psychological aspects of the individual, revealing representations of one's identity, roles, and personality. The Community Suit reflects human interconnectedness and social relationships; the cards depict individuals of influence such as family, friends, spiritual leaders, and personal heroes. Based on the eastern philosophy of the chakras, the Companions Suit identifies animal totems as representations of energetic centers within the body. Finally, the Council Suit explores archetypal expressions of individual experience. The act of reading one's SoulCollage card follows the act of creation; the process of reading SoulCollage cards is further outlined in the research methodology section.

Collage and Art Therapy

In art therapy, collages have been utilized as a tool for assessments (Hinz, 2009; Landgarten, 1993), clinical treatment (Hinz, 2009; Landgarten, 1993; Wolfer, 2014), and research purposes (Chilton & Scotti, 2014; Raffaelli & Hartzell, 2016; Riccardi, 2013). Art therapy interventions utilizing collage straddle directive (Buchalter, 2009; Hinz, 2009; Landgarten, 1993; Stallings, 2010) and nondirective approaches and can be completed in both individual and group therapy processes. Collage is inherently a resistive media, which lends itself to structured approach in art making. “Linesch (1988) wrote that structured materials such as collage have inherent limitations that prevent regression or overstimulation” (as cited in Raffaelli & Hartzell, 2016, p. 22). Collages are generally considered an accessible and nonthreatening artistic medium in art therapy (Buchalter, 2009; Hinz, 2009; Margolin, 2014; Wolf, 2014). Collages provide an increased reflective distance, which encourages verbalization and communication (Raffaelli & Hartzell, 2016). “Collages are non-threatening ways of representing thoughts, concerns, attitudes and feelings” (Buchalter, 2009, p. 107). Landgarten (1993) asserts collage techniques are beneficial in art therapy because “clients can identify with the images and voice their projection onto their self-selected pictures” (p. 1). The collage

process encourages projection, symbolization, meaning making, and discussion between client and therapist.

According to the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) a theoretical framework for conceptualizing the materiality of artistic mediums, collage process are categorized as cognitive activity due to the procedural nature of selecting, organizing, and explaining images (Hinz, 2009). Kagin and Lusebrink (1978) explain that the Cognitive component of the ETC “depends upon a capacity for abstract thinking and often requires the use of language in order to express complex thoughts, ideas, and values” (as cited in Hinz, 2009, p. 124). Creating and reflecting on SoulCollage cards is a cognitive process through which suggested healing properties include “the ability to generalize from one concrete experience to other situations” (Hinz, 2009, p. 125). Cognitive process fostered by collage materials appears to implicate the prefrontal cortex (PFC), particularly the dorsolateral PFC, and possibly the anterior cingulate cortex (Lusebrink, 2010), which can help understand spatial relationships, plan and execute multi-step tasks, develop cause-and-effect thinking and strengthen problem-solving skills.

Collage interventions are broadly studied in art therapy research (Chilton & Scotti, 2014; Raffaelli & Hartzell, 2016; Riccardi, 2013). Riccardi’s (2013) research explores the efficacy of collage as an intervention to reduce anxiety within a cognitive behavioral framework. The results of this research indicated that collage interventions promoted improved problem-solving abilities, cause-and-effect thinking, and encouraged clients to reflect on past actions and events as well as to plan for the future (Riccardi, 2013, p. 22). Art therapy intervention research by Raffaelli and Hartzell (2016) compared the materiality of collage and drawing when used in first time art therapy sessions. The results indicated that collage material helped to focus art making, promote exploration, and foster insight; the drawbacks included a need for systematic organization of the materials, working with preselected imagery, and the inherent nature of commitment to the process necessitated by the gluing and pasting of images.

Wolfer (2014) and Landgarten (1993) caution that when working with collage it is essential to include a wide variety of imagery reflecting diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition, Wolfer wisely cautions to be cognizant that magazine images depict dominant cultural values. From a neuroscience perspective, Hass-Cohen and Loya (2008) highlight the importance of understanding how various images impact visual systems pathways:

...collage images with or without movement can enhance clients' feelings of mastery and safety while mediating stress responses aroused by novel stimuli. Conversely, utilizing photographs of images of familiar faces may evoke stronger emotional reactions than would utilizing other images. (p. 92)

Shifting from the making of imagery to the meaning of imagery, visual and verbal metaphors serve as tools for developing insight and understanding within SoulCollage, art therapy and psychotherapy contexts. The following discussion will explore the links between the use of body and metaphor in cognitive linguistic, psychotherapy and art therapy settings.

Metaphors are understood as a figure of speech, which make an implicit comparison between two things. "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnston, 1980, p. 5). Examining metaphors within the context of cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnsons landmark text *Metaphors We Live by* (1980) deconstructs the use of metaphorical expressions in everyday life. They propose that the "human conceptual system is [fundamentally] metaphorically structured and defined..." (Yu, 2013, p. 1469). Metaphors are a "cognitive tool for people to conceptualize the objective world" (Yu, 2013, p. 1467). Lakoff and Johnsons (1980) influential ideas, known as Contemporary Theory of Metaphor (CMT) utilize linguistic evidence to suggest that "metaphors are primarily cognitive, and only secondarily linguistic" (Finlay, 2015; Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; as cited in Tay, 2013, p. 1). Recapitulating Lakoff and Johnson's landmark contribution, Finlay (2015) summates that "metaphors are pervasive in everyday language, thought, and action –[and are] often out of one's awareness" (p. 339). CMT suggests the emergence of metaphor can be both conscious and unconscious processes. Although an in-depth analysis of CMT is beyond the scope of this paper, recognition of the impact of CMT on human cognition is essential to note when addressing the broad scope of metaphorical processes in therapy.

Returning to the application of metaphors within therapeutic contexts, Tay (2013) suggests the study of metaphorical concepts linking linguistics and psychotherapy is presently limited. However, Skarderud (2007) states that academic interest in the study of metaphors in psychotherapy is gaining momentum. Within the psychotherapy context, metaphors are a verbal mechanism used to communicate and comprehend experience between client and therapist (Stott, Mansell, Salkovskis, Lavender & Cartwright-Hatton, 2010). Rizzuto (2001) states that language is both a mental and physical process of exchange between two people establishing "bodily,

emotional, and cognitive contact...” (p. 537). Finlay (2015) proposes the benefits of using metaphors in practice encourage embodied intersubjective experience between therapist and client. According to Finlay body metaphors engage the senses and provide additional means of accessing a client’s lived experience. In-session metaphors can be used to clarify experience, represent images, elaborate understanding, or expand narratives (Finlay, 2015). Notably, the use of metaphors in therapy can offer increased emotional distancing functioning (Rieder, 1972).

The study of metaphors linking mind and the human body in psychotherapy is highly explored (Faranda, 2014; Finlay, 2015; Rizzuto, 2001; Skarderud, 2007). “The mind is always and inevitably based on bodily perception and sensorimotor experience” (Skarderud, 2007, p. 244). Rizzuto (2001) points out that the mind inhabits both external and internal worlds, “the world and self we know are constructed by the mediation of our bodies” (p. 535). Rizzuto (2001) suggests language [which gives voice to metaphor] is an expression of our *bodily mind*. Describing the origins of metaphors in the body Rizzuto (2001) states the “mind is a bodily mind, and language is a fully embodied function of the mind....linguistic metaphors capture and express otherwise inexpressible psychic experiences” (p. 535). Teasdale (1993) proposes that a “metaphor is tied to implicational, holistic meaning based on information from sensory and proprioceptive systems of the body” (as cited in Stott et al., 2010, p. 18). Metaphors are informed by our bodily perceptions and mental processes, which ascribe meaning to experience. Faranda (2014) highlights metaphorical thinking as a creative approximation which gathers “something we know, often something we have felt in our bodies, and applying it to something distant, unfamiliar, or abstract” (p. 67). According to the literature, metaphors are informed by our felt experience; bodily experiences inform a multitude of sophisticated expressions, which are communicated through metaphorical expressions (Rasmussen, 2002).

