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### Consulting Editorial

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## CONSULTING EDITORIAL

# 30 Years of Art Therapy at LMU: Reflections on Research

My comments lie between Einat Metzl's discussion of the expanding debate about systematic scholarship in the field of art therapy and Maxine Junge's observations about the problems plaguing research in the field. Interestingly, both begin their editorials with strong connections to Helen Landgarten—that's where so much in our field was activated. My intention is to find a place between them, to reflect on the history of program sponsored research over the 30 years of art therapy at LMU, and to discuss the articles in this journal in light of that history.

Having participated in many strident debates about the definition, nature, and value of research in the field of art therapy, I realize that I actually know less now, and with less certainty, than I thought I did when I began. I entered the field when case study testimonials pervaded our scholarship, I formed my professional identity as qualitative vs. quantitative debates presided, I joined the cry for nontraditional and arts based research methods, and I have matured with humility into advocacy for art therapy scholarship of any kind.

The three articles that moved through the peer review process and multiple revisions in this inaugural edition of the *Journal of Clinical Art Therapy* reflect both a spectrum of methodological choices and the history of research debate. Additionally, all three represent the department's current focus on qualitative research, emphasizing cultural considerations and integrative models of scholarship. I am pleased to comment on each one from that perspective.

The article by Tucker and Trevino, an outgrowth of the department's pioneering collaborations with Mexican art psychotherapists, exemplifies the case study method, a research strategy reflecting a distinct developmental stage. Clinical work that is initially being explored, clinical work that is moving into new territories, and clinical work that is being tenderly exposed to the world is often shaped through the discussion of case material. Tucker and Trevino make themselves vulnerable by exploring their own challenges in transporting (from the United States to Mexico) a solution-focused curriculum for couples engaged in domestic violence. Their willingness to present and assess their work is typical of the spectrum of art therapy scholarship that has to do with demonstration and dissemination. Their work il-

lustrates the cultural stretching in which the department and its alumni are currently engaged.

Both Curtis' and Morell's explorations of the mechanics of clinical art therapy represent different kinds of research approaches. These projects were initially begun as master's research projects during the heady days of scholarly debate when phenomenology, grounded theory, and non-traditional qualitative strategies were intoxicating to art therapists yearning for research participation. Curtis' project does exactly what clinical art therapists need to do: analyze, systematize, and legitimize the incorporation of imagery into the clinical process. Her use of grounded theory, using data from interviews with clinicians to generate emergent themes, and her inclusion of theoretical models from outside the field demonstrate the flexibility and creativity that the field of art therapy needs. Morell's project is informed by the tradition of theoretical inquiry and utilizes conceptual constructs as the data and building blocks for the development of an idea about how art therapy works and how art therapists find meanings. Her contribution models inclusive thinking, creative problem solving, and an open mind.

As I reflect on these three research articles and the history of teaching (sometimes cajoling) art therapists to engage in scholarly activities, I am delighted with our progress and proud of these contributions. We need to do it all, we need to do it every way we can imagine, and we need to do it with our authentic and arts based voices. In fact that is what Helen taught us, so I too include a connection to Helen Landgarten in my comments. Every time I shared a new plan or project with Helen, she asked me, "why?" Now that questioning voice is gone, and I regret the times I found it confrontational. With retrospective sadness I understand what a significant gift her curiosity was. In Helen's memory, let us keep moving forward, asking each other "why not?"

I thank the authors for their hard work and patience with the process. I extend my appreciation to Maxine Junge for her provocative and stimulating ideas and to Einat Metzl for her diligence in sustaining this vision. It is an honor to share the title "editor" with both of them.

Debra Linesch, *Consulting Editor*