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Brief Report: 30th Anniversary Survey Results

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Brief Report: 30th Anniversary Survey Results

Cover Page Footnote

The survey was administered and analyzed by Professor Paige Asawa and Amelia Waite.

BRIEF SURVEY REPORT

30th Anniversary Survey Results

The graduate Department of Marital and Family Therapy at Loyola Marymount University is celebrating 30 years of clinical art therapy. As part of this celebration a survey was created to gather information that included basic demographics, educational experience, licensure and professional activities, as well as job retention and satisfaction. This survey was based on the 25th anniversary survey created by Malissa Morrell. The preliminary results of the 30th anniversary survey presented in this brief report suggest that overall the alumni were satisfied with their educational experience, work environment, and employment experiences. The respondents graduated over a three-decade span, included a wide age range, and as expected, most were female. There was an overwhelming generosity of spirit and openness to answer the survey questions with thoughtful consideration and detailed descriptions.

In the past few years there have been dramatic changes in the field of mental health. As part of the 30th anniversary celebration, the LMU MFTH alumni were surveyed for their experiences in the field, use of art therapy, and preparedness for the profession. The survey link was sent via email to alumni with current email addresses (approximately 300 graduates); at the time of writing 71 graduates had responded. The survey covered a broad range of information from demographics, employment and salary, to job satisfaction, use of art therapy, and educational experiences. Other useful information was gathered about interests in research and an affiliate group for our alumni. This brief report presents a preliminary overview of the survey results.

Demographics

As might be expected, the vast majority (93%) of respondents was female and 7% were male. Reported graduation years ranged from 1975 to 2010. The respondents reported ages ranging from 20-80+, with the majority of respondents in the 51-60 age range. This corresponds very closely with the recent American Art Therapy Association report (Elkins & Deaver, 2009) where 86.9% reported an age between 30 and 69 years. Regarding language, the majority was fluent in English; however, of the 42 respondents to this question, 16 reported speaking Spanish and 10 reported other languages from French, Italian, and Portuguese to Tagalog, Croatian and Hebrew.

Employment Characteristics

The survey asked employment questions and requested details regarding how respondents experienced their relationship to art therapy and the frequency that they utilized the art modality in their therapeutic settings and personal life. Figure 1 shows a de-

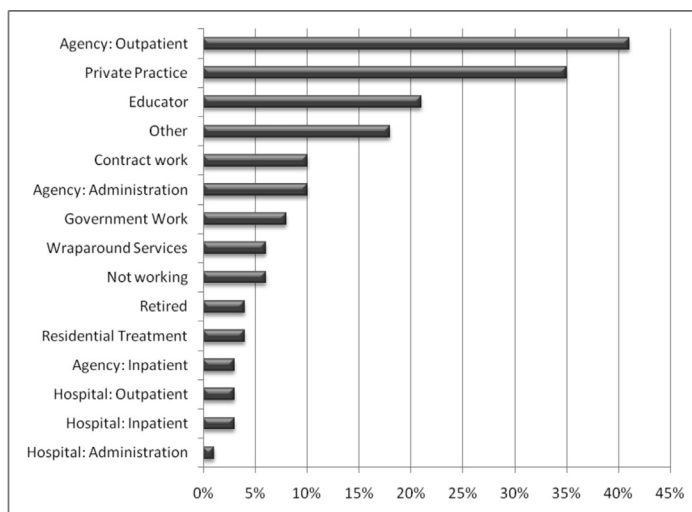


Figure 1. Type of employment (n=71).

tailed breakdown of the variety of work settings in which alumni are employed, with the vast majority being in outpatient agencies (41%), private practice (35%), and educational settings (21%). This is in direct contrast to the American Art Therapy Association survey report, which site private practice as the most often reported employment setting (Elkins, Stovall, & Malchiodi, 2003; Elkins & Deaver, 2009). This indicates that the MFT program at LMU prepares alumni for a range of employment opportunities. Many respondents reported that they were primarily an art therapist in title (21%), although the majority (32%) reported being primarily an MFT in title utilizing art therapy frequently, and only 19% reported using art sometimes. None of the respondents who described being primarily an MFT in title reported never using the art. A majority of respondents (60%) reported being employed full-time, 24% part-time, and 10% engaged in contract work. Regarding salary range, 27% were in the \$40 to \$50,000 range, while 16% were in the \$60 to \$70,000 range, and 13% were in the \$30,000 and below range.

The alumni responded to questions about how they used art in clinical sessions and in their personal life. Most of the respondents indicated that they were prepared to keep the art central in their clinical work. Figure 2 shows a detailed breakdown of how often the alumni use art in clinical sessions. When asked how often the alumni make art in their personal life, there was a wide variety of responses with the majority (29%) reporting that they make art 2-3 times a month.