Edging closer to the visual, both images and symbols are notable components of metaphors. Rycroft (1979) suggests metaphors are dependent on our personal network of stored images, which connect to sensations within the body. In addition, Faranda (2015) proposes that bodily impressions and an on-going flow of images inherently inform the creation of metaphors. According to Faranda (2015) images are “not ‘mental pictures’ seen in the ‘head’ but rather, *image-based felt experiences found in the body/mind space*” (p. 66). Faranda (2015) and Rycroft (1979) propose the relationship between images, the body, and metaphors are intimately

intertwined. Additionally, Finlay (2015) emphasizes the interrelated symbolic components of metaphors; metaphors contain visually loaded images, which impart symbolic meaning.

Symbols

Images, like words, contribute to symbolic formation. Jung (1964) defines a symbol as “a term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown or hidden from us” (p. 20). Jung furthers that “an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning” (p. 20). According to Jung, a symbolic image is not entirely archetypal or completely personal but rather encompasses both aspects of the psyche (Edwards, 2001). Jacobi (1959) furthers that true symbols are both ambiguous and bipolar representations of psychic factors, which are not easily comprehended. Linking symbols and metaphors, Kagin and Lusebrink (1978) state that “regressive symbols may carry metaphors which are more primitive or archaic, while progressive symbols may be more abstract” (p. 176). From a psychoanalytic perspective “symbols contain both manifest (overt) and latent (hidden) content that allows material too threatening for the ego to grasp to be disguised and utilized” (Hinz, 2009, p. 146; Levick, 1983; Lusebrink, 1990).

Symbols actively represent, transcend, and transform meaning (Hinz, 2009); symbols embody an inherent sense of movement, described as energy charge, drive energy, or dynamic energy (Edinger, 1973; Jung, 1964; Hinz, 2009). Lusebrink (1990) shares “the emergence of a symbol gives form and progressive direction to a part of the energy present in the unconscious” (p. 52). Furth (2002) adds that symbols have transformative power to “unlock unconscious psychic energy” (p. 10) which promote healing processes to occur. According to Lusebrink (1990) symbols are experienced by the active interaction of imaginal/structural, affective, sensory and kinesthetic components, the interaction of these components leads to the eventual resolution of the symbol. The “resolution of a symbol reveals its meaning” (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978, p. 177). Langer (1967) proposes that the human brain utilizes information obtained from sensations and perceptions to contribute to symbol formation. Lusebrink (1990) states we encounter the symbolic through the “primary unity of the senses” (p. 52), which may give rise to the process of responding to “a stimulus of one sensory modality with sensations belonging to another sense modality” (Kreitler & Kreitler, 1972, p. 70); suggesting that we can both receive and respond to symbolic images through the activation of sensations within the body.

Additionally, Kagin and Lusebrink (1978) describe symbols as “emotionally charged internal structures” (p. 176), which require externalization before they can be internally resolved. From a neuroscience perspective, Bridgham and Hass-Cohen (2008) state that the “symbolic imagery tends to be rich in right hemispheric poetry, often representing the preferred or implicit self, and can be the entrance to deep emotional content” (Bridgham & Hass Cohen, 2008, p. 273; Kane, 2004). Further connecting symbolism to the body research indicates that “art therapy can provide symbolic cues about immune system function” (Birdgham & Hass-Cohen, 2008, p. 301; Frencik, Novak, & Rovensky, 1998).

Within the field of art therapy, the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) helps conceptualize clinical work by categorizing interactions between the client, the proposed media, the image produced and the art therapy process (Hinz, 2009). The ETC allows the therapist to structure the evaluation process and personalize the therapeutic objectives while also guiding the decisions to be made during treatment (Hinz, 2013). The Cognitive/Symbolic level, involves problem solving or a metaphorical and symbolic representation. SoulCollage fosters cognitive functioning, which implies complex intellectual processes such as planning, categorizing and logical thinking, as well as symbolic functioning which uses intuitive concept formation to facilitate personal, cultural or spiritual dimensions (Hinz, 2009).

Metaphors and Art Therapy

Art therapy utilizes the creation of verbal and visual metaphors to facilitate therapeutic processes. Moon proposed that regardless of orientation, all art therapists engage with metaphoric imagery to foster and deepen communication (2007). Moon asserts that “art psychotherapists by nature are metaphoreticians” (1990, p. 11) whose role is to “see, listen, and interact with the symbolic graphic language and actions of our patients” (1990, p. 11). According to Moon, the role of therapist is to viscerally engage with the metaphorical through the senses (2007). In contrast, Riley and Malchiodi (2003) describe metaphors as “analogies through which the therapist and client can communicate in powerful, direct but nonthreatening ways” (p. 296). As a whole, art therapists acknowledge the evolution of the client’s metaphorical process as a fundamental aspect of art therapy (Mayo, 1996; Moon, 2007; Riley & Malchiodi, 2003). Broadly speaking, within the context of art therapy metaphors have been utilized as tools to facilitate interventions, engage clients in communication, as well as serve as

an art based research tool for data creation (Hanes, 1995; Kapitan, 2010; Moon, 2007; Riley & Malchiodi, 2003).

In art therapy, metaphors are an avenue to enhance dialogue between client, therapist, and the image (Moon, 2007). Dialoguing with the image is a means to facilitate insight (Allen, 1995; McNiff, 1992). According to Watkins (1981) trusting images is an important aspect of dialogue. Additionally, Allen (1995) states that “it is important to remember that the image functions in the realm of metaphor, speaking powerfully yet symbolically” (p. 59), she cautions against prescribing singular meaning to a symbolic form suggesting that images shift in meaning and message; which should not be taken literally. In a similar vein, Moon (2007) states that “artistic metaphors invite us to look at, listen to, and respond to them, and wonder about their meanings. Rather than assigning fixed interpretations...” (p. 65). The process of imaginal dialogue creates space for questioning, interaction, and intuitive listening, which is fostered through engagement with the metaphorical images.

According to the ETC the physicality of art materials engages the senses, which can illicit memory of past experiences (Hinz, 2009). Kagin and Lusebrink (1978) suggest that many internal sensations may be beyond the scope of conscious awareness; referencing Jung, they state that particular experiences “may only be sensed, but not known; in this case the meaning may be represented only by a metaphor or parable, either imaginal or verbal” (p. 176). They further that “negative or threatening material may be excluded from awareness, possibly emerging as less threatening metaphor through displacement” (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978, p. 176). According to neuroscience the bases of “metaphors [like] symbolism, vividness, clarity of colour and line quality reveal the affective language of the limbic system expressing inner emotional experiences, memories and thoughts....while personal in nature, [they] are also rooted in culture and experience” (Bridgham & Hass-Cohen, 2008, p. 270). The research suggests that metaphors encompass conscious personal history, unconscious felt experience, and the experience of lived cultural influences.

Moon (2007) suggests that the relationship between metaphors and the human body is linked through the senses; according to Moon, the aim of the therapeutic arts and art therapy interventions is to engage the senses. Moon suggests that metaphors are the result of artist, media, and the environment intersecting, thus creating a therapeutic atmosphere, which matches

the physicality of lived experience. Acknowledging the embodied physicality of trauma Moon states that:

The painful events that lead one to seek art therapy are visual, auditory, olfactory, and sensual. It would be a fallacy to imagine that such painful experiences could be worked through, resolved, or healed through talking alone. The success of therapeutic endeavours often hinges upon their capacity to involve the senses (p. 70)

The intersection of clients' lived experience and their physical body in relationship to art materials evokes conscious and unconscious associations, which give rise to metaphors.

Emotions

The scientific study of emotions is a highly contested issue (Furtak, 2010). Despite advances in modern imaging techniques, relatively little is known regarding the biological basis of emotions or “how affect experience is created in the brain” (Panksepp, 2006, p. 17; Wassmann, 2009). Emotions have been described as “episodic, relatively short-term, biologically based patterns of perception, experience, physiology, action, and communication, which occur in response to specific physical and social challenges and opportunities” (Keltner & Gross, 1999, p. 468). Commonly accepted core emotions include: “happiness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust, and sadness” (Tamietto et al., 2007, p. 836). Emotions serve as signals linking inner experience with corresponding events in our environment (Hinz, 2009). However others propose emotions have no useful function (Keltner & Gross, 1999). Making the distinction between feelings and emotions, Damasio (1999) defined a feeling as a “private, mental experience of an emotion” (p. 42) and an emotion as a collection of responses which can be publicly observed. Further clarifying definitions, Panksepp (2006) states “emotional feelings are only one of several distinct types of affect” (p. 17). Distinct affective states include: sensory affects, homeostatic arousal and moods, and interceptive affects; most of which are assumed to be purely instinctual. However, Panksepp notes humans are not purely instinctual creatures; the study of how “affective consciousness is integrated with various forms of cognitive consciousness within the human mind remains largely unexplored territory in neuroscience” (p. 18).

Returning to the investigation of affect, Ekman (2008) proposes defining characteristics of emotion. The first characteristic, that the author proposes, is that most emotions include an element of a signal, such as a facial expression. Secondly, emotions and their appraisals can

occur almost automatically. Ekman refers to the third characteristic as the most controversial, citing that most humans propose a general lack of awareness regarding emotions. Finlay, the author, states that although humans are not always aware of sensations, sensations are a defining characteristic of emotion. “Many emotion[s] have a similar physiological substrate: [such as] heart rate and blood pressure increase, muscles tense, and perspiration...” (Hinz, 2009, p. 110).

Nummenmaa, Glerean, Hari, and Hietanen (2013) state that numerous studies have indicated that emotions produce physiological changes in the body necessary to meet environmental challenges through the “activation of the cardiovascular, skeletomuscular, neuroendocrine, and autonomic systems” (Nummenmaa et al., 2013, p. 646). The authors further suggest that linguistic expression linking emotions and bodily states are commonly communicated through verbal metaphors such as having “cold feet”. This study mapped “bodily sensations associated with different emotions using a unique topographical self-report method” (p. 646). The authors suggested that “emotional feelings are associated with discrete, yet partially overlapping maps of bodily sensations, which could be at the core of the emotional experience” (Nummenmaa et al., 2013, p. 650). In addressing the cultural tendency to describe emotions with body-related expressions and metaphors, Nummenmaa et al. reported that expressions and metaphorical language do not actually describe “physiological changes associated with emotional response” (2013, p. 649) but rather “reflect a purely conceptual association between semantic knowledge of language based stereotypes associating emotions with bodily sensations. When activated, the conceptual link...could thus guide the individual in constructing a mental representation for the associated bodily sensations” (Nummenmaa et al., 2013, p. 649). The research of Nummenmaa et al. suggests emotions have common physiological patterns, which are somatically experienced throughout the body, although all verbal metaphorical expressions may not accurately capture the exact physiological changes. In their study of emotions Nummenmaa et al. reveal a link between the expressions of emotions corresponding to felt sensations within the body.

Felt Sensations

Felt sense is an immediate physical experience which draws a client into the present moment (Hanh, 1999). Ekman (2008) advocates for developing “sensitivity to the sensations in your body” (p. 41) as a tool for encouraging self-awareness; thus allowing for increased awareness of one's actions and responses. The recognition of and meditation on one's felt

experience is intimately linked with mindfulness practice; mindfulness practices allow for “sensory (and emotional) input to come and go without thought or judgement attached to it” (Hinz, 2009, p. 66). Salom (2013) states that “the experience of self can be developed through present moment awareness, conscious witnessing, direct experience of reality, attention to affective states... (p. 142), suggesting that awareness of one’s felt sense promotes enhanced self-awareness. The term *felt sense* was coined by Gendlin (1981), who stated: “a felt sense is not a mental experience but a physical one. *Physical*. A bodily awareness of a situation or person or event...” (p. 31). “A felt sense doesn’t come to you in the form of thoughts or words or other separate units but as a...bodily feeling” (Gendlin, 1981, p. 32). Levine (1997) states the “felt sense is a difficult concept to define with words, as language is a linear process and the felt sense is a nonlinear experience” (p. 76). Lindhard (2015) shares that the process of “focusing on inner sensations and describing them but not naming the emotion that they represent, has also been found to be very therapeutic” (p. 4). Ekman (2008) proposes that individuals can utilize sensations in the body as a tool to develop emotional awareness. Levine (1997) states that use of felt sensation is a key component of trauma recovery; trauma fosters a disconnection within the body, which creates a loss of skin sensation, numbness and disconnect. Banks states that “human beings live in sensory worlds, as well as cognitive ones” (2008, p. 6). A sense of physical competence is the basis for self-structuring one’s emotional responses & learning from experience. Interventions that utilize the body can help to solidify a connection between sensorimotor experiences, perceptions, feelings, thoughts, & inferred meaning (Van der Kolk, (1987).

Art Therapy and the Felt Sense

In art therapy a range of felt sensations are experienced through the physicality of art materials (Hinz, 2009). Art materials offer stimulating experiences which engage the tactile, visual, olfactory, and auditory senses and may elicit reactions, memories and emotions (Salom, 2013). According to Hinz (2009), engaging in tactile stimulation can illustrate “how focusing on an external sensation can lead to the realization of an internal state or emotion” (p. 67). According to the ETC, the Sensory component fosters awareness of internal and external sensations, which are evoked through the manipulation of art materials (Lusebrink, 1990). Kagin and Lusebrink share that “the naming of the experience attaches a label to the object of the affect associated with the experience. The labels allow for the abstraction and formation of schemata

and concepts, that are useful in dealing with complex representations” (1978, p. 176), thus externalizing inner experiences. In art therapy, metaphors serve as mechanisms, which give shape to one’s inner experience through the creation of tangible art products.

Chapter Two: Arts-Based Research Methodology

Arts based research (ABR) will inform the framework of this qualitative research project. This project investigates the use of SoulCollage cards to facilitate visual metaphors, felt sensations, and the creation of verbal metaphors. The three questions comprising my research process are: how does SoulCollage facilitate the emergence of metaphor in art therapy? How does the creation of visual metaphors connect to sensations felt in the body? What insight is gained through the awareness of felt sensations, and how does it contribute to the field of art therapy? Based on a cyclical loop of creating and reflecting on SoulCollage cards, this ABR project mirrors the therapeutic process of creation and reflective critique that is fundamental to the practice of art therapy.

Introduction to Arts-Based Methodologies

ABR is a form of qualitative research. Kapitan (2010) defines the qualitative research paradigm as being “characterized by exploratory or interpretive analysis of observed themes and reflections, and inductive reasoning to arrive at in-depth understanding” (p. 276). Leading arts-based researcher McNiff (2008) describes ABR as “the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience...” (p. 29). ABR is described as an emergent methodological genre, which is continually influenced by artists, researchers, and art educators who employ arts-based methods to inform their work (Leavy, 2015). Art is the centre of ABR practice as “epistemologically, ABR assumes the arts can [both] create and convey meaning” (Leavy, 2015, p. 20).

Kapitan (2010) furthers that “art is not solely a descriptive or representational form but also is a valued means for constructing new knowledge” (p. 162). ABR places the value of the artistic process and expression at the centre of meaning making, understanding, and knowledge transmission. ABR structures the process of artistic creation with rigorous analysis and observation of themes to develop a deeper awareness about life. Philosophical truths form the foundation of ABR; Leavy (2015), citing Gerber et al.’s (2012) ABR philosophy, acknowledges

the ability of art to convey truths and bring about awareness in self and others. In addition, ABR philosophy values ways of knowing based in the “sensory, kinesthetic, and imaginary” (Leavy, 2015, p. 20). These beliefs acknowledge the pluralistic ways art can facilitate an experience of meaning making within the researcher, audience member and research participant. Moving from theory to form in ABR practice requires both tools and frameworks.