Another area surveyed was job satisfaction. In the narrative

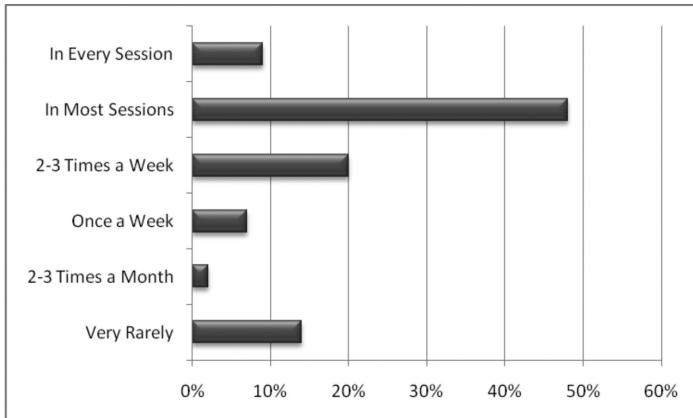


Figure 2. Use of art in clinical sessions (n=46).

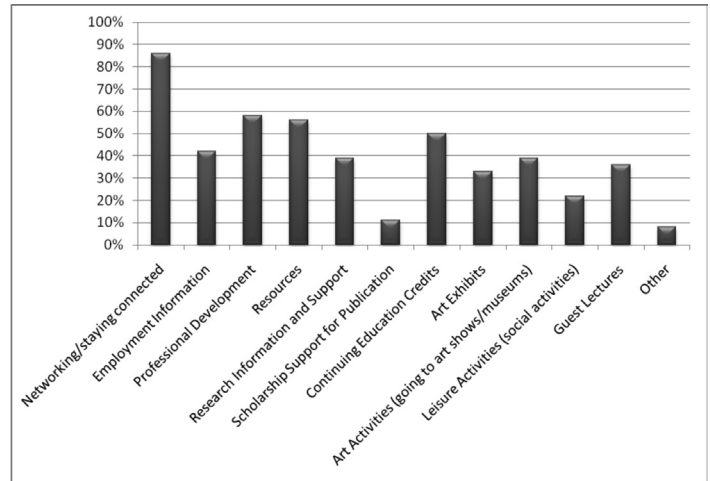


Figure 3. Services provided by affiliate group (n=35).

responses the words “I love...” were used generously to describe jobs, work, agencies, being an art therapist, teaching art therapy, working with clients, and working with adolescents. One respondent described being satisfied because the position allowed for creativity in an administrative role, with the ability to influence the system to create change that would improve the quality of care for youth and families. However, this same respondent highlighted, “dissatisfaction with external systems as they create numerous barriers to more effective and treatment focused work.” Another respondent cited feeling respected for her skills as an MFT and as an art therapist at the agencies where she works. She said, “Colleagues and staff frequently ask me about my work and for my feedback on their cases, so I feel that my contribution is valued.” One respondent spoke directly to the issues related to the economy. Although she felt the work was fulfilling, she cited the negative impact of benefit cuts and reduced work hours. Another respondent described being extremely satisfied having the ability to use multiple skill sets that were demonstrative of her deepest passions.

Program Preparation

The MFT program prepares graduates to engage work in the mental health field, for licensing and registration, research and future endeavors. Beginning with preparation to work in an agency, hospital, or other clinical setting, 48% of the graduates reported that they were well prepared to work in these settings. Forty-three percent of respondents felt well prepared for licensure and registration. Many of the comments reflected challenges with additional requirements for out of state licensure. Forty-two percent of the respondents felt prepared to engage in research, and 33% acknowledged that they would be interested in pursuing future research projects with the department. However, only 27% reported that they would be interested in working toward submitting research to be published. A surprising 37% reported that they would consider furthering their education by pursuing a doctoral program.

Affiliate Group
Loyola Marymount University has a general alumni association and smaller program oriented clusters called affiliate groups.

When asked about interest in joining an alumni affiliate group for the department, a resounding 81% of respondents indicated some level of interest. The majority of the respondents (86%) thought that the affiliate group could serve them by providing meetings to stay connected and offering networking opportunities. Many cited continuing education units, professional development, and training opportunities as expected benefits of the affiliate group. See Figure 3 for a more detailed analysis of how an affiliate group might serve the needs and interests of the alumni.

Conclusion

Despite the current economic challenges, overall the LMU MFTH alumni find their jobs satisfying and stimulating. The vast majority experience that art therapy is accepted and valued in their agencies. They engage in art in most of their sessions and even find time to make art in their personal lives. The alumni shared their acknowledgement of the program’s resourcefulness and dedication to excellence over the years. The accomplishments that the alumni reported demonstrated their commitment to the centrality of the art despite the many shifts in the field of mental health.

Paige Asawa and Amelia Waite

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- Elkins, D. E., Stovall, K., & Malchiodi, C. (2003). American Art Therapy Association, Inc.: 2001–2002 membership survey report. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 20(1), 28–34.
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For alumni who have not yet taken the survey and want to do so, please go to the following link: http://mylmu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_eCBZW5YWlyCH9Uo