According to Leavy (2015) “ABR practices are a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generating, analysis, interpretation and representation” (p. 4). Hervey (2000) proposes a general framework of ABR, maintains “a focus on art making as the primary method of inquiry for data gathering, data analysis, and presentation of findings” (Kapitan, 2010 p. 167). The three elements of the framework utilized in the creation of this ABR project include: initial-awareness, decontextualization and intentional re-creation, and finally, refinement and transformation (Hervey, 2000). Reflecting on this framework, Kapitan (2010) asserts that we can conceive of art making as a structured approach to data gathering and data analysis. Kapitan shares that arts based methods require active artistic engagement, which McNiff (2013) identifies as the empirical “doing” of research. According to Kapitan (2010), the “hallmarks of the creative process –immersion, intense preoccupation, and openness to experience without preconception...are all activated in data gathering” (p. 167). ABR is founded on artistic creation, in-depth reflection, reflexivity and meaning making based in the process of art making. “Art-based inquiry adds to the knowledge base of art therapy as new ideas are presented to help art therapists see in new ways” (Kapitan, 2010, p. 179). In ABR the process of meaning making is varied. ABR does not favour one singular methodological approach, but rather encourages adaptive and flexible artistic structures to foster knowledge creation. According to McNiff (2013), the challenge of ABR is that “it does not advocate set methods of enquiry” (p. 110), therefore, it is essential that the researcher outline the methods of the research process.

Why Arts-Based Research

The use of an ABR approach was appropriate for these research questions because ABR is founded in artistic creation and reflective critique to generate knowledge. Arts based inquiry includes and privileges aesthetic, experiential, and emergent meanings, which reflect the use of metaphor, symbols, and meaning-making (Brown, 2008). The data gathering for this ABR project is based on the creation of one hundred 5 in. by 8 in. SoulCollage cards and written

reflections focused on witnessing the image and identifying visual and verbal metaphors. This research project investigates the experiential impact of making SoulCollage cards. Additionally, the written reflections, based on the experience of creating and reflecting on the visual image, seek to identify and acknowledge sensations felt within the body. Kapitan (2010) adds, “art-based inquiry often involves and provokes somatic responses” (p. 164); this inherent quality of art making and viewing is an essential element of the data collection. The process of creating SoulCollage cards and corresponding written reflections serve as the data for this ABR project.

Data Creation

Returning to Herveys (2000) framework of ABR, this investigation includes the following phases: Initial-awareness, decontextualization and intentional re-creation, and refinement and transformation. Hervey (2000) described the phase of initial-awareness as the feeding of ones curiosity. This occurred during class explorations of SoulCollage, metaphor, and the proposed usefulness of these concepts in art therapy. During this phase, I was struck by the visual and felt impact of SoulCollage process and its potential therapeutic value and clinical applications within an art therapy context.

During a period of immersion, I created over one hundred SoulCollage cards and written reflections, which serve as the data for this ABR project (Appendix A). During the phase of decontextualization and intentional re-creation I intentionally created one hundred SoulCollage cards. Collage is recommended as a “medium for arts-based research because it involves gathering and selecting imagery – which can serve as data- as well as analyzing, synthesizing, and presenting the results of these processes” (Chilton & Scotti, 2014, p. 164). Butler-Kisber (2008) stated that collage can “mediate understanding in new and interesting ways both for the creator and viewer because of its partial, embodied, multivocal, and nonlinear representational potential” (p. 265). The artistic medium of SoulCollage utilizes the power of juxtaposition to create powerful, informative, and personally meaningful artistic forms, which give rise to visual and verbal metaphors.

The process of writing reflections in response to the creation of SoulCollage cards serves as a continuation of the decontextualization and intentional re-creation phase characterised by the “systematically focusing [of] attention” (Kapitan, 2010, p. 166). The process of creating verbal metaphors occurred through imaginal dialogue and corresponded to the written reflections. The written reflections served as documents of the metaphorical discussions and at times poetic

dialogue with the images. Authors Sava and Nuutinen (2003) refer to imaginal conversations with imagery as a “dialogue between inquiry and art...the hybrid or ‘third space’ created as art and inquiry, or image and word meet...” (as cited in Leavy, 2009, p. 232). This third space creates a place of analysis in which the power of metaphors, felt sensations and their inherent connection to art therapy can be explored and documented. This process of dialogue is similar to Pat Allen’s (1995) imaginal image process. Invoking intuition through writing, Allen’s imaginal image process essentially invites images to speak through the page. In a similar fashion, Frost advocates for a series of reflection questions titled *Feeling a SoulCollage Card with the Body* (2010a). Frost conceptualizes the questions as ideally answered in small groups of SoulCollagers; one person is the speaker and another scribes the response. However, Frost states the questions can be recorded individually. For the purposes of this ABR project, the questions were completed through a written question and answer format. Frost’s (2010a) questions include:

When I sit with this card, where in my body do I feel a response, sensation, warmth, energy, tension, “butterflies”? Would you ____ (addressing the card and its Neter) share your wisdom about the sensation? Where in my body do you bring your gifts? Your vitality? How would you like me to use these gifts & vitality? If I allow this vitality, this gift, to flow in my body how will it nourish me and my life? (p. 16)

With a central focus on the impact of image on the somatic experience of the body, the question process fosters embodied learning. Weber (2008) shares that people’s bodies respond to visual creations with “an unintentional but automatic and visceral identification with some images,...on some level, experiencing the situations depicted” (p. 46) suggesting that images elicit a physical response. Frost’s questions recognize the holistic impact of visual images on felt sensations situated within the body, through the process of written dialogue, and seek to expand and identify awareness of the body. This process values that connecting with an image can foster both a mental and physical experience of knowing.

This intuitive sequence of discovery is further deepened by Frost’s (2010a) imaginal dialogue processes, which are initiated by the phrase “I am the one who....” (p. 97). Speaking from a place of intuition, the cardholder engages with aspects of the visual content depicted on the SoulCollage card, which inevitably reflects the psyche of the speaker. Frost (2010a) suggests this process invites our inner “images to speak aloud combining both imagination and intuition”

(p. 98). Both imaginal dialogue and poetic discourse served as a component of the data gathering and analyzing process.

Authors Manders and Chilton (2013) describe poetry and creative dialogue as a translation tool for data analysis. Through poetic words and imaginal dialogue the visual image is translated into language, which is further refined into identifiable metaphors. Through this process of translation the visual data can be distilled into verbal metaphors. Manders and Chilton (2013) describe poetry as the active or writing in free verse, combining found words, or standard poetic forms; as a process to locate meaning through the both creative textual and verbal thinking. Manders and Chilton (2013) describe creative dialogue as an imaginal line of questioning used to evoke the voice of the image.

Hervey's concept of appreciation and discrimination best characterises the final stages of my process. Upon completing my collection of SoulCollage cards I created an additional suit visually identifying the steps of this ABR practice (Appendix B). To summarize, the ABR steps of this process include: the acquisition of images, assemblage of cards, silent meditation on the cards, followed by written reflections documenting felt sensations, visual and verbal metaphors, which is followed by posting the cards on my wall to create a personal gallery in my living space. This lived visual emersion enabled an environment for ongoing engagement and reflection. Additional insights acquired through the ongoing witnessing of the cards were added to the stimulus card's corresponding reflection page. Completion of the steps fosters additional insights and further refinement, which necessitates additional cards created in response to meaningful or challenging themes provoked. The cyclical process of examining my ABR steps and the self propelling nature of SoulCollage cards exemplify the aspects of refinement and transformation inherent in Hervey's (2000) examination of the ABR process.

Ethical Considerations

SoulCollage cards are made from a process of appropriating images. I have collected images from books, magazines, greeting cards, and the internet in addition to personal photography and found material. Frost addresses the ethical use of appropriating images in her text, assuring that the cards are for "personal use and not to sell, trade, or publish" (Frost, 2010a, p. 4). In an effort to celebrate my creative works for the purposes of this paper, I will include only images which are copyright-free or have been constructed from my own source material such as personal photography, painting, and root image-making processes. In addition, as the

sole arts-based researcher engaged in a creative and psychological process of SoulCollage, I actively revealed aspects of my psyche. As the sole research participant, it is essential to consider the personal impact of the research process, acknowledging issues of harm, privacy, and confidentiality (Kapitan, 2010, p. 194).

Validity and Reliability

Consideration of validity and reliability are fundamental to sound use of ABR practices. Reliability is defined as the “principal of consistency in research instruments. A reliable instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and obtains similar results consistently over time... a valid instrument is one that measures what it is supposed to measure” (Kapitan, 2010, p. 276). Critiquing the positivist notion of ‘validity’ Guba and Lincoln (1989) propose the concept of authenticity as an ABR alternative to quantitative concept of ‘validity’.

Unlike quantitative research practices in qualitative research, however, these concepts have a broad scope of meaning. Leavy (2009) states that “traditional conceptions of validity and reliability which develop out of positivism, are inappropriate for evaluating artistic inquiry” (p. 15). McNiff (2011) asserts ABR practices offer “a process of disciplined and systematic inquiry where modes of investigation are determined by the nature of the issues being examined” (p. 388), and in this vein, the research method serves the artistic form. Expanding on this, Kossak (2012) challenges the concept of reliability in ABR, questioning if aesthetic knowing is fundamental to the art making process and contributes to reliability in ABR research.

In the case of this research study, reliability is the consistency of my approach to art making. Reliability was insured through honest reflection, detailed oriented, and systematic approach in which I logged my thoughts, feelings, and reflections in response to making each SoulCollage card. This exhaustive documentation will inform and enhance both the reflexivity and influence the validity of this study. Leavy (2009) states that “these kinds of internal signals are vital to building authentic and trustworthy knowledge when using unconventional qualitative methods” (p. 49). According to Tenni, Smith and Boucher (2003) the systematic process of documenting inner dialogue and research process enhances the internal validity of the study. Through the meticulous documentation of my thoughts, feelings, and observations in my research log I have added to the validity of this ABR approach.

Chapter Three

Findings

Over a six-month period, I actively engaged in the process of making, recording, and engaging with my collection of SoulCollage cards, aiming to identify metaphors and felt sensations within my body. The practice of investigating metaphors and felt sensations has led me to the awareness of how symbols and the emotions are intimately linked to this research investigation. In total I have created one hundred SoulCollage cards; therefore, in an effort to summarize my findings based on these cards, I will address the following pertinent themes which emerged from the data collection process: symbols, visual and verbal metaphors, felt sensations, and emotions.

Due to the vast number of collage cards, I have chosen to focus my analysis on the series of five SoulCollage cards documenting my research steps, in addition to the 56 Committee cards and 16 Council cards. I have chosen to exclude the Energetic and Community Suits from this analysis due to the overly personal themes emerging from the material. The research findings will be presented and related to the five arts based steps of this ABR process: 1) gathering 2) assemblage 3) felt sensations 4) reflecting 5) organizing. Each step is identified by and investigated through a SoulCollage card and corresponding verbal metaphor.

Arts Based Research Step One: Gathering

The first step of this ABR process is characterized by the physical act of gathering, seeing, and internally feeling a collection of source images, which contain symbols and visual metaphors necessary for the creation of SoulCollage cards. The first card of this ABR investigation depicts the process of acquiring images necessary for the creation of SoulCollage cards. The card reveals my body actively engaged in the repetitive process of locating imagery. In the bottom right corner of the image I appear sitting, eyes fixed on a magazine as I flip through the pages waiting for a felt sense of connection to an image. This process of selecting images is informed by philosopher Barthes' (1981) notion of *the punctum*. According to Barthes (1981), the punctum can be described as a physical sense of connection to a specific detail of an image, which grabs, pricks and bruises you with lived intensity. The metaphor which came to me for this step and this card was *amassing chaotic potential*, which describes this physical process of searching, waiting, and feeling the intensity of chosen images.

Arts Based Research Step Two: Assemblage

The second step of the ABR process requires the assemblage of the SoulCollage card. Assemblage of cards connects with the Cognitive component of ETC in which abstract concept formation, logical thought process, and conscious planning are utilized to create and structure SoulCollage cards (Hinz, 2009). The image reveals the employment of cognitive processes as my hands actively arrange, snip, and glue the chosen image. This process card gave rise to the metaphor *the messy birth of fragmented form*. Through the act of selecting, cutting, and gluing, the meaningful image becomes personalized, allowing for conscious and unconscious symbols to form.

Upon formation of the SoulCollage card, the Cognitive component gives rise to the Symbolic component, which promotes metaphorical representation, resolution of symbols and intuitive engagement (Hinz, 2009). In reviewing my collection of SoulCollage cards I discovered that different suits elicited different imagery. Common archetypal symbols associated with the Council Suit, which again, explores archetypal expressions of individual experience included: wings, body parts, bones, birds, forests, skies, abstract patterns, figures appeared as royal, spiritual or mythic. Common symbols identified in the Committee Suit, which reflects psychological aspects of being, included: nature imagery such as trees, water, animals, and environmental landscapes. Symbolic representations of myself were depicted almost entirely through images of women and girls; the imagery revealed the plurality of life roles including student, partner, woman, and child; the images connected to elements in my past, present, and future. Within my ABR process cards common symbols included: SoulCollage cards, magazines, and my body; specifically the movement of my hands and the direction of my gaze.

Arts Based Research Step Three: Felt Sensations

During the third step in the research process, I used my body as a tool to identify the impact of the image on felt sensations within my body. The corresponding metaphor describing the third step of the ABR process is *speckled feelings filled space and time*. The metaphor reveals the transient and time bound nature inherent in the act of feeling and viewing a SoulCollage card. In the image my body appears seated in a meditative pose, this connotes a sense of reflection and focus on felt sensation inherent in meditative processes. Through the use of warm and cool colours, a polarity of temperatures is implied; depictions of water and glass-like imagery elicit a physical felt response.

Upon the completion of each card I sat in a state of meditative silence consciously focusing my awareness on the image, noting any felt sensations within my body. Salom (2013) states “the body is a vehicle through which one encounters emotions; perceptual and sensorial capabilities allow contact with what arises in one’s awareness, supporting a direct experience of reality...” (p. 143). Although the documentation of physical sensations offers subjective records of lived experience, these records serve as a phenomenological exploration of experience in response to images.

In review of the data, my experiences of physical sensations were organized into categories of observations effecting different aspects of my physiology. The various categories included: physical sensations associated with my breathing; my heart rate; my facial expressions; tension verses relaxation in my body; a sense of restriction versus expansion; vague internal sensations of movement verse numbness; and finally, fluctuation in temperature. Through this process I noted impactful images had the potential to affect the pattern, speed, and intensity of my breath; images moved me to sigh, pause, or withdraw my breath as though my nervous system responded to the immediacy of the image. At times, I felt as though my heart rate increased, decreased or pronounced itself as a pounding in my chest. Some cards had the effect of adding a sense of tightness to my body; I could feel my shoulders, belly, throat, heart and head restrict, creating feelings of solidifying, tightening, and closure within me. Countering a sense of restriction, other images fostered a sense of lightens, expansion, and openness as though the space within me was vast, open, and clear in response to the image, feeling, and message evoked through the imaginal. Additional physical responses elicited a change in my facial expression, most noticeably producing a smile, frown, or grimace, which pointed towards a shift in affect. Focusing on the experience of felt sensation offered me an increased sense of conscious awareness aimed towards my internal sense of being.

Through analysis it became evident that my collection of Committee cards revealed a broad spectrum of desirable and undesirable expressions of affect. In total, the cards depict comfortable feelings of joy, ease, contentment, satisfaction, love, abundance, wonder, and compassion. Undesirable feelings depicted were sadness, anxiety, disappointment, anger, frustration, guilt, shame, fear, conflict and insecurity. Throughout my research I discovered that felt sensations corresponded with the impression of either positive or negative experiences of affect. I found that the experience of desirable emotions led to a sense of lightness, expansion

within my heart, and improved posture. Undesirable feelings led to a sense of heaviness in my body, slumped posture, and overall tension in my belly or constriction in my throat, at times gestures of crossing my arms or moving my body away from the image, accompanied the experience of viewing the image. Through the process of analysis I have discovered a constant dialogue between my collection of SoulCollage cards, the felt sense of my body, and my experience of affect.

Arts Based Research Step Four: Reflecting

The fourth process card reveals an image of me writing and reflecting. The phrase *word wrapped sensation of thought and form* reveals the cards corresponding to metaphor. The metaphor echoes Barthes' (1987) description of language as skin, which rubs against the other. Both metaphors highlight the physicality of the bodily mind (Rizzuto, 2001). The card's image is simple, soft, and well organized, as though the act of writing and reflecting brought clarity and structure to the process. During the writing process, I followed Frost's (2010a) questions outlined in "Feeling a SoulCollage Card with the Body" (p. 16) as well as the phrase "I am the one who..." (p. 98). These questions allowed me to identify the voice of the image through free prose. This aspect of the writing process introduced me to both light and dark aspects of my personality. This process enabled me to dialogue with and give voice to challenging emotions, beliefs, fears and worries. Through the writing process, I connected with conscious and unconscious aspects of myself, attempting to identify and locate their energetic hold and felt sense of being within my body. This awareness has led me to identify ways in which negative and positive thoughts and affects connect to a felt sense within my body.

Verbal metaphors were honed throughout the creating and reflecting processes. At times, the verbal metaphors presented themselves instantaneously. For example, one of my Committee cards illustrates a young woman happily standing in a forest stream, and thus, without much conscious effort the metaphor "go with the flow" came to mind. I felt as though the symbolic elements of the image communicated a clear and immediate message. At other times, the SoulCollage cards remained as a visual metaphor, which I was not able to translate into descriptive language. The majority of my Committee cards contain visual metaphors representing past experiences, future hopes, and present feelings in addition to cards identifying invisible systems of power such as white privilege, ageism, and systemic oppression. This group of cards defies being reduced to verbal phrases, but rather communicate through their powerful

symbolic imagery. The final group of metaphors arose from the process of using prose to identify and explore symbolic associations, felt sensation, and emotions. The prose served as a fun and accessible way to create and identify meaningful metaphors.

It should be noted that I created the metaphors associated with the ABR process with the greatest ease. The verbal metaphors served as a reflection of my bodily experience in relationship to the ABR process. I believe my ability to identify and generate metaphors for the ABR process is reflective of my bodily, emotional, and mental awareness necessary to complete each step. This process analysis was completed for each of my hundred SoulCollage cards, and I believe this intense familiarity has enabled me to easily identify and create metaphors which accurately and consciously reflect my experience. This implies that verbal metaphors can reveal one's knowledge, familiarity, and conscious awareness of a subject. In contrast, both the Committee and Council Suits reflect ambiguous and broad personal life themes, which at times seem to defy being reduced to a linguistic expression. The specific process of generating metaphors for each of the Council and Committee Suits will be further explored in the discussion section.

Arts Based Research Step Five: Organizing

My fifth and final ABR card reveals my process of organizing my SoulCollage cards, with its corresponding metaphor being *visual dialogue*. In the image, I stand before my wall of SoulCollage cards with additional cards placed on the ground in an attempt to begin the data analyses process presented throughout my findings. As a whole, my sequence of ABR cards and their corresponding metaphors imply a sense of movement and increased visual organization as I move through the research steps progressing from chaos to order.

Discussion

In the following section I will review the original research questions, specifically focusing on: how SoulCollage facilitates the emergence of metaphor; what insight is gained through the awareness of felt sensations in the body, and; how do felt sensations contribute to the field of art therapy. Using ABR processes I have explored the relationship between SoulCollage, symbols, both visual and verbal metaphors, felt sensations, emotions, and the body. Using the data generated through ABR process in discourse with my findings and the literature review, this

discussion will address the relationship between the body, metaphors, the ABR research process and how these contribute to art therapy.

Metaphors are defined as a “device in which one thing is described in terms of another” (Moon, 1990, p. 9). In a similar fashion this research investigation utilizes SoulCollage cards as visual source from which linguistic metaphors are derived. The process of translating one artistic medium (SoulCollage) into another (linguistic metaphors) is an ABR process known as data translation (Leavy, 2015). Leavy (2009) suggest that ABR is useful to those who aim to explore, describe and discover. Through the process of data translation this project seeks to identity and describe how metaphors connect with the body.

Returning to the outline of this ABR process I have documented each step with a SoulCollage card, metaphor, and corresponding sensations. Through analysis of the first image it appears as though my body is portrayed actively moving throughout the SoulCollage card. From a neuroscience perspective, Hass-Cohen and Loya (2008) highlight that “utilizing photographs of images of familiar faces may evoke stronger emotional reactions than would utilizing other images” (p. 92). One might hypothesize that using photos of oneself may have a similar effect. The first metaphor *amassing chaotic potential* (see Figure 1) is informed by the sensation of a pounding heart, withdrawn breath and a sense of tension which I experience as an overall feeling of anxiety. I believe the metaphor and corresponding sensations reveal my feelings of anxiety embarking on this elaborate ABR process. The written documentation of felt sensations form direct links with the corresponding verbal metaphors. This example reveals how images, which are visual metaphors, facilitate the expression of felt sensations and emotional reactions through potent and personal imagery.

Metaphors translate embodied experience into linguistic expression, essentially linking both body and mind. As stated in the literature review, according to Rizzuto (2001), language is an expression of our bodily mind; “the mind is always and inevitably based on bodily perception and sensorimotor experience” (Skarderud, 2007, p. 244). Language reveals and is informed by our physical experience. It is therefore not surprising that all of my ABR process cards contain an image of my body in the SoulCollage card. I believe a combination of the visual record and embodied experience informs the creation of the card’s verbal metaphor. According to Damasio (1994), the mind is continuously receiving information from the internal milieu and the visceral division, which are “concerned with the organism’s interior” (p. 150). This aspect of the

somatosensory systems “is permanently active, permanently signalling the state of the most internal aspects of the body proper to the brain” (Damasio, 1994, p. 150).

Emergence of Metaphor

According to my research findings, SoulCollage is a complex modality, which utilizes both the Symbolic and the Cognitive components of the ETC to facilitate the emergence of metaphors. Moon (2007) states that “metaphors in art therapy are formed when the artist, media, procedures, and external environment intersect” (p. 70). According to Moon, the physicality of art materials and elaborate processes of art making contribute to the formation of metaphors. In my research investigation I have discovered that the highly structured process of creating SoulCollage cards coupled with the selection of symbolic and archetypal images gives rise to visual and verbal metaphors.

As noted in my literature review the Cognitive component of the ETC requires deliberate planning, conscious decision-making and sequencing to promote problem solving and the completion of complex tasks (Hinz, 2009). Frost’s complex modality requires an elaborate step-by-step process to generate the creation of SoulCollage cards. In addition, my research process included steps focusing on felt sensations and witness writing techniques. As discussed in my findings, the preparation process was guided by the selection of imagery evoked by a personal connection to images, best described as Bathes’ (1981) notion of punctum. Each image was consciously selected for its ability to provoke a felt connection. Through the cognitive process of selection, evocative and meaningful images served as the basis from which neters and powerful background images were amassed.

Frost (2001) conceptualizes neters as an internal force, which is symbolized through the SoulCollage process. In addition to the Cognitive component, SoulCollage facilitates the Symbolic component of the ETC, which promotes intuition, metaphoric representation, symbolic expression and resolution (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978). Frost’s complex modality utilizes both the Cognitive and Symbolic component to foster metaphors. According to Frost (2001) neters are depictions of people, animals, archetypes or deities, which symbolise an internal force; through SoulCollage processes these inner energies are given a visual form. Kagin and Lusebrink (1978) state that symbols are multidimensional entities, which contain dynamic energy and an inherent sense of movement. Frost’s concept of neter echoes Kagin and Lusebrink’s (1978) description of a symbol as containing “emotionally charged internal

structures” (p. 176). Neters, like the symbols which they represent, are dynamic energies, which seek to communicate on both conscious and unconscious levels (Jung, 1964).

The Council

Frost (2010) describes archetypal images depicted within the Council Suit as “universal patterns of energy” (p. 56), which appear across all cultures throughout all times, but by different names. Through my analysis the Council suit reflected archetypal themes of time, death, creativity, beauty, as well as destruction and preservation of the earth. The images reveal a cast of characters representing both humans and deities spanning a broad spectrum of ages, races, and genders. Each card revealed a unique vignette depicting a complex character in their personal habitat; the collection of cards appeared to exist in places referencing both ancient past and mythic future. The images contained universal symbols of fire, water, earth, and sky, which fostered a sense of timeless imagery. Upon initial dialogue with the images the cards appeared to remain silent. Frost (2010) writes that “they remain silent until they express themselves in dreams, poetry, myths, music...” (p. 56). Using the ABR process of data translation I used prose as a tool to create archetypal metaphors.

Verbal metaphors associated with the Council Suit were consciously created during a process of dialogue and written prose. This conscious and deliberate intention reflects the Cognitive component of the ETC, which requires the capacity for abstract thought and often utilizes language to communicate complex thoughts and ideas (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978b). Using writing as a tool to translate experience is a cognitive process, which touches upon the conscious, mental, abstract, and deliberate processes associated with the Cognitive component. While analysing the data of the 16 archetypal cards, I observed that some of the metaphors made reference to the physicality of form. A sample of the archetypal metaphors included: Hands of Time, Rejoice in the Dance of Death, Ice Princess, Upward Momentum of Power Rising, Plastic Beauty Queen, Speechless Wonder, Bridge of Knowing, and the Crazy Face of The Wild World. In general, my Council suit references the sensual experience of physicality and symbolic elements indicative of archetypal themes.

In hindsight, I question how much my results and findings were influenced by the fact that my research was focused on the body, sensations, and perception of felt experiences, which in turn lead me to the identification of metaphors corresponding with human physicality.

Committee Suit – Affect/ Symbolic Component

The Committee Suit reflects psychological aspects of being. This suit has been informed by my personality, various life roles, and feeling states. In total my Committee Suit is comprised of fifty-six cards. Many of my cards illustrated feelings of emotions or identified powerful or challenging times in my life. Within this suit eighteen SoulCollage cards depict emotions as visual metaphors. The cards included a visual metaphor of: joy, ease, contentment, satisfaction, love, abundance, wonder, compassion, sadness, anxiety, disappointment, anger, frustration, guilt, shame, fear, conflict and insecurity. About half of the cards illustrated images of animals to symbolize affect. I found the Committee suit facilitated the experience of metaphors through evoking strong emotions, which were symbolized through images of animals or people. During my data analysis I discovered that the Committee Suit fosters metaphors through emergent function of the Affective component, which engages the Symbolic component of the ETC. The affective component is focused on the amplification and expression of feelings (Hinz, 2009). This will lead to the creation of and identification with significant and meaningful personal or universal symbols (Hinz, 2009). The healing functions of the affective component include: increasing awareness of affect promoting, identification, communication and constructive expression of emotion (Hinz, 2009). Hinz (2009) states that the emergent function of the Affective component gives rise to the “internalization of emotional and personal symbols....[which] often elicits functioning on Cognitive/Symbolic level of the ETC (p. 120). Visual metaphors were created by the externalizing of emotions, symbolized as neters the Council cards can accurately capture and portray affective states and the upward movement of cognition from Affective to Symbolic functioning.

Felt Sensations, Affect, and Art Therapy

The second question shaping this ABR investigation seeks to identify what insight is gained through the awareness of felt sensations in the body, and how it contributes to the field of art therapy. According to my literature review, the art materials elicit the awareness of felt sensations directly linked to the Sensory component of the ETC (Hinz, 2009). As previously noted, Lusebrink (1990) states that the sensory component of the ETC focuses on the internal and external sensations, which are evoked through the interaction with art materials. Damasio (1994) states that sensation, which is experienced through the body, informs the basis of both emotion and cognition. Ekman (2008) proposes that individuals can utilize sensations in the

body as a tool to develop emotional awareness. Ekman's sentiment suggests that the focus on felt sensations can enhance one's comprehension, identification, and awareness of emotional processes.

The Sensory component of the ETC emphasizes the felt connection to materiality of art media. According to the ETC, the Sensory component fosters knowledge of the external environment which can inform the Affective component through awareness and knowledge of internal sensations which gives rise to one's awareness of emotions (Hinz, 2009). As described by Hinz (2009), the affective component of the ETC "allows for and amplifies the expression of feelings" (p. 101); the healing component of the affective level is "the increased awareness of appropriate affect and support for the constructive expression of affective impulses" (p. 120). Damasio (1994) points out that felt sensations occur before the experience of emotion. As noted in my findings, this ABR process documents the link between the SoulCollage cards and the recognition of internal and external sensations, which promoted the identification of emotions.

As stated in my findings, I discovered the potential of SoulCollage to facilitate the expression of emotions. During my research processes I was able to use SoulCollage as a tool to move from negative affect to positive feeling states. For example, I can recall creating a meaningful sequence of cards, which I made following an interpersonal conflict. Using art as a means to channel my feelings of frustration, I created a card representing my anger. This card is associated with sensations of tension, heat, and restriction. Through the process of creating the card and reflecting on the uncomfortable sensations in my body I was able to use SoulCollage and the ABR process to foster a space for reflective distance, which assisted in reducing the intensity of affect.

After creating the initial SoulCollage card depicting anger I created a second card to honor my underlying and residual feelings of disappointment. The felt sensations associated with feelings of disappointment were indicated by a sense of feeling hollow, restricted and a sense of dropping in my shoulders. Seeking to move away from my feelings of disappointment I created a Community card honoring and acknowledging the individual with whom I was in conflict with. This third card enabled me to connect to feelings of compassion, which resulted in a renewed sense of care. The image fostered sensations of warmth, prickling on my skin, and a slowness of breath. Following the Community card, I created a fourth card depicting and expanding my feelings of compassion, which I associated with a sense of lightness in my chest,

smile on my face, and ease in my body. This card was immediately followed by a card depicting harmonious and joyful companionship, complete with sensations of warmth in my heart, relaxation in my body, and softness in my face.

By using SoulCollage to acknowledge and depict my feelings, I generated a sequence of cards which enabled me to externalize my feeling state. Through this continuous sequence of card making, I experienced the power of SoulCollage to foster a cathartic release and increased reflective distance. The process of creating cards undulated through the ABR pattern of making and reflecting, touching upon Cognitive, Symbolic, Affective and Sensory aspects of the creative process. I believe images served as externalized visual metaphors which acknowledged and reflected my feeling state. The experiences of anger, disappointment, and compassion were felt within my body and projected onto the card. Hinz (2009) states that for many clients in therapy, the “Perceptual/Affective level of the ETC aids in helping clients recognise their emotions, discriminate among that, and express them appropriately” (p. 110). She furthers that creating images based on the feeling of an emotion can encourage reflective distancing and cause-and-effect thinking (Hinz, 2009).

As stated before, sensations give rise to emotion (Damasio, 1994). Seated reflection focused on sensations serves as a mental pause in which attention, affect, and mental thought processes are redirected towards the body. In this space of stillness a sense of presence, mental quiet, and breath can be experienced. This space of focusing on sensations allows for the opportunity to simply be with what is. According to Hanh (1999) focus on sensations within the context of art making promotes focus and attention to the moment.

This process of focused attention towards one’s internal and external sensations can be described as mindfulness. Mindfulness has been described as “awareness of what is happening in the present moment characterized by a non-judgemental, open and accepting attitude towards everything that arises in consciousness without trying to change it” (Cigolla & Brown, 2011, p. 709). Kabat-Zinn (1994) describes mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally” (p. 4). Research indicates that calm breathing and meditative practices encourage the mind to focus inwards attuning to the “VVC [ventral vagal complex] to internal experience, producing a state of relaxed, open-ended attentiveness” (Kass & Trantham, 2013, p. 306).

I found it interesting to note that throughout this process, there were times where bizarre images were formed, odd neters evoked, and challenging themes revealed. At times the images seemed to be stubbornly silent during which I felt unable to consciously connect with the themes, neters, and content emerging. Despite my difficulty engaging with dialogue at times, all of my SoulCollage cards resulted in the conscious experience of felt sensation, accessed through mindful attention. Damasio (1994) states that the mind is constantly receiving and relaying information regarding the felt state of the body. I believe focus on felt sensation encourages a place of internal reflection which seeks to momentarily privilege and acknowledge the experiences of the body. Within an art therapy context the relationship between image creation and the experience of felt sensations points toward an avenue for distilling insight regarding a client's embodied experience in connection to their images.

Limitations

My research utilized the creation of SoulCollage cards and written reflections as a tool to identify felt sensations and verbal metaphors. The identification of a felt experience is a highly subjective interpretation of one's own lived experience which cannot be generalized.

Visual images are the root source of SoulCollage cards. In this project a collection of pictures sourced from magazines, books, and Internet sites, and personal photography images for my data collection process. The symbols, imagery, and content of the cards reflect the limited source material and North American cultural lens presented in printed media. Landgarten (1993) acknowledges magazine images reflect cultural landscape, values and ideology and therefore are never neutral. Through the assimilation of pre-existing images, a North American bias and perspective is evident in my collection of SoulCollage cards. Additionally, many of the images, which are appropriated from books and magazines, represent copyrighted material, thus limiting my ability to responsibly disseminate this collection of SoulCollage cards.

At times the creation of verbal metaphors proved to be exceedingly difficult. Although generating meaningful metaphors was an aim of this project, at times I felt I was unable to create a viable metaphor to correspond with each card. I believe the SoulCollage cards in my collection without corresponding meaningful verbal metaphors may indicate an incubation phase of the process. During this phase, the subliminal content, meaning, and symbolic value may not yet be ready to be translated into conscious prose.

This ABR process is founded on the making, reflecting, and engaging with my collection of one hundred SoulCollage cards and written reflections. The sheer amount of SoulCollage cards and corresponding written reflections generated a considerable amount of data. Tenni et al. cautions in arts-based research when the researcher is using their own personal experience as data collection that “there may be a tendency to collect too much data” (as cited in Leavy, 2015, p. 269). Leavy (2015) shares data saturation “is the point at which the collection of more data stops adding to the insights gained and the researcher risks being inundated” (p. 269). Through my keen participation in data creation I failed to recognize I had reached the point of data saturation. Absorbed in data creation I limited my time frame and ability to sit in a space of incubation and reflection necessary to digest, reflect, and deeply respond to the density of emerging themes. Due to the scale of this art based project the sheer amount of images, reflections, sensations, metaphors and themes posed a challenge to distil and identify the underlying themes which were emerging from the intersection of meaningful relationships.

Recommendations

The aim of this research project is to explore the emergence of visual and verbal metaphors in SoulCollage analysed through an art therapy context. As an art therapy graduate student I have found using SoulCollage to be a valuable self-care tool as it encourages reflection, creativity, and insight. Throughout this process SoulCollage has been a very accessible modality for creating powerful symbolic images, externalizing intense emotions, revealing personal narratives, and generating meaningful visual metaphors. The third step in the ABR process which focused on observing felt sensations within the body created a meaningful space for pause, silence, and stillness to emerge amidst the mental process of making and examining. Through reflecting on physical sensations within my body I was able to develop an immediate sense and lived connection to the images. This space of reflection allowed for the wisdom of my body to meet the conscious thoughts of my mind allowing for new meaning and greater personal awareness to emerge.

During the process of immersion I posted the growing collection of SoulCollage cards on my bedroom wall; thus creating a personal gallery in my living space. During this period of everyday contact I consciously and unconsciously dialogued with the images, noting relationships, symbolic themes, and connections between the forms. This heightened visual contact invited a hyper state of receptivity through which an ongoing dialogue with symbolic

images could occur. My wall of images additionally affirmed my research efforts and creative identity as an emerging art therapist.

As a whole, collage processes are generally referred to as contained art therapy interventions; when compared to other mediums, collage offers a greater level of reflective distance (Hinz, 2009; Raffaelli & Hartzell, 2016). However, I found through the process of creating SoulCollage there were times when I unconsciously assembled deeply evocative, stunningly accurate imagery reflecting traumatic experiences and challenging relationships. SoulCollage utilizes symbolic forms to connect, influence, and dialogue with conscious and inevitably unconscious aspects of self. I caution: although SoulCollage is exceedingly accessible it holds the potential to connect to past traumas held in the psyche. I recommend that SoulCollage is approached with respect, skill, and understanding of the unconscious psychic process, which close connection to images may call forth.

Conclusion

Through the lens of an ABR approach this project examined the use of SoulCollage to facilitate the development of visual and verbal metaphors in art therapy. Frost's imaginative modality lends itself to a personal exploration of symbolic imagery through which the identification of identity, emotions, values, and personal challenges immerse in visual form. Through examination, dialogue, prose, and written reflection metaphors can be made known. SoulCollage mainly utilizes the Cognitive and Symbolic components of the ETC to foster the creation of verbal and visual metaphors.

Following an ABR process I was able to discover the vibrant intersection between the images and felt sensations. The physiological experience of felt sensation is an ongoing human phenomenon continuously linking body and mind (Damasio, 1994). Using stillness and reflection as a tool to acknowledge the impact of images on the physiological process within the body encourages embodied integration of the therapeutic processes. Inviting clients to focus on their experience of felt sensations acknowledges the importance of their bodily experience in relationship to the emotional, mental, and physical processes of art making. Within art therapy this process of taking time and space to acknowledge the image and its connection to inner processes encourages conscious witnessing.

The reflective structure outlined in ABR theory and practice was an essential element in bringing this research to fruition. Through the depiction and analysis of the ABR process cards,

the major themes in this investigation came to light. The process cards revealed how the sense of movement depicted by the neter in the image informed the experience of felt sensations within the body; thus linking image, experience, verbal and visual metaphors.

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Appendix A

Feeling a SoulCollage Card with the Body

Title _____ Suit: _____

“I am the one who...” (Frost, 2010a, p. 98)

Where in my body do I feel a response, a sensation, warmth, energy, tension, butterflies”? Would you _____ (addressing the card and its Neter) share your wisdom about the sensation? Where in my body do you bring your gifts? Your vitality? How would you like me to use these gifts, this vitality? If I allow this vitality, this gift, to flow in my body, how will it nourish me and my life? (Frost, 2010a, p. 16)

Appendix B



Figure 1. Amassing Chaotic Potential, collage, 5 in. x 8 in.



Figure 2. The Messy Birth of Fragmented Form, collage, 5 in. x 8 in.



Figure 3. Speckled Feelings Filled Space and Time, collage, 5 in. x 8 in.



Figure 4. Word Wrapped Sensation of Thought and Form, collage, 5 in. x 8 in.



Figure 5. Visual Dialogue, collage, 5 in. x 8 in